

# Chapter 2

MY FAMILY DIDN'T LOOK LIKE THE ONES ON TV.



ON TV, FAMILIES LOOKED LIKE THIS:



MINE LOOKED LIKE THIS:





**FABULOUS Monggo!**

Adapted from a recipe by Nora Daza. Serves 6. This is a popular weeknight dish, served with steamed rice and something crispy on the side (like fried fish or pork belly).

**INGREDIENTS**

- 1 cup mung beans, soaked overnight
- 4 cups water
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 3 tomatoes, chopped
- 1 onion, chopped
- 1 tbsp olive oil
- 2 tbsp shrimp paste
- 1/2 c pork, boiled and sliced into bite-size pieces

**DIRECTIONS**

- Boil mung beans in water until tender.
- Sauté garlic, tomatoes, and onion until soft in some oil. Add shrimp and pork and stir for a minute.
- Add mung beans and shrimp paste. Add the 4 cups of water and let simmer for 15 minutes.
- Season with fish sauce and pepper to taste.
- Add spinach and cook until wilted.
- Serve immediately, like this:

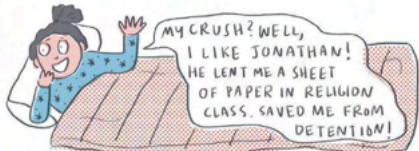
MONGGO PORK BELLY RICE



THEY DIDN'T ALLOW STUFF THAT MOST PARENTS DID - AND ALLOWED STUFF MOST PARENTS DIDNT.

# GAME TIME!

CIRCLE ALL THE THINGS MY PARENTS DIDNT ALLOW!  
(ANSWERS BELOW)



SLEEPOVERS!



ORDERING DESSERT!



STAYING UP LATE!



EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES!



EATING CANDY!



LUNCHABLES!



CUSSING IN ENGLISH!

ANSWERS: HANGING OUT AFTER SCHOOL, SLEEPOVERS, DESSERT, EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES, LUNCHABLES.

EVEN THOUGH I WAS JUST A KID, I COULD SEE THAT MY PARENTS WERE STRUGGLING.

WELL, WHO WILL PAY FOR TUITION? I CAN'T-



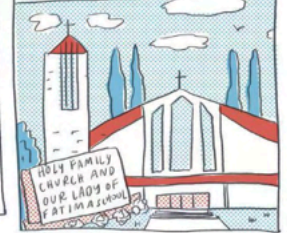
WHEN I WAS SIX, MY MOM HAD MIN MIN. HER DAD MAY HAVE BEEN FILIPINO, AND MINE EGYPTIAN, BUT WE WERE SISTERS ALL THE SAME.



NANAY HELPED OUT A LOT AND TOOK CARE OF US.



MOM WORKED TWO JOBS, SEVEN DAYS A WEEK, ON THANKSGIVING AND CHRISTMAS, TO PAY FOR PRIVATE SCHOOL...



PRIVATE TUTORS...

HA-HA, MIN MIN, YOU CAN'T READ.



AND A BASIC MIDDLE-CLASS LIFE.

I WANT AN AMERICAN GIRL DOLL.

THOSE ARE, LIKE, \$80!



BUT I LOVE SAMANTHA.

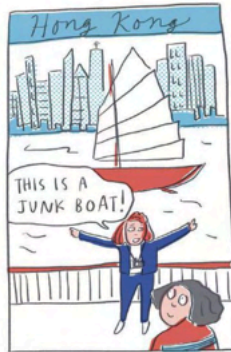
THE VICTORIAN ONE, RIGHT? JEEZ, JUST READ THE BOOKS!

MOM'S GREATEST EXTRAVAGANCE WAS TAKING US ON BIG TRIPS ABROAD. SHE USED THE PERKS FROM HER JOB AT AN AIRLINE.

WE'RE GOING ON A TRIP!

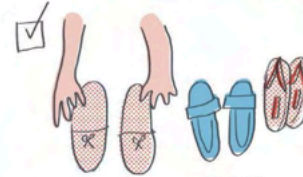


IT WAS IMPORTANT TO HER THAT MIN AND I KNEW AND CARED ABOUT ART, MUSIC, AND CULTURE. SHE WANTED US TO BE "EXPOSED!"



I TRIED TO LIVE UP TO THE VIRTUES OF...

# THE PERFECT FILIPINO KID!



ALWAYS HAVE MOM'S HOUSE SLIPPERS READY WHEN SHE GETS HOME FROM WORK.



MAGICALLY KNOW WHEN THE RICE COOKER IS EMPTY. AND MAKE FLAWLESS RICE EVERY TIME.



GET MIN READY FOR SCHOOL.



PUT OINTMENT ON TATA'S SCABS WITHOUT COMPLAINING.



WATER NANAY'S PLANTS.

WHEN I WAS ABOUT 11 MY DAD MOVED TO EGYPT.



HE SAID HE WAS GOING FOR A SHORT WHILE, TO TAKE CARE OF MY GRANDPA WHO WAS SICK.



HE WAS GONE A LOONGGGGG TIME...

EVENTUALLY I LEARNED HE WAS NOT MOVING BACK.



HE HAD FOUND A MANAGEMENT JOB AT ONE OF CAIRO'S FANCIEST HOTELS.



AND HE GOT REMARRIED, TOO.



THE TRUTH WAS, I WAS KIND OF RELIEVED. I WONDERED WHETHER HE WAS HAPPY WITH HIS LIFE IN CALIFORNIA. HE HAD A JOB IN A SMALL TOWN FAR AWAY AND HE LIVED BY HIMSELF.

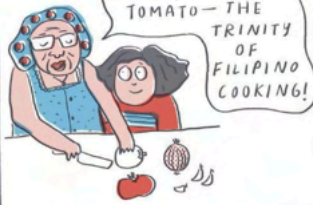


SOMETIMES I FELT LIKE I WAS HIS ONLY FRIEND. AND I DIDN'T EVEN GET TO SEE HIM THAT OFTEN. MAYBE HE WAS BETTER OFF IN EGYPT.



WITH MY DAD GONE, I SPENT MOST OF MY CHILDHOOD WITH THE FILIPINO SIDE OF MY FAMILY, WHO ALL LIVED WITHIN A 5-MILE RADIUS. WE DID EVERYTHING TOGETHER.

I COOKED WITH NANAY.



GARLIC, ONIONS, TOMATO—THE TRINITY OF FILIPINO COOKING!

I WENT SHOPPING WITH TITO MARO.



WE WANT THE BIG CRAB!

BIG CRAB!!!

I WENT TO THE LIBRARY WITH TATAY.

HAVE YOU READ JOHN UPDIKE YET?

I'M ELEVEN.



I WENT BIKE RIDING WITH TITO ARNEL... WELL, KIND OF.

PUT YOUR HANDS ON THE HANDLE-BARS!!



HELP!!!

I'M GONNA CRAASHHH!!!

MY TITOS AND TITAS, MY NANAY AND TATAY: THEY ALL HELPED RAISE ME.



WHO WANTS HOT AND SOUR SOUP?

I'M GONNA MIX THE CRISPY NOODLE!

MOM, HE'S EATING ALL THE SHRIMP ON THE FRIED RICE.

CAN WE HAVE ANOTHER ORDER OF PORK CHOPS?

MOM, MALAKA KEEPS EATING MY RICE.

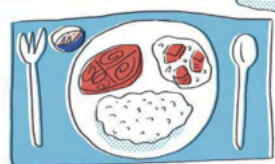
I'M TAKING THE PORK CHOPS TO GO.

I HAVEN'T EVEN GOTTEN A PIECE YET!

AS I GREW OLDER, I REALIZED THAT MY MOM'S SIDE OF MY FAMILY WAS DIFFERENT FROM MY DAD'S - IN ALMOST EVERY WAY.


**FOOD**

**Filipinos**



Eat with a spoon and fork. Rice is the main staple, eaten with fried or stewed fish/meat.

**Egyptians**



Eat with a fork, knife, or use bread as a utensil. If you're Muslim, absolutely NO PORK!

**CULTURE**

GREETING ELDERLY: ASK FOR A BLESSING, CALLED "MAND PO."



GREETING ELDERLY: LOTS OF KISSES AND HUGS!



**LANGUAGE**

**TAGALOG**

Egg - Itlog	Rice - Kanin
Girl - Babae	Soap - Sabon
Milk - Gatas	Tomato - Kamatis
House - Bahay	School - Eskwela
Mom - Nanay	

**ARABIC**

Egg - Beid	Rice - Roz
Girl - Bint	Soap - Sabon
Milk - Laban	Tomato - Tomatin
House - Beit	School - Madrasa
Mom - Mama	

I QUICKLY LEARNED THE CODE OF CONDUCT.

Social custom	FILIPINO	EGYPTIAN	AMERICAN
EATING WITH HANDS 	✓	✓	✓
KISSING AS A GREETING 	✓	✓	 PIZZA, DUH!
SITTING SEPARATELY FROM MEN ♀ ♂		✓	
SERVING ELDERLY (NOT CHILDREN) FIRST 	✓	✓	
THANKING GOD WHEN GIVING A COMPLIMENT 		✓	ERM...
COMMENTING ON PERSONAL APPEARANCE 	✓		
WEARING SLIPPERS INSIDE THE HOUSE 	✓		
BEING ON TIME 			✓



FORTUNATELY, IT WAS EASY TO BE FILIPINO-AMERICAN IN CERRITOS, THE TOWN IN SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA WHERE I GREW UP. MOST KIDS AT MY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL WERE JUST LIKE ME.



\* PORK BUNS. THEY'RE COOL NOW, BUT NOT SO MUCH BACK THEN.



\* "UGLY" IN TAGALOG

WELL, THEY WERE ALMOST LIKE ME. FILIPINO-EGYPTIANS WERE KINDA RARE.





TO ME, NOTHING MIXED ME UP MORE THAN RELIGION.



MY DAD WAS A DEVOUT MUSLIM. HE WENT TO THE MOSQUE ON FRIDAYS.



DIDN'T DRINK ALCOHOL, OR EAT PORK.

I WANT THE BACON DELUXE BURGER.

UH, NO.



MY MOM WAS A DEVOUT CATHOLIC. SHE LIT CANDLES AND BROUGHT FLOWERS TO THE VIRGIN MARY STATUE AT CHURCH.

ONE TIME, SHE SAID THE VIRGIN MARY APPEARED TO HER IN A DREAM. EVEN THOUGH IT WAS THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT, WE PRAYED THE ROSARY AT THE SPOT WHERE MOM SAW HER.



SHE WAS RIGHT HERE! SHE TOLD ME— SHE TOLD ME EVERYTHING WOULD BE ALL RIGHT!

MOM MADE SURE I HAD MY FIRST COMMUNION.

WHAT'S YOUR CHRISTIAN NAME?

MALAKA.

OKAY, DO YOU HAVE ANY OTHER NAMES?

MALAKA MAGED MOHAMMED GHARIB ABDELLATIF.

UHH, LET'S GO WITH... UM... FATIMA.

DAD TAUGHT ME TO MEMORIZE VERSES FROM THE KORAN.

BISMILLAHIR RAHMANHIR RAHEEM ALHAMDU LILLAH

Bismillahie Rahma...

OKAY, AT THE END, YOU SAY "RAHEEEEEEM" AND PAUSE.

YOU DON'T NEED TO SAY "AND PAUSE."

