

Story for performance #962  
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The daftly named resort, *Refuge of Last Resort* stood proudly at the edge of the vast dump. Lilia let loose sour thoughts. No refuge, no resort-to-anything, the river is all, red is all, red rag in the muck, nothing's *last*, no, things go on and on and on, endless viscous toxic flows. Lilia is curious how the resort perfumes its rooms. Whatever, its techniques must work. At least, to Lilia, young warrior of the longest running Communist armed rebellion in Asia and habitué of this *Refuge of Last Resort*, the resolutely quiet corridors smelled always of good numbers of people. Though she hardly sees them, nor them her, she is sure the non-refuge is always chock-a-block with its usual customers, randy bureaucrats needing quick sex with their secretaries, paying a decent 500 pesos for two hours of locked doors.

It isn't a good hide-out for a lovely college drop out. The front desk doesn't get why she doesn't rent a room with the usual moustachioed, pot-bellied customer. Can't be helped. She's on the run now. Her beloved *masa*—the poor toiling masses in her version of the universe—carry on without her daily denunciations of state power. They reside in her marrows, they drive her insane, the way they pick through the dump, daily, from dawn, when the garbage emanates a mist that is quite beautiful, she's got to agree, she's having to face up to their perverse glee, as they smile, throwing themselves into the mountains of, yes! capitalism's crap! The detritus of shopping and eating and preening addictions. She hates how the poor puts up with anything. She hates them.

It's no secret that they do scrape together a living. To Lilia, this is that kind of wrong that cries to the heavens for vengeance. (These words borrowed from the required revolutionary literature, comfort her.) Her rage feeds on what continues to shock her: how her 'urban poor' keeps calm, picks through the discarded French fries, pokes their heads to bins full of shards, rattles mounds of rusted metal, counting the centavos to be earned and laughing, often enough. She left behind a home with *two* wide-screen plasma TVs that first 'exposed' her to this dump site and its garbage pickers, Lilia remembers distinctly, when she was 12. It was definitely her 12th year when she made out the discarded body part that the editors of the news program weren't able to clean out of the program on dump sites with humanity, which showed way past her bedtime. In fact it was the day after that one special birthday when she got Sparkler from her mom.

'Sparkler died last night,' her sister, Delia, said during the one phone contact a year Lilia allowed for family. Only with Delia. 'Old dog now, 10 years,' Lilia murmured to her shattered twin. Lilia didn't like that she had to sort out her feelings about that dog, expensive hairy creature. So extraneous to the tropics. Lilia wasn't to be drawn into this emotional bog, and held fast to her aloofness through the one

agonizing, happy hour on the phone. Remorse fills that bog, vibrating Lilia endlessly. She left Delia after they both turned 20. Lilia resolved to purge herself of birthday sentimentality (refuge of last resort, she grimaced) but knew she wouldn't succeed. The call she made to Delia was, as always, on their birthday.

Lilia walked out of the *Refuge of Last Resort* at midnight. No more calls to Delia, ever. She will test her resolve by fleeing to the other end of the dumpsite to find the man Dato, to whom she will propose, ask to take her as wife and help move her to the front in the southern islands. Revolutionary wedding with long firearms, the good stuff. No reason whatsoever not to find an escape from her last link to that other human being, the Lilia raised by gentle, perhaps innocent parents, both physicians, who help the poor but can't think beyond their Rotary Club commitments; nor to the Lilia educated by nuns, who help the poor but have to be married to Jesus. Lilia's arrogance can, will, must slash a way for her to slip through emotional thickets more dangerous than the dump site. She told herself, angrier by the minute as she slipped through the stench—she is not the first in the movement to have to wield intellectual snobbery like a scalpel.

Dato was nowhere to be found. The denizens of the garbage heap had disappeared hours ago. She almost tripped over a dog; rodent-like, hair too close to the skin. She stopped breathing. She let the stench overpower her. This was exactly like that dog in that television program about dumpsites, ten years ago. The program was about a work by a Swedish filmmaker, who was seduced by that rubbish; who found a family who found a dog at a dump site worked by the poor. The family ate the dog. When Lilia was a college freshman, this Swede, Vilgot Sjöman, breezed through town to give a lecture. He had famously made *I Am Curious, Yellow*. The documentary about the garbage-heap dog-eating family was to be in *I Am Curious, Blue*.

The university assembly laughed hard at the fate of the dog. Neither Lilia nor the Swede could understand that collective laughter. Both were appalled. Lilia had to yield to the flashing of all this stuff inside her skull. This can't be death, she figured, because she knew that Sparkler, who came into her life on her birthday, and the dog in the program the night after her birthday, to be the true twinned parts of her being.

At least she thought so until the following night, when she found out that Dato had gone to the *Refuge of Last Resort*, found Delia, and tried to take her home. This, she read about in a tabloid article, only two inches high, about the discovery of their dead bodies.

*Adapted for performance by Barbara Campbell from a story by Marian Pastor Roces.*