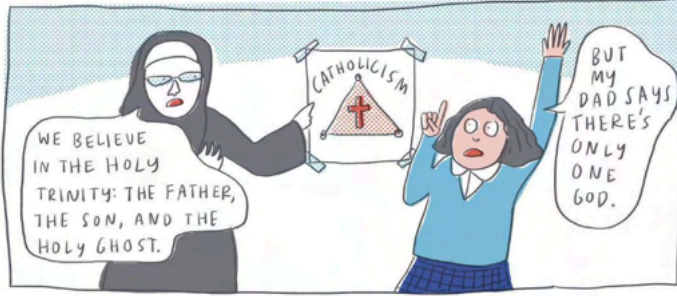
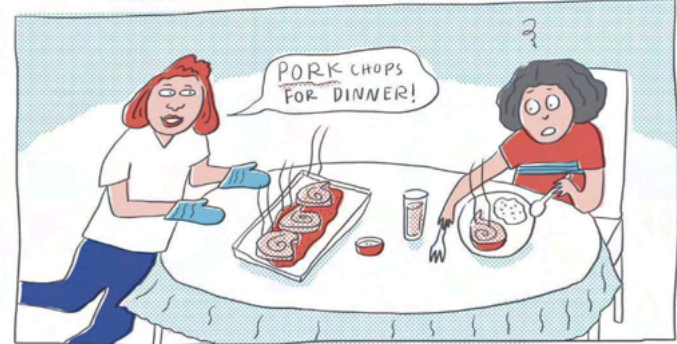
RAHEEEEEEM! AND PAUSE.

**FUN FACT:** DAD USED TO RECORD HIMSELF RECITING VERSES OF THE KORAN ON CASSETTE TAPES.



HE MADE THEM SO I COULD PRACTICE WHEN HE WASN'T AROUND. I JUST LISTENED TO THEM BECAUSE I MISSED THE SOUND OF HIS VOICE..

THAT MADE EVERYTHING SUPER COMPLICATED AND CONFUSING FOR ME.



OUT OF RESPECT FOR MY PARENTS, I TRIED TO FOLLOW THEIR FAITHS.

I PRAYED WITH MY DAD.



AND I PRAYED WITH MY MOM.



AND JUST LIKE RELIGION MEANT SOMETHING TO THEM, IT MEANT SOMETHING TO ME, TOO.

I LOVED THE FORGIVENESS, PEACE, AND MERCY OF THE VIRGIN MARY. I FELT LIKE I COULD TELL HER ALL MY SECRETS.



I LOVED THE GREATNESS AND ABSOLUTENESS OF ALLAH. KNOWING THERE WAS NO GOD BUT HIM WAS COMFORTING.



I LOVED THAT MOHAMMED WAS JUST A MESSENGER OF GOD. TO ME HE WAS A SYMBOL OF HUMILITY AND SELFLESSNESS.



I LOVED THE POMP AND CIRCUMSTANCE OF CATHOLICISM. I FELT LIKE I WAS A PART OF SOMETHING.

I WISHED THAT I COULD HAVE SMUSHED THEM ALL TOGETHER INTO ONE FAITH. SO ... FOR MOST OF MY CHILDHOOD, I DID.

DEAR GOD, AND THE VIRGIN MARY, BUT SORRY, NOT YOU, JESUS: PLEASE LET ME GET A GOOD GRADE ON THE QUIZ TOMORROW. AND DON'T LET ME GET IN TROUBLE IN MATH CLASS. PLEASE WATCH OVER MOM AND DAD, AND MIN MIN AND TITO MARO, AND NANAY AND TATA Y...



\*HOW MUSLIMS SAY "AMEN"

### Chapter 3

MY PARENTS HAD A DEAL.  
SCHOOL WITH MY MOM IN THE STATES,  
SUMMERS WITH MY DAD IN EGYPT.



SUMMER IN EGYPT WAS SO DIFFERENT FROM THE LIFE I  
KNEW IN CALIFORNIA. TIME MOVED SO MUCH SLOWER!

THERE WAS TIME TO EAT LONG, LEISURELY BREAKFASTS ON  
THE BALCONY,



TIME FOR ADVENTURE WALKS,





# FUN PAGE

## EVIL SAND TRAP

1. DIG A HOLE LARGE ENOUGH FOR A FOOT.

KIDS! DON'T TRY THIS AT HOME!

2. COVER HOLE WITH A SINGLE SHEET OF NEWSPAPER.

3. SPRINKLE NEWSPAPER LIGHTLY WITH SAND TO CAMOUFLAGE.

4. WAIT FOR SOMEONE TO STEP IN YOUR TRAP!

## FRUIT CARD GAME

1. DEAL ALL CARDS EVENLY.

2. EACH PLAYER PICKS THE NAME OF A FRUIT FOR THEMSELVES.

3. TAKE TURNS FLIPPING OVER YOUR CARDS ONE AT A TIME. IF YOU SEE A PLAYER FLIP OVER A CARD THAT MATCHES YOURS, YELL OUT THE NAME OF THEIR FRUIT. IF YOU SAY THEIR FRUIT FIRST, THEY TAKE ALL YOUR FLIPPED CARDS. IF THEY SAY YOUR FRUIT FIRST, YOU TAKE THEIR FLIPPED CARD PILE.

4. THE OBJECT OF THE GAME IS TO GET RID OF ALL YOUR CARDS FIRST.

5. KEEP PLAYING UNTIL THERE IS ONE PLAYER LEFT. GOOD LUCK!

DAD WAS VERY PROUD THAT HE HAD AN AMERICAN DAUGHTER.

SHE'S HALF AMERICAN!!!

... AND FILIPINO



HE LOVED DRESSING US UP IN CLOTHES WITH AMERICAN FLAGS ON IT.



BUT I DIDN'T REALLY FEEL LIKE A "REAL AMERICAN."

I HAD A ROUND, BROWN FACE

I WAS IN ? EGYPT...?

I HAD A WEIRD NAME

I LOVED SPAM

I SPOKE ENGLISH WITH A TAGALOG ACCENT



BASICALLY, I FELT LIKE A GIANT, SPAM-EATING FOB\*!

LOVE YOU, SPAMMY!



\* SOMEONE WHO IS "FRESH OFF THE BOAT"

MEANWHILE, MY DAD WAS ALWAYS TRYING TO TEACH ME LIFE LESSONS. WE HAD LIMITED TIME TOGETHER SO I GUESS HE JUST WANTED TO CRAM EVERYTHING IN.



WALK STRAIGHT WITH YOUR HANDS BEHIND YOUR BACK.

STAND WITH YOUR FEET TOGETHER!

LIKE THIS?

YEAH, BUT SUCK YOUR STOMACH IN, TOO.

GRR!

OKAY, THAT'S JUST MEAN!

DO NOT LEAVE THIS TABLE UNTIL YOU CAN EAT WITH A FORK AND KNIFE!

HOW TO LIVE

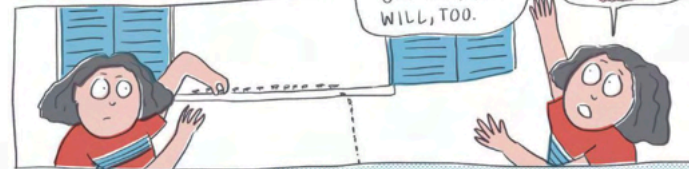
ACCORDING TO DAD

BUT WITH MOM I EAT WITH A SPOON AND FORK.



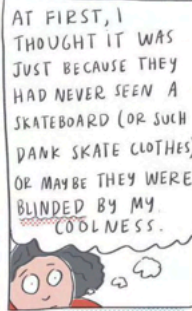
SEE, MALAKA, EVEN AN ANT KNOWS ITS PURPOSE IN THE WORLD. ONE DAY, YOU WILL, TOO.

BUT, DAD, I'M NOT AN ANT!





SPENDING TIME IN EGYPT EXPOSED ME TO REALITIES I NEVER WOULD HAVE EXPERIENCED IN CALIFORNIA.



I NEVER FORGOT THAT; I NEVER FORGOT HER. I REMEMBER ASKING HER IF SHE WANTED TO DRAW WITH ME, BUT SHE COULDN'T EVEN WRITE HER NAME, IT WAS SO UNFAIR.



BUT IT QUICKLY BECAME CLEAR SOMETHING WASN'T RIGHT. THE TOWN WAS DESERTED. AND IN THE DISTANCE, THERE WAS THIS SOUND OF SOMETHING BIG AND LOUD AND HEAVY!









THEY KNEW WHAT TO WEAR TO THE WEDDING.

ARE YOU GONNA WEAR THAT?

NO... YES. WHY?



AND MOST OF ALL, THEY KNEW HOW TO SPEAK ARABIC BEAUTIFULLY.

لا م عليك الف مبروك!

HI, TANT, REMEMBER ME?

AFTER 10 YEARS OF COMING TO EGYPT, YOU STILL DON'T SPEAK ARABIC?!

شكرا!



NO, TANT.

I DON'T.

IT BECAME PRETTY OBVIOUS TO ME THAT ALL THE SUMMERS IN THE WORLD IN EGYPT COULD NEVER REPLACE GROWING UP WITH MY DAD.



MAYBE IF HE LIVED IN CALIFORNIA I WOULD HAVE KNOWN TO BRING A BALL GOWN TO AN ARAB WEDDING INSTEAD OF A STUPID FOREVER 21 SUNDRESS!



IN MOMENTS LIKE THOSE, I TRIED TO REMEMBER WHY I CAME TO EGYPT IN THE FIRST PLACE:

LOLOLOLOLO

LOLOLO LOO!

TO SPEND TIME WITH MY DAD.



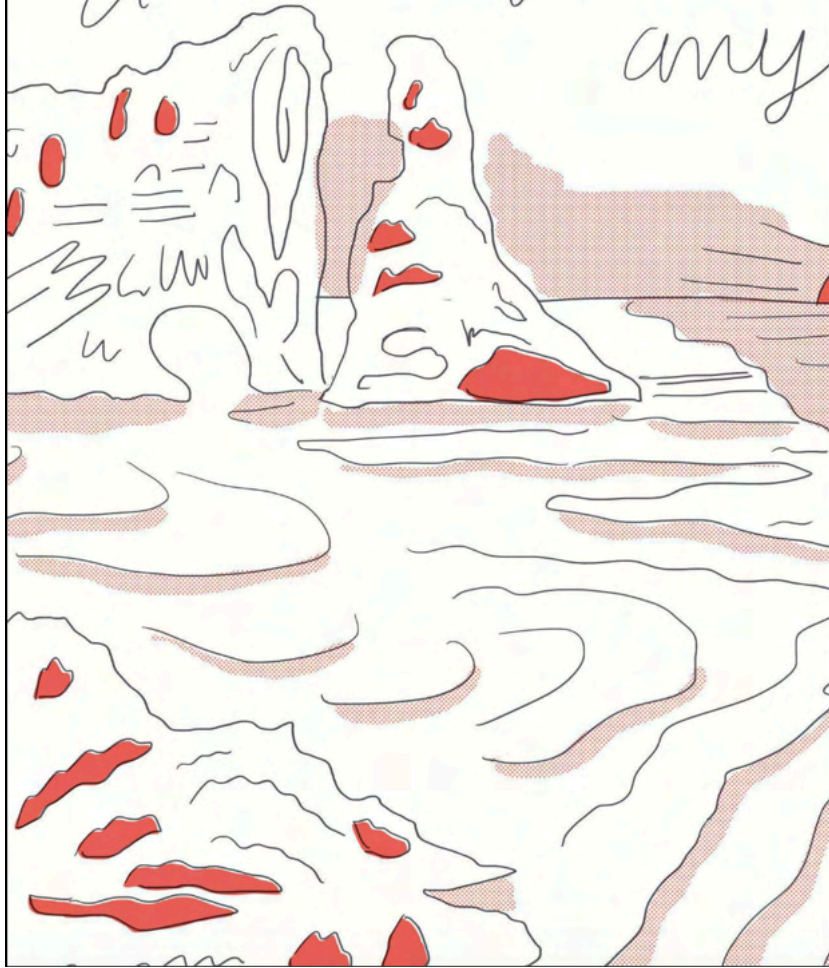
WHEN I THINK BACK ON THOSE SUMMERS, ONE MEMORY FROM WHEN I WAS 12 COMES TO MIND.



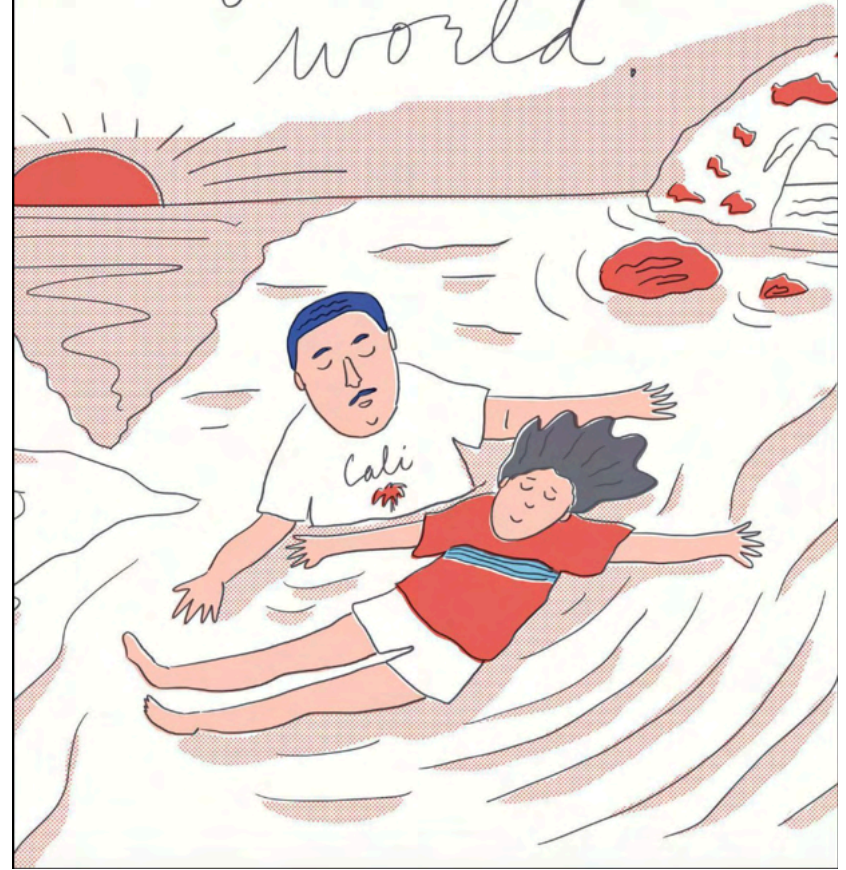
WE WERE IN A TOWN ON THE MEDITERRANEAN CALLED MARSA MATROUH. DAD AND I SPENT THE WHOLE DAY ON THE BEACH. AS THE SUN WAS SETTING, HE SAID, "LET'S GO BACK FOR ONE LAST DIP."

HE FLOATED ME ON THE WATER AND TOLD ME:

I love you more  
any



more than  
thing in the  
world.



## Chapter 4

IN MY HIGH SCHOOL,  
THE CLASS PRESIDENT WAS KOREAN  
AND THE PROM QUEEN, FILIPINO.



AT A SCHOOL AS DIVERSE AS CERRITOS HIGH, THE MOST  
IMPORTANT QUESTION YOU COULD ASK WAS

**WHAT ARE YOU?**\*



Vanda  
INDIAN-AMERICAN



Tricia  
TAIWANESE-  
AMERICAN



Yalda  
IRANIAN-AMERICAN



Kyle  
JAPANESE-  
AMERICAN



Henna  
PAKISTANI-  
AMERICAN



Dinelle  
FILIPINO-GERMAN-  
AMERICAN



Michael  
EGYPTIAN-  
AMERICAN



Eric  
MEXICAN-  
AMERICAN



John  
KOREAN-AMERICAN



Albert  
TAIWANESE-  
AMERICAN



Emil  
PAKISTANI-AMERICAN



Raaida  
PALESTINIAN-  
AMERICAN

\* LATER I'D COME TO LEARN THE FLAWS OF THIS QUESTION...  
BUT THAT'S ANOTHER CHAPTER, YO!

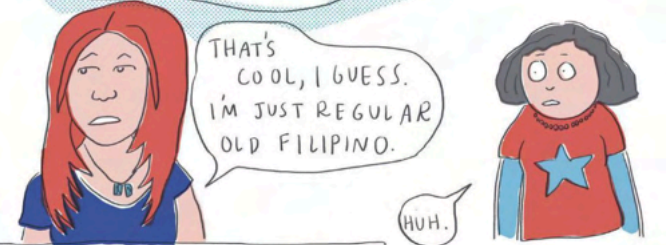
IN THE MEANTIME, IT WAS ONE OF THE QUICKEST WAYS TO UNDERSTAND EACH OTHER'S CULTURES



WHEN PEOPLE ASKED ME THIS QUESTION, I FOUND IT HARD TO ANSWER.

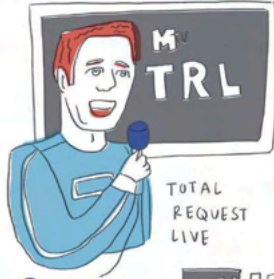


WELL... I'M EGYPTIAN-FILIPINO. I GREW UP WITH MY FILIPINO FAMILY HERE IN CERRITOS. I EAT RICE EVERY DAY. AND I WENT TO CATHOLIC SCHOOL, BUT MY DAD IS MUSLIM AND LIVES IN EGYPT. I SPEND MY SUMMERS WITH HIM! I CAN UNDERSTAND TAGALOG AND ARABIC. ESAYAK\*? KAMUSTA KA\*? SO I GUESS BOTH? WELL, I KIND OF FEEL MORE FILIPINO BECAUSE THAT'S WHO I SPENT MORE TIME WITH.



\*"HOW ARE YOU?" IN ARABIC AND TAGALOG.

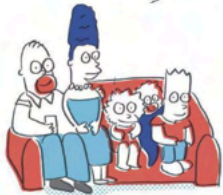
LIKE ALL KIDS IN AMERICA, WE WERE VERY HEAVILY INFLUENCED BY TV, MOVIES, AND POP CULTURE.



TOTAL REQUEST LIVE



HANGING OUT HERE FOR HOURS



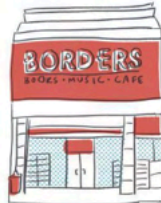
THE SIMPSONS



BUFFY, DAWSON, AND ALL MY FRIENDS ON THE WB



BURNED CD MIXES



I WAS ESPECIALLY INTO THE TV SHOW FELICITY. I WANTED WHAT SHE HAD!

...A CIRCLE OF SMART GAL PALS WHO WERE INTO SONGWRITING, GETTING GOOD GRADES, AND WITCHCRAFT



DON'T TOUCH MY BOX!

A LOVE TRIANGLE BETWEEN GUYS LIKE BEN AND NOEL



LET'S BE SERIOUS, BEN.

WE ALL KNOW I'M THE CUTER ONE!

SOPHISTICATION IN THE FORM OF ANTHROPOLOGIE SWEATERS AND DEAN & DELUCA COFFEE

WHAT I REALLY WANTED, THOUGH, WAS TO MEET REAL LIFE WHITE PEOPLE. AND CERRITOS HAD HARDLY ANY!



IN FRESHMAN YEAR, I HAD A MEGA-CRUSH ON A BOY NAMED JORGE.



HE WASN'T WHITE, BUT HE WAS CLOSE ENOUGH.

☆ *Jorge* ☆

- HE WAS MEXICAN-PORTUGUESE-AMERICAN
- HE HAD FAIR SKIN
- HE HAD 8-INCH FROSTED TIPS
- HE HAD A SKATER-PUNK LOOK (HE ♥ THE GERMS)

I WANTED SO BAD FOR HIM TO LIKE ME BACK.

Dear Diary, 3/4/01  
Today Jorge kicked the hockey sack towards me!

Dear Diary, 3/5/01  
Can you keep a secret? I want to ask Jorge to

CADIE HAWKINS!

Dear Diary, Jorge shared his FRITOS with me today. SQUEEEEE!

BUT OF COURSE HE PAID NO ATTENTION TO ME.



BEING ONE OF THE "WHITEST" BOYS IN SCHOOL, HE REALLY HAD HIS PICK OF THE LITTER.



I HAD NO FREAKING CLUE WHERE MY OBSESSION CAME FROM. I JUST KNEW, AS A 16-YEAR-OLD, THAT WHITE > WHATEVER THE HELL I WAS.

THEY'RE REAL AMERICANS.



THEY DO NORMAL STUFF LIKE EAT SANDWICHES FOR LUNCH.



THEY'RE ON TV AND IN THE MOVIES.



THEY'RE CUTE. (WE'VE ESTABLISHED THIS.)

WHY White People ARE SO COOL (ACCORDING TO HIGH SCHOOL ME.)



CLOTHES AND MAKEUP JUST LOOK BETTER ON THEM!



THEY DON'T SMELL LIKE FRIED FISH AND FRIED GARLIC IN THE MORNING.



THEY'RE RICHER THAN EVERYONE ELSE!



THEY GET TO HAVE COOL JOBS, LIKE MAGAZINE EDITORS.



THEY HAVE CLEAN, PERFECT, HUGE HOUSES.

OKAY, IF I'M BEING HONEST, MAYBE I \*DID\* HAVE SOME THEORIES AS TO WHY I THOUGHT THIS WAY.

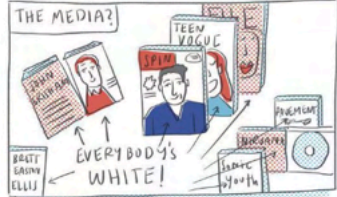
# MAYBE IT WAS BECAUSE...

EVERYONE IN MY TOWN WAS BROWN AND I COULDN'T HELP BUT FEEL THAT BEING WHITE MADE YOU EXTRA SPECIAL?



PEOPLE SAID I LIKED "WHITE PEOPLE" STUFF?

- Weezer
- Kurt Vonnegut
- Daria
- Jonathan Franzen
- Donnie Darko



I WAS TAUGHT FROM AN EARLY AGE THAT EVERYTHING WHITE PEOPLE DID WAS BETTER?

I SAW A WHITE WOMAN WEAR THIS AT THE AIRPORT SO I BOUGHT ONE. SUCH FINE TASTE! HOW DO I LOOK?



MA, YOU LOOK LIKE A MILLION BUCKS!



DANG, IT WAS PROBABLY A COMBO OF ALL THESE THINGS!

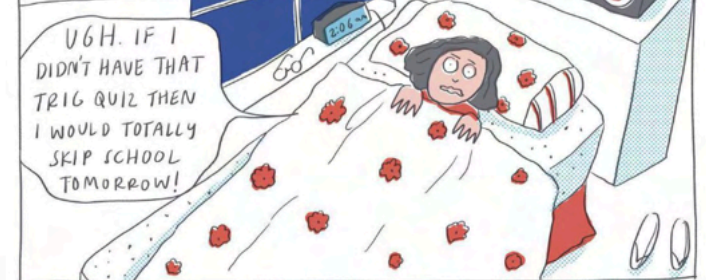
BY THE END OF SOPHOMORE YEAR, I HAD HEARD IT ENOUGH TO KNOW IT ABOUT MYSELF:



AT OUR SCHOOL, THE TERM "WHITEWASHED" HAD A VERY SPECIFIC MEANING. IT MEANT YOU WERE TRYING TO ACT WHITE AS A WAY TO BE COOL.



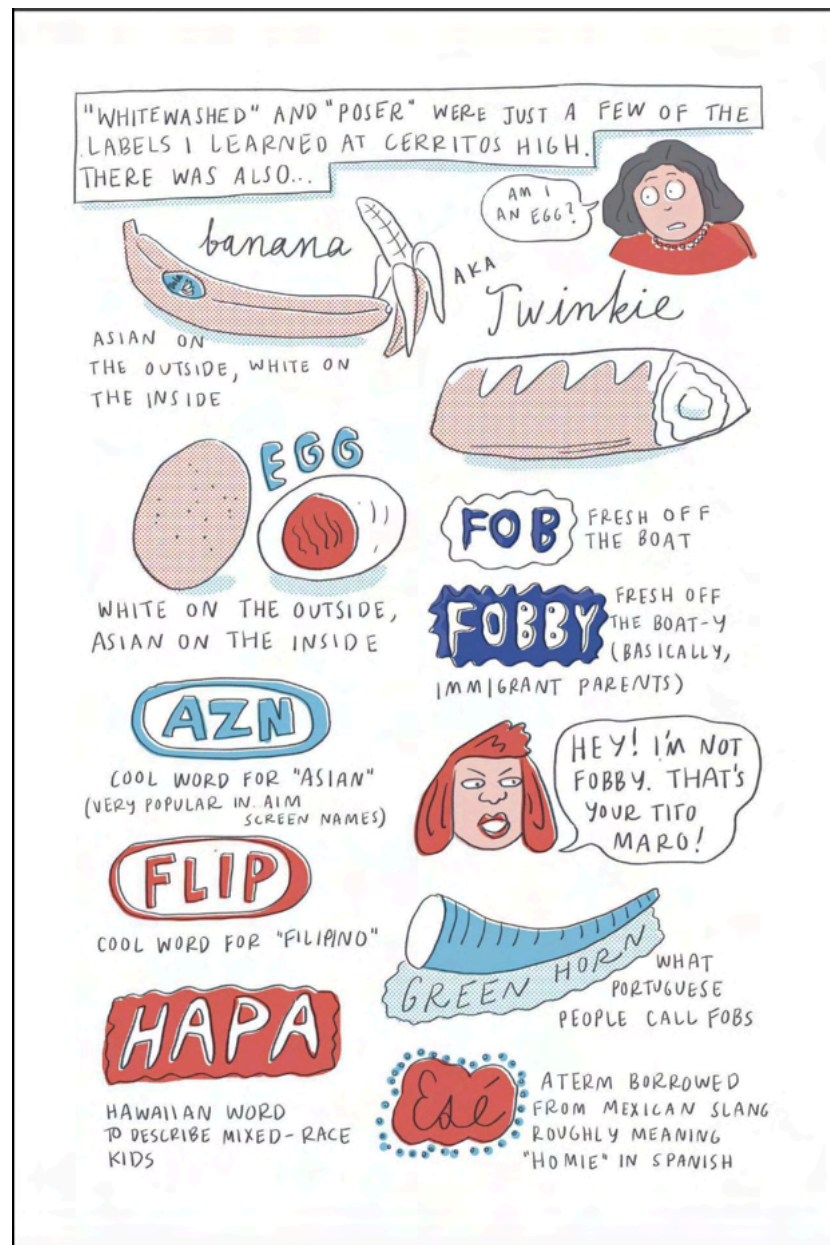
IN 2002, BEING CALLED A POSER WAS EVEN WORSE THAN BEING CALLED WHITEWASHED IT MEANT YOU WERE A FAKE—A PHONY!







I WASN'T TRYING TO BE WHITE. I MEAN, JUST LOOK AT ME!

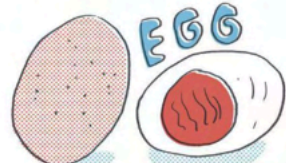
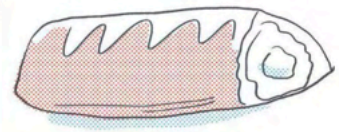


"WHITWASHED" AND "POSER" WERE JUST A FEW OF THE LABELS I LEARNED AT CERRITOS HIGH. THERE WAS ALSO...



AKA Twinkie

ASIAN ON THE OUTSIDE, WHITE ON THE INSIDE



WHITE ON THE OUTSIDE, ASIAN ON THE INSIDE

**FOB** FRESH OFF THE BOAT

**FOBBY** FRESH OFF THE BOAT-Y (BASICALLY, IMMIGRANT PARENTS)

**AZN**  
COOL WORD FOR "ASIAN" (VERY POPULAR IN AIM SCREEN NAMES)



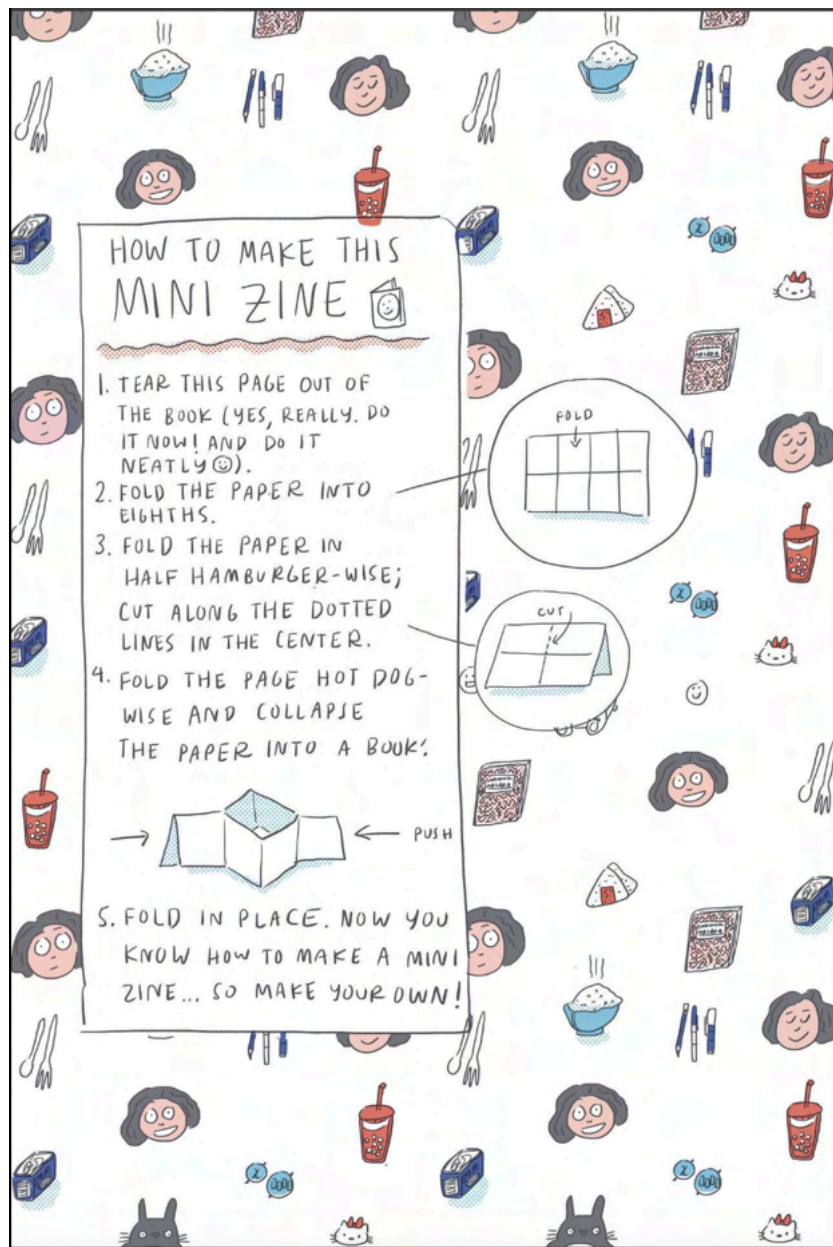
**FLIP**  
COOL WORD FOR "FILIPINO"

**GREEN HORN**  
WHAT PORTUGUESE PEOPLE CALL FOBS

**HAPA**  
HAWAIIAN WORD TO DESCRIBE MIXED-RACE KIDS

**Ese**  
A TERM BORROWED FROM MEXICAN SLANG ROUGHLY MEANING "HOMIE" IN SPANISH





SOMETIMES I WONDERED, IF I LOOKED A LITTLE MORE FILIPINO, WOULD IT HAVE BEEN EASIER TO HANG OUT WITH THE FILIPINOS?

IF THEY KNEW I WAS FILIPINO, MAYBE THEY'D ASK ME TO JOIN THEIR GROUP!



WHEN MY SISTER MIN MIN, WHO IS FULL FILIPINO, CAME TO CERRITOS SIX YEARS LATER, HER SOCIAL LIFE WAS SORTED.

HEY! DO YOU WANNA HANG OUT WITH US?

SURE!



SHE ATE LUNCH WITH ALL THE FILIPINO HIP-HOP KIDS, JOINED THE FILIPINO CLUB, AND DATED FILIPINO GUYS.



IN CONTRAST, I WAS ETHNICALLY AMBIGUOUS. AND WHITEWASHED, TO BOOT.

I'M A LOSER, BABY, SO WHY DON'T YOU FILL ME.

DAMN! IT'S TOO REAL!



SO I HUNG OUT WITH ANYONE WHO WOULD HAVE ME...



... A MOTLEY CREW OF PUNK KIDS, "THE GROUP," AS WE CALLED OURSELVES, CAME FROM ALL DIFFERENT BACKGROUNDS— BUT WE HAD LOTS IN COMMON.



NATE KADI JOSH MALAKA JAMES JORGE ERIC

STUFF WE LOVED!

WE MADE FUN OF POSERS.

YO, HAVE YOU HEARD OF THE BAND... MUSKRAT LEMON JUICE?

YEAH, DUH.

YOU'RE A LOSER, I JUST MADE THAT BAND UP.



WE PLAYED MUSIC.



WE ALL LOVED PUNK.



WE MADE ZINES + COMIX



WE WORE PINS AND PATCHES.



WE DABBLED IN GRAFFITI.



WE SKATE-BOARDED.

## Chapter 5

I HAD TO GO TO COLLEGE IN NEW YORK.



IN THE END, I GOT THE LABEL I'D BEEN SEARCHING FOR.

CHS YEARBOOK  
2004



IT GAVE ME SO MUCH VALIDATION. AT SCHOOL I ALWAYS FELT LIKE AN OUTSIDER, A MISFIT, A WEIRDO. BUT MAYBE THAT WAS TOTALLY OKAY. MAYBE THAT'S WHAT MADE ME COOL.

I APPLIED TO NEW YORK UNIVERSITY, WHERE I THOUGHT FELICITY WENT.



Dear NYU, I must attend this college... you see, there's this

I DIDN'T GET IN.



Dear Malaka, NO. love, NYU

TURNS OUT IT DIDN'T EVEN MATTER BECAUSE FELICITY WENT TO THE FICTIONAL UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK, AND MOST OF THE SHOW WAS SHOT IN LOS ANGELES. STILL!



I DIDN'T GET INTO COLUMBIA, EITHER.



I DID, HOWEVER, GET INTO SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY, WHICH WAS TECHNICALLY IN NEW YORK. JUST FIVE HOURS FROM THE CITY BY CAR!



WE COULDN'T AFFORD IT, BUT I BEGGED MY MOM TO LET ME GO THERE.



ANYONE WHO'S ANYONE GOES TO NEW YORK, MOM. I NEED TO BE THERE!

OKAY. WE WILL FIND A WAY.

SHE REFINANCED THE HOUSE...



HI, I WOULD LIKE TO TAKE MONEY OUT OF MY MORTGAGE.

... AND ASKED MY TITOS, TITAS, NANAY, AND TATAY TO PITCH IN WITH A LITTLE MONEY.





ONE BIG REASON THEY AGREED TO SEND ME TO SYRACUSE (WHICH TITO MARO INSISTED WAS PART OF THE IVY LEAGUE, HA-HA) WAS BECAUSE OF THE "EXPOSURE."

WE'RE SENDING YOU TO A WHITE SCHOOL SO YOU CAN LEARN FROM THEM.

EAT LIKE THEM. DRESS LIKE THEM. ACT LIKE THEM.

BECAUSE WHEN YOU GET INTO THE REAL WORLD, THAT'S HOW YOU HAVE TO BE.



TITO MARO



I WAS READY! BRING IT ON!

HO-WAY OH HUH OH  
HAY OH UHH HO-A- OH-UH  
OH-A-OH UH OH WAY OH  
OH HEYYYY HHUHHHHH  
HUH EEEE HO-WAY-YO  
YO YUHH (FELICITY THEME SONG)



MOMMY, NANAY, TITA PINKY, AND MIN MIN PACKED ME A BALIKBAYAN BOX\* OF STUFF I MIGHT NEED IN COLLEGE:



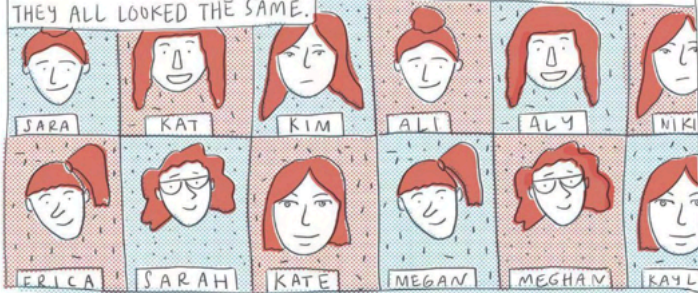
- SPAM, DUH!
- MINI RICE COOKER
- LITTLE VIRGIN MARY STATUE
- LITTLE PACKETS OF INSTANT MICROWAVEABLE RICE
- CANNED CHEESE
- ORIGINAL Likas
- PAPAYA SOAP FOR MY FACE
- HOTEL ROOM SLIPPERS
- SARDINES PACKED IN TOMATO SAUCE? I'M NEVER GONNA EAT THIS!

\*BOXES OF GIFTS AND FOOD THAT FILIPINOS SEND TO THEIR LOVED ONES





IN THE DORMS, I COULDN'T TELL THE GIRLS APART. I THOUGHT THEY ALL LOOKED THE SAME.



CRAPPPP SARAH OR MEGHAN?

HEY, THERE; UHH... UMM... FELLOW... ORANGEWOMAN

UHH, HELLO, FELLOW... CLASSMATE.

UH, HI KATE— DO YOU HAVE ANY EXTRA THUMB TACKS?

I'M KIM. KATE'S SHORTER THAN ME.

OH. SORRY.

I QUICKLY REALIZED I DIDN'T KNOW CRAP ABOUT WHITE PEOPLE.



... JUST STUFF I SAW ON TV



... READ IN MAGAZINES

... AND STUFF MY PARENTS AND FAMILY TOLD ME.

THEY DON'T TAKE THEIR SHOES OFF IN THE HOUSE!

THEY MAKE YOU PAY FOR YOUR OWN FOOD AT DINNER.

THEY DON'T EAT RICE.

ISN'T THAT CRAZY!?

NONE OF IT SEEMED REALLY USEFUL.

EVERYONE SEEMED TO KNOW ALL THE SONGS AT THE BAR.



I HAD TO GOOGLE THE LYRICS.

REACHING OUT, TOUCHING YOU— I MEAN, ME— TOUCHING YOU...



SWEET CAROLINE, BUM BUM BUM...

... GOOD TIMES NEVER SEEMED SO GOOD D!

I ALSO SEEMED TO SAY STUFF THAT MADE THEM MAD.



ANYWAY, I WAS DETERMINED TO FOLLOW TITO MARO'S ADVICE ABOUT TRYING TO LEARN FROM WHITE PEOPLE.



I STARTED GOING TO THE GYM. I WAS NEVER ATHLETIC BUT IT SEEMED LIKE ALL THE GIRLS LIKED USING THE ELLIPTICAL AND DOING AB EXERCISES.



I TRIED TO BE MORE OUTGOING AND CONFIDENT.

HI!  
HOW ARE YOU?



I AM MALAKA!  
LIKE MONICA,  
WITH AN "L"!



HI... I'M COURTNEY  
... WITH A "C."

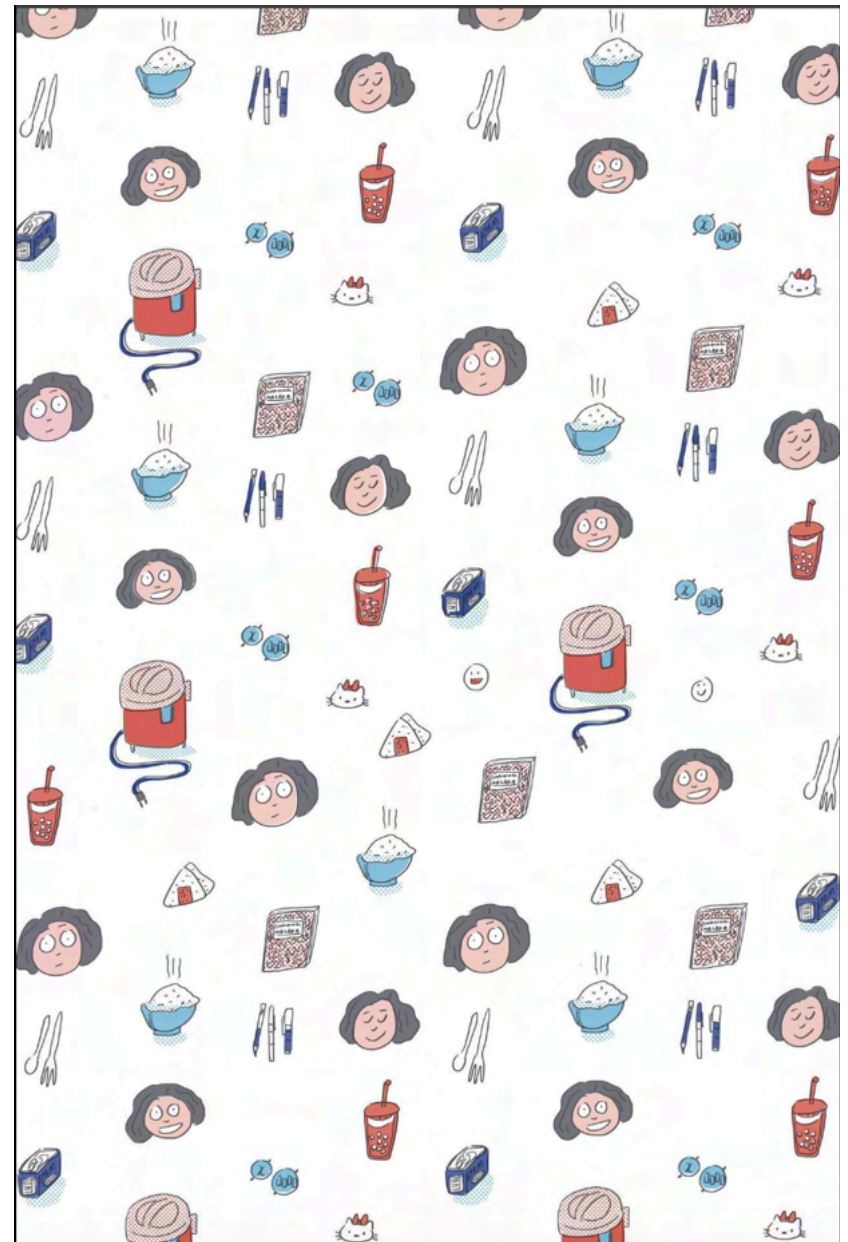
AND I KISSED A LOOOOTTTTT OF WHITE GUYS. 💋

WOULD YOU LIKE TO... "WATCH A MOVIE" TONIGHT?



WHO'S UP FOR "SPIN THE BOTTLE"?

HEYYY. I'VE BEEN SEXILED BY MY ROOMMATE. CAN I CRASH... IN YOUR BED... TONIGHT?



AND I TRIED TO LOOK MORE LIKE THEM...

### MALAKA

HANGIN' IN THE QUAD LOOK

GAME DAY LOOK

FIRST-GEN IPOD LOADED WITH V2 AND CLASSIC ROCK

ID CARD



UBIQUITOUS TOTE BAG THAT EVERY GIRL USED TO CARRY BOOKS



PIZZA



LOGO SHIRT

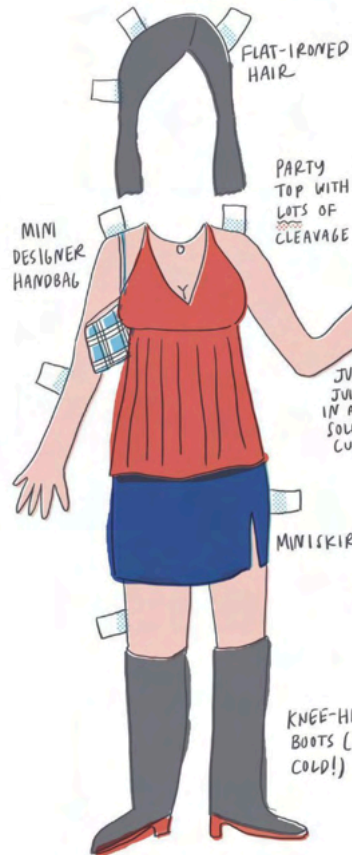


LOGO HAT

**INSTRUCTIONS:** Cut out this paper doll of Malaka. Then cut out the clothes and accessories. Dress her up to dramatically transform and alter her personality!

### FRAT PARTY OUTFIT

### BUSINESS SCHOOL OUTFIT



FLAT-IRONED HAIR

MIM DESIGNER HANDBAG

PARTY TOP WITH LOTS OF CLEAVAGE

JUNGLE JUICE IN A SOLO CUP

MINISKIRT

KNEE-HIGH BOOTS (IT WAS COLD!)

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL (FREE IN BIZ SCHOOL LOUNGE)



HEADBAND AND VERY LARGE SUNGLASSES

STARBUCKS SKINNY CHAI LATTE

PASTEL-COLORED OXFORD, POPPED COLLAR OPTIONAL

BLACK LEGGINGS

THICK BOOT SOCKS

CONDOMS (JUST IN CASE!)

GUM (ALWAYS)

UGGS





THE MOST SURPRISING THING ABOUT COLLEGE WAS THAT NO ONE ASKED ME THE QUESTION THAT WAS SO IMPORTANT IN HIGH SCHOOL.

**WHAT ARE YOU?**

I DIDN'T ANTICIPATE HOW MUCH I'D MISS BEING ASKED. HOW ELSE WOULD I GET THE CHANCE TO TELL THEM WHO I WAS? WHERE I CAME FROM?

Hi! I'm Michelle. I'm from New Jersey. What's your major?  
I'm Malaka! I'm from Cali! Umm, oh! Gee. Marketing and journalism. Anything else to ask?

SOMETIMES I WOULD INITIATE THE QUESTION.

GUESS WHAT I AM!

BUT THEY WERE ALWAYS SO OFF.

RUSSIAN?  
PORTUGUESE?  
ITALIAN?  
LATINA?  
I'M EGYPTIAN.  
AND FILIPINO.  
ISN'T THAT CRAZY?

THEY'D PLAY ALONG FOR A BIT.

THE RESPONSE WAS ALWAYS SO LUKEWARM.

That's crazy.  
Cool.  
Huh.  
How interesting.  
Wow.

THE WORST WAS WHEN PEOPLE RESPONDED:

**I DON'T SEE COLOR.**  
IT MADE ME MAD!

DIDN'T THEY WANNA KNOW ABOUT...

THE TINIKLING?!  
(A PHILIPPINE DANCE)

EGYPTIAN FALAFEL?!

PANCIT,  
ONE OF THE MOST POPULAR FILIPINO FOODS ?!

EGYPT  
ONE OF THE SEVEN WONDERS OF THE WORLD?!

THE GALABEYA?!

WHAT YOUR NAME LOOKS LIKE IN ARABIC?!

**MY CULTURE?!?**





## Chapter 6

TITO MARO WAS RIGHT  
ABOUT THE REAL WORLD...



AFTER COLLEGE, I MOVED TO WASHINGTON, D.C. IT WASN'T NEW YORK, BUT IT WAS 2008, THE HEIGHT OF THE GLOBAL RECESSION, AND I SOMEHOW NABBED THE HIGHLY ELUSIVE

*Entry-Level Job!!!*

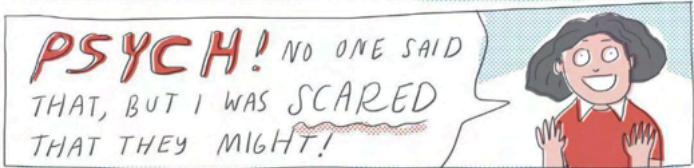


TO FIT IN, I TRIED TO GO WITH THE FLOW. THE STAKES FELT SO HIGH. I NEEDED TO STAY EMPLOYED!





AND FOR SOME REASON, I WAS ANXIOUS THAT NOT BEING WHITE WOULD HURT MY CHANCES OF GETTING AHEAD.



I ALSO FELT LIKE I WAS BEING SINGLED OUT FOR BEING A PERSON OF COLOR AT THE OFFICE.



THE CEO WANTED TO MEET WITH A DIVERSE GROUP OF EMPLOYEES.

HOW CONVENIENT—WE'RE ALL "DIVERSE."

WE'RE GONNA PUT YOU WITH THE HAWAIIAN GROUP.

BUT I'M NOT HAWAIIAN!  
YOUR NAME KINDA SOUNDS HAWAIIAN.



COME TO THINK OF IT, I DIDN'T JUST ENCOUNTER THIS TYPE OF BEHAVIOR AT THE OFFICE. IT WAS EVERYWHERE!



OOH, THEY HAVE ALL OF WEEZER'S BLUE ALBUM!



BUDDY HOLLY? DUDE. YOU ARE SO WHITE!



NOPE. I'M STILL FILIPINO-EGYPTIAN.

OO-EE-OOH I LOOK JUST LIKE BUDDY HOLLY

LATER, I'D COME TO LEARN THAT THESE SIDE COMMENTS HAD A SPECIAL NAME: MICROAGGRESSIONS.

IF I ARRANGED THEM IN A GAME OF BINGO, I'D WIN, WIN, WIN!

# MICROAGGRESSIONS BINGO

"YOU TALK FUNNY." 	"CAN YOU WALK LIKE AN EGYPTIAN?" 	"WHERE'S THAT ACCENT FROM?"	"CAN I JUST CALL YOU MOLLY?" 	"YOU DON'T LOOK ASIAN." 
"DO YOU NEED RICE WITH THAT?" 	"DO YALL EAT DOG?" 	"DO YOU SPEAK EGYPTIAN?" 	"WHERE'S YOUR HIJAB?" 	"WERE YOU BORN HERE?"
"¿HABLAS ESPAÑOL!"	"YOU DON'T LOOK ARAB." 	"DO YOU SPEAK FILIPINO?" 	"WHY ARE MUSLIMS TERRORISTS?"	
"HOW HAVE YOU NOT HEARD OF [POP CULTURE REFERENCE]?" 	"YOU ARE SO AMERICANIZED!" 	"YOU SEEM REALLY WHITE." 	"YOUR ENGLISH IS GREAT!" 	"I DON'T SEE COLOR." 
"YOU ARE SO EXOTIC." 	"YOU DON'T ACT LIKE THEM." 	"YOU HAVE BAD MANNERS." 	"I DIDN'T EVEN KNOW YOU WERE ETHNIC!" 	"IF YOU'RE SO BROWN THEN WHY DON'T YOU ACT THAT WAY?" 



Turns out David was Korean. But no, David didn't speak Korean. He was not from California, but Delaware, where he grew up with...

**WHITE PEOPLE!**

So does that mean you hung out with...

...white people? Yes, I didn't really grow up around Korean culture.

WHAT?!!

I know this is crazy, but until then, I thought brown people in America grew up like me - in little immigrant communities.



IN WASHINGTON, DC, I GOT TO MEET PEOPLE OF COLOR FROM DIFFERENT PARTS OF THE COUNTRY. IT HELPED ME SEE THE PROBLEM WITH THE QUESTION:

**WHAT ARE YOU?**

I USED TO LOVE THIS QUESTION BECAUSE IT GAVE ME THE OPPORTUNITY TO TALK ABOUT MY ETHNICITY.

BUT NOT EVERYONE FELT THAT WAY.

WHAT ARE YOU?

A HUMAN.

YEAH, BUT WHERE ARE YOU FROM?

OKAY, BUT YOUR FAMILY—

INDIA.

CHICAGO.

NOTHING... IT'S COOL THAT YOU'RE INDIAN?

...I GUESS.

OH! SO YOU'RE INDIAN!

YEAH... SO WHAT?

NOTHING... IT'S COOL THAT YOU'RE INDIAN?

...I GUESS.

# THE PROBLEM OF "WHAT ARE YOU?"

DERP!



JAMES

IT IMPLIES OTHERNESS... THAT SOMEHOW I'M NOT AMERICAN.

LET'S ASK SOME REAL PEOPLE WHAT THEY THINK!



STEPHANIE

IF SOMEONE ASKS WITHIN MOMENTS OF MEETING YOU, IT FEELS REDUCTIVE.



JUDY

I DON'T MIND... UNLESS IT'S A MAN TRYING TO HIT ON ME.



BRENDA

TO ME, IT'S THE TONE OF THE QUESTION. SOME ARE CURIOUS. OTHERS COME ACROSS AS CRASS OR IRRITATED.



EMILY

WHEN IT'S ANOTHER "OTHER," I LOVE IT. BUT WHEN IT'S A WHITE DUDE AT A BAR, IT'S GROSS.



MARISSA

IT ALL DEPENDS ON TIMING, TOPIC OF CONVERSATION, AND TONE.



ERIN

I NEVER THOUGHT OF IT AS OFFENSIVE UNTIL OTHER PEOPLE TOLD ME I SHOULD BE OFFENDED.

MEANWHILE, MY FAMILY WAS BEGGING ME TO COME HOME AND RECONSIDER MY LIFE CHOICES.



YOUR YOUNGER SISTER NEEDS YOU!



"FUN.ORG"? I'VE NEVER HEARD OF THAT COMPANY. STOP WASTING YOUR TIME THERE.

THERE'S NO FILIPINO FOOD IN DC.



WHY DON'T YOU BECOME A PHARMACIST LIKE YOUR COUSIN FRANCINE? SHE WAS GOING TO FASHION SCHOOL! NOW LOOK AT HER, WORKING AT HER OWN CVS! IT'S NOT TOO LATE.

A NONPROFIT? WHAT WAS THE POINT OF SENDING YOU TO PRIVATE SCHOOL?



SHE'S MAKING \$200,000 A YEAR!

BUT I HAD BEEN LIVING IN DC FOR A FEW YEARS AND I WAS **IN TOO DEEP!**



I FELT GUILTY ABOUT BEING SO FAR AWAY FROM HOME. IN FILIPINO CULTURE, THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS YOUR OWN LIFE. YOUR LIFE WAS THE ONE WITH YOUR FAMILY. I WAS EXPECTED TO...

ATTEND TO MY MOM'S EVERY NEED



HANG OUT WITH THE FAMILY OFTEN



HELP RUN ERRANDS AND DO CHORES



BE THERE FOR SOCIAL ENGAGEMENTS



HELP A BIT FINANCIALLY



HAVE KIDS AND RAISE THEM UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF THE WHOLE CLAN







BUT I HAD MY OWN BIG PLANS.

I WANTED TO NOT HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT MONEY.

DO YOU REMEMBER HOW MUCH WE SPENT AT THE STORE TODAY?

\$20, I THINK?

BALANCING CHECKBOOK?

I WANTED TO HAVE THE KINDS OF IMPRACTICAL JOBS MY FAMILY ADVISED AGAINST.

April 5, 2002  
Dear Diang,  
I would like to be an ARTIST and a WRITER

when I grow up but I don't think my parents would let me.

I WANTED TO GIVE BACK TO MY PARENTS.



DON'T WORRY ABOUT BUYING A NEW FRIDGE, MOM— I'VE ALREADY PAID FOR IT!

I WANTED TO BE LOVED AND ACCEPTED FOR JUST BEING ME.

YOU THINK I'M WEIRD? WHY, THANK YOU!

I WANTED TO MAKE MY FAMILY PROUD OF ME.

WE LOVE YOU, MAKKA!

YOU'RE THE BEST!

WE MISS YOU!

WE'RE ALWAYS WITH YOU!

YOU'RE DOING GREAT, YA MALOOKA!

\* MY FAMILY'S NICKNAMES FOR ME

TO DO THOSE THINGS, I KNEW I HAD TO LEAVE HOME.



I JUST HOPED ONE DAY MY FAMILY WOULD UNDERSTAND.

## Chapter 7

WHEN I WAS A KID,  
MY DAD USED TO PLAY THIS  
GAME WITH ME.

JASON OR  
MOHAMMED?

UHH...



MUSTAFA OR THOMAS?

UHH... MUSTAFA?

ROBERT OR MOHSEN?

MOHSEN?

ABDELRAHMAN OR GEORGE?

ABDELRAHMAN!

(THE ANSWER, IN  
CASE YOU DIDN'T GET IT,  
WAS ALWAYS THE  
MUSLIM NAME.)





DARREN DIDN'T KNOW MUCH ABOUT ARAB OR ASIAN CULTURE, BUT HE WAS WILLING TO LEARN. ON ONE OF OUR FIRST DATES...



I'LL HAVE THE YUDON NOODLES.

OMG. DID YOU JUST SAY YUDON? IT'S OODON.

OODON NOODLES!

I MADE HIM FILIPINO AND EGYPTIAN FOOD.



THAT IS EXTREMELY SOUR...

OH YES! THAT'S THE TAMARIND YOU'RE TASTING! I ADDED EXTRA JUST FOR YOU.

...AND SO... TASTY!

I TOLD HIM ABOUT OUR CULTURAL ETIQUETTE



WHEN YOU MEET MY FAMILY, NEVER SAY NO WHEN THEY OFFER YOU FOOD.

NEVER SHAKE HANDS WITH A WOMAN IN HIJAB!

DRESS NICE WHEN YOU FIRST MEET MY FAMILY!

BRING A GIFT-LIKE ASIAN PEARS!

GEEZ. OYAM

DON'T SIT WITH THE WOMEN!

TAKE OFF YOUR SHOES IN THE HOUSE!

AND I EVEN TAUGHT HIM SOME TAGALOG WORDS!

MUTA



EYE BOOGER

BAON



PACKED FOOD

PAMBAHAY



HOUSE CLOTHES

BADUY



LAME OR UNCOOL

DARREN'S TAGALOG FLASHCARDS

(Cut along the dotted line &---)

ULAM



THE MAIN DISH TO EAT WITH RICE (IT USUALLY HAS MEAT)

TSINELAS



SLIPPERS

TALI



TIE OR HAIR TIE

TAONG PUTI



WHITE PERSON

SABAW



BROTH

LAWAY



DROOL / SALIVA

PASALUBONG



SOUVENIRS



DARREN TAUGHT ME A LOT ABOUT WHITE PEOPLE, TOO. VISITING HIS HOMETOWN NEAR NASHVILLE, I SAW THAT WHITE CULTURE VARIED BY REGION- AND SOUTHERNERS HAD THEIR OWN QUIRKS.

THEY LIKE SWEET FOOD

SWEET ROLLS  
SWEET TEA  
SWEET HAM  
SWEET BUTTER

PEOPLE REALLY EAT BISCUITS!!

THEY REALLY DO SAY "Y'ALL."



THEY SAY "SIR" AND "MA'AM."

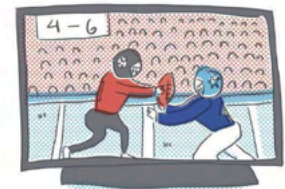


SOUTHERNERS:  
SOME OBSERVATIONS

THEY DRINK ABOUT 7.5 CUPS OF COFFEE A DAY.



FOOTBALL IS ALWAYS ON THE TV.



WOMEN DO THEIR HAIR AND MAKEUP- AND WEAR HEELS.



MOST FAMILIES GO TO CHURCH ON SUNDAYS.



THEY'RE VERY FRIENDLY AND POLITE...

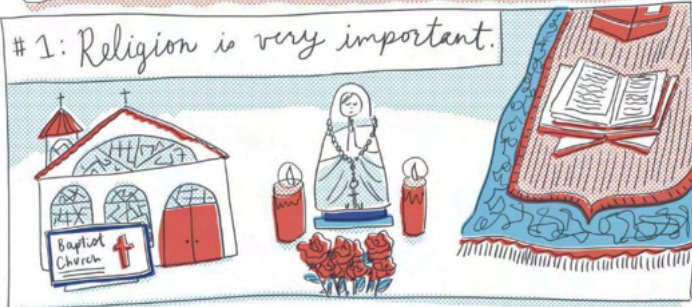


...BUT BEWARE OF ZINGERS.



WHEN I THOUGHT ABOUT IT, SOUTHERNERS WERE A LOT LIKE FILIPINOS AND EGYPTIANS.

#1: Religion is very important.



#2: They are very generous and hospitable.



#3: They have a good sense of humor.

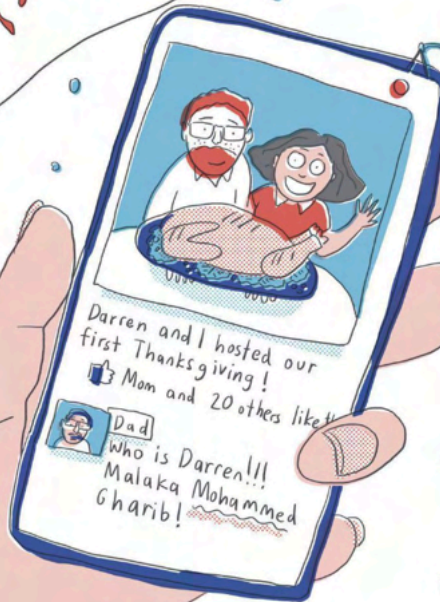


A FEW YEARS LATER, DARREN PROPOSED.



FOR A LONG TIME I KEPT DARREN A SECRET FROM MY DAD BUT HE EVENTUALLY FOUND OUT.

DRAT!



DANG SOCIAL MEDIA!!!!

WHEN I TOLD DAD THAT DARREN AND I WERE GETTING MARRIED, HE WAS REALLY DISAPPOINTED. DID I REALLY NOT KNOW ANY ARAB MUSLIMS IN DC?

DAD, I'M MARRYING DARREN.



COULDN'T YOU HAVE GONE TO A LOCAL MOSQUE?



AND SAY WHAT, THAT I'M LOOKING FOR A HUSBAND?

YES!



WE DIDN'T TALK FOR A MONTH AFTER THAT. FINALLY, I CALLED AND SAID:

LOOK, DAD, LET ME BE REAL WITH YOU.



I DON'T WANT WHAT HAPPENED BETWEEN YOU AND MOM TO HAPPEN TO ME.



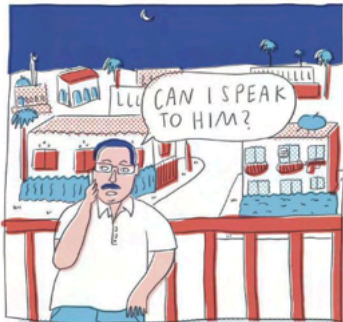
I LOVE DARREN VERY MUCH. AND HE LOVES ME, TOO. WE ARE GOING TO BE HAPPY TOGETHER!



OKAY, BUT IT'S ME WHO WILL BE PUNISHED BY GOD — FOR NOT BEING THERE TO HELP YOU MARRY A MUSLIM.



I'M SORRY.



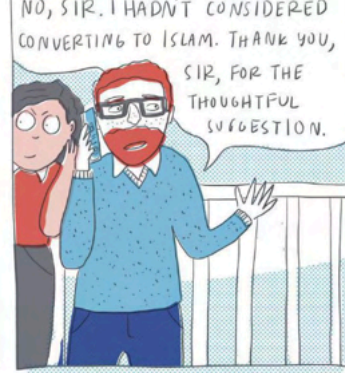
CAN I SPEAK TO HIM?



DARREN!!



HELLO?  
YES, SIR.  
YES, SIR.  
YES, SIR.



NO, SIR. I HADN'T CONSIDERED CONVERTING TO ISLAM. THANK YOU, SIR, FOR THE THOUGHTFUL SUGGESTION.



WE HAVE HIS BLESSING.

ALHAMDULILLAH!

\* YOU REMEMBER THIS WORD!



I WAS HAPPY MY DAD APPROVED, BUT HE MADE ME WONDER: WHY DID I END UP WITH A WHITE DUDE?

OF COURSE IT WAS GONNA BE THE WHITE GUY!

MY IMAGINARY VERSION OF THE BACHELORETTE



TO BE HONEST, I WASN'T THINKING OF HIS SKIN COLOR WHEN WE MET.

TWO HOURS INTO FIRST MEETING ME...

WHAT WOULD YOU DO IF I KISSED YOU RIGHT NOW?

UHM... I DON'T KNOW.



I LIKED HIM FOR HIM, PLAIN AND SIMPLE.

ZAAPPPP!

SMOOCH-  
WOW I WANT THAT BOY.



AND I REFUSED TO BELIEVE THAT DARREN'S WHITENESS WAS THE ONLY REASON I WAS ATTRACTED TO HIM.



TO ME, HE EMBODIED VALUABLE QUALITIES IN MY CULTURES, MOST NOTABLY A FILIPINO TRAIT CALLED 'MABAIT.'

WHAT'S YOUR NAME A'AIN?

HI, TATAY, I'M DARREN! REMEMBER ME?

MALAKA'S FIANCEE!



What does  
**MABAIT?**

LET'S  
ASK TITA PINKY.

mean  
(PRONOUNCED MA-BA-ET)

"MABAIT" MEANS "KIND."  
THIS QUALITY MEANS  
MORE TO US FILIPINOS  
THAN BEING RICH OR  
EDUCATED.

IT MEANS THAT YOU RESPECT ELDERS...  
HI, NANAY, WHAT A  
BEAUTIFUL GARDEN  
YOU HAVE!

YOU'RE A GOOD PERSON IN GENERAL...  
GOOD MORNING. I  
MADE YOU COFFEE...  
..AND I  
PACKED YOU  
YOUR BAON.\*

YOU'RE EASY TO GET ALONG  
WITH...  
\* \* \*  
BOTTOMS UP!

... YOU DON'T MAKE WAVES.  
OH! UH...  
THEY'RE  
GREAT!  
DARREN  
WHAT DO YOU  
THINK OF  
MY NEW  
FLOORS?

IN A WAY, DARREN IS  
KINDA LIKE AN HONORARY  
FILIPINO!

\* A TAGALOG WORD I TAUGHT DARREN, REMEMBER?

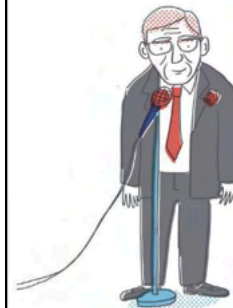
AND SO WE HAD  
**OUR BIG, FAT,**  
FILIPINO-EGYPTIAN-AMERICAN  
SOUTHERN BAPTIST-MUSLIM  
**WEDDING!**

OOH!  
DO THE  
MONEY  
DANCE!

How  
ABOUT  
HAVING IT  
AT A MOSQUE?

How ABOUT AN  
OPEN BAR!

I JUST WANNA  
DANCE TO DEPECHE  
MODE AND NEW  
ORDER!



DARREN'S GRANDDADDY, A SOUTHERN  
BAPTIST PASTOR, OFFICIATED THE  
WEDDING WITH A CEREMONY SCRIPT  
THAT DREW FROM THE KORAN AND  
THE BIBLE.



MY SISTER SALMA SANG  
A BEAUTIFUL ARABIC SONG,  
"I SWEAR YOU DESERVE IT"  
BY JAYED DARNISH.



WE PERFORMED THE FILIPINO  
COIN, VEIL, AND CORD CEREMONY.  
THE COIN REPRESENTS FUTURE  
CHILDREN; THE VEIL, UNITY, AND  
THE CORD, THE COUPLE'S BOND.



Chapter 8

SO HERE WE WERE, LIVING  
OUR CUTE LITTLE LIFE IN DC.



DARREN AND I HAD THE  
SAME PRIORITIES IN LIFE.

WE WANTED A  
FAMILY...



...WE WANTED TO BE AROUND OUR  
FRIENDS...

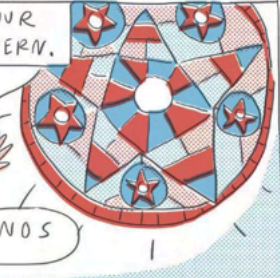


AND WE WANTED TO STAY  
CONNECTED TO OUR CULTURES...

THE FIRST TIME DARREN SPENT  
CHRISTMAS WITH MY FAMILY IN  
CERRITOS, I COOKED HIM HIS MOM'S  
SAUSAGE CASSEROLE.



AND LAST CHRISTMAS, WE HUNG UP OUR  
VERY FIRST PAROL, A FILIPINO LANTERN.



BUT I WASN'T SURE I KNEW ENOUGH ABOUT BEING FILIPINO-EGYPTIAN.

CAN YOU MAKE TITO MARD'S BARBECUE DISH?

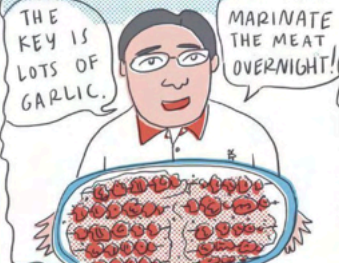
CRAP! I DON'T KNOW HOW. I CAN CALL HIM.



TO ME, MY FAMILY WAS MY IDENTITY.

THE KEY IS LOTS OF GARLIC.

AND MARINATE THE MEAT OVERNIGHT!



THEY ENFORCED THE CUSTOMS THAT MADE ME FEEL EGYPTIAN AND FILIPINO.

THEN YOU GOTTA GRILL THAT SUCKER!



LIVING THOUSANDS OF MILES AWAY FROM MY FAMILY, COULD I CARRY ON THE TORCH?

DARREN, IT'S READY!



MMMMMM



UGH, YOU'RE JUST BEING NICE. IT DOESN'T TASTE ANYTHING LIKE TITO MARD'S. I DON'T KNOW WHAT I DID WRONG!



THERE WERE ALREADY SO MANY CUSTOMS I HAD LOST OR IGNORED.

SERVING MEN AT THE DINNER TABLE FIRST... YEAH, I'M NOT DOING THAT!



SOMETIMES I CAUGHT MYSELF WEARING SHOES IN THE HOUSE, A MAJOR NO-NO IN ASIAN HOMES.



I COULDN'T REMEMBER THE SONGS OF MY YOUTH.

NANAY USED TO SING THIS SONG TO ME: BAHAY KUBO, KAHIT MUNTI-HMM HMM HMM-ACK! I FORGOT!



WEEKS WOULD GO BY WHEN WE'D NEGLECT TO EAT RICE!

LOOK, SOMETIMES I JUST WANT A SALAD FOR DINNER!



THE SUPERSTITIONS THAT USED TO SCARE ME DIDN'T ANYMORE.



SOMETIMES, I THREW RICE AWAY. IN FILIPINO CULTURE, IT'S BAD LUCK-IT'S LIKE THROWING MONEY AWAY!

SOMETIMES I'D CRY IN THE BATHROOM, IN ISLAMIC CULTURE, THAT'S WHEN SPIRITS COULD POSSESS YOU!

WAHHH!!



ROOPS!

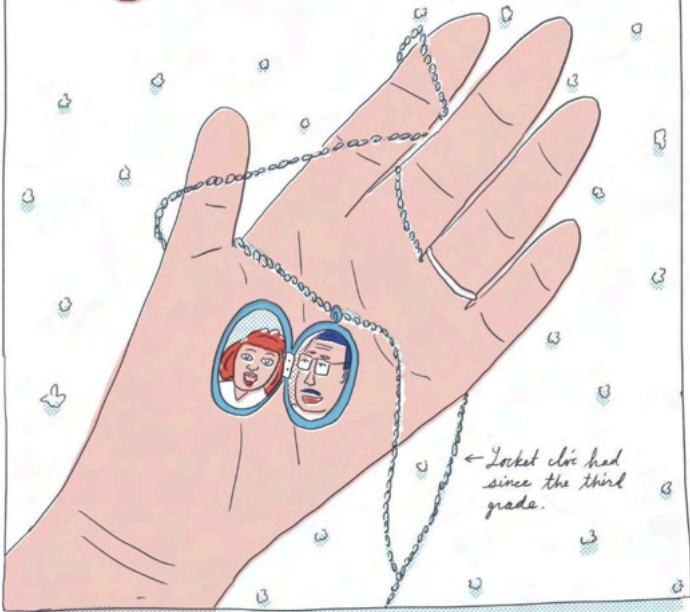
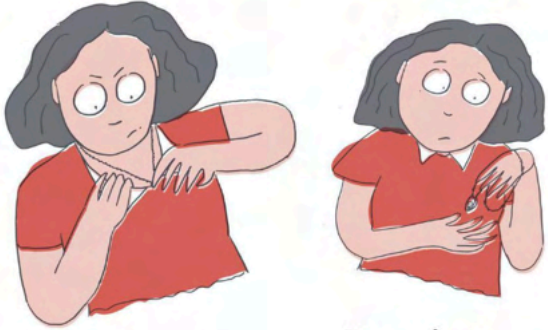


I DIDN'T EAT NOODLES FOR MY BIRTHDAY, A SYMBOL OF LONG LIFE IN ASIAN CULTURE.

STILL, I KNEW I HAD TO HAVE SOME OF THOSE VALUES INSIDE ME—BECAUSE I COULD SEE IT WHEN ME AND DARREN'S CULTURES CLASHED.



THESE DAYS, I'VE BEEN THINKING  
A LOT ABOUT MY PARENTS.



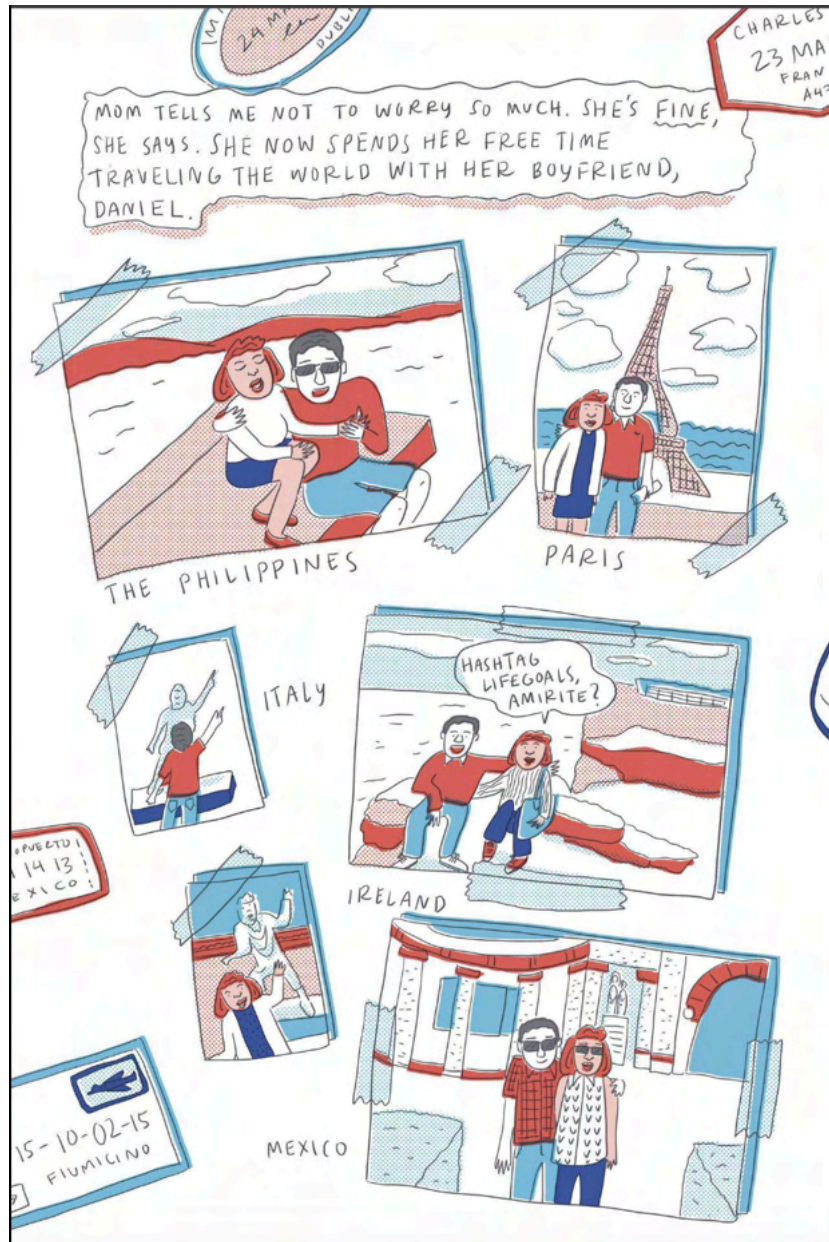
← Locket she had  
since the third  
grade.

I NEVER WANTED TO  
LET THEM DOWN.



THEY FOUGHT  
SO HARD TO  
MAKE A LIFE HERE.

I JUST  
WANTED THEM  
TO BE HAPPY.



A COUPLE OF YEARS AFTER DARREN AND I GOT MARRIED, WE WENT TO EGYPT FOR THE VERY FIRST TIME.



IM BUBBIN' OUT, HOMIE! I CANT BELIEVE WE'RE GOING TO EGYPT!

NEVER IN MY WILDEST DREAMS DID I THWK I'D COME HERE WITH A HUSBAND!



-ME, AGE IT-

DAD, EGYPT IS SO BORING. WHY CANT I EVER JUST SPEND MY SUMMER AT SPACE CAMP OR SOMETHING?

I REMEMBER DAD HAD THIS FUNNY EXPRESSION ABOUT THE FUTURE.



TRY TO ENJOY IT, BROWNIE, BECAUSE TOMORROW, YOU'LL BE MARRIED. AND YOU WON'T COME TO EGYPT AS OFTEN.

NO, DAD! TOMORROW I'LL STILL BE ELEVEN. AND EVEN IF I'M MARRIED I'LL SEE YOU ALL THE TIME!

BUT DAD WAS RIGHT. BECAUSE THAT MEMORY ONLY FELT LIKE YESTERDAY.



OVERNIGHT TRAIN TO LUXOR FROM CAIRO

AND HERE I WAS TODAY, FLOATING DOWN THE NILE RIVER WITH DARREN.



I STILL CANT BELIEVE WE'RE HERE!

WELL, YOU KNOW WHAT THEY SAY, HONEY. "DENIAL" AINT JUST A RIVER IN EGYPT!

OH, BOY.



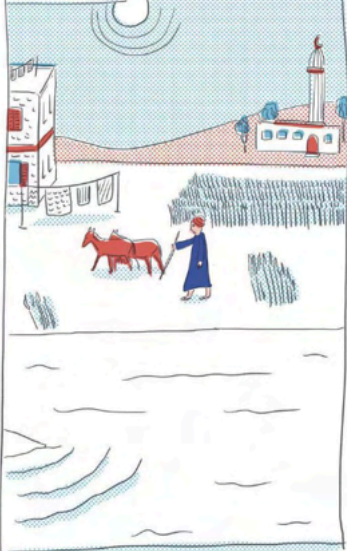
TOMORROW, I KNEW WE'D BE BACK HERE WITH OUR CHILDREN.



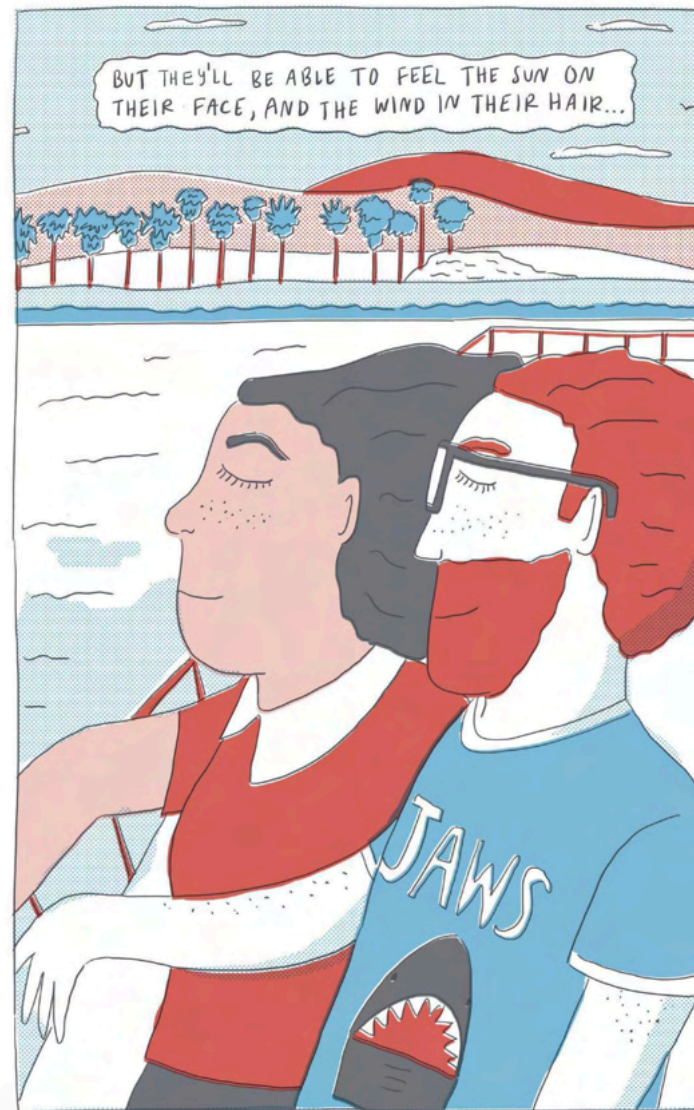
I PROBABLY WON'T BE ABLE TO TRANSLATE ARABIC FOR THEM...



...OR UNDERSTAND THE LOCAL CUSTOMS...



BUT THEY'LL BE ABLE TO FEEL THE SUN ON THEIR FACE, AND THE WIND IN THEIR HAIR...



... AND THEY'LL KNOW, SOMEDAY, SOMEHOW,  
THAT ALL THIS IS A PART OF THEM, TOO.

