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## UNDERSTANDING MAKOY

by: **CHRISTIAN L. CHUA**

Even as a child, there are many things in life that confuses our young minds. Why is the sky blue? Why is there rain? But perhaps nothing ever bugged my young mind more than My cousin Makoy.

I think it was June of 1998 when I first came across Makoy. Back then, as my Tatang and Nanang are both working abroad at the time. I was left under the care of My Grandparents, so I spent most of my childhood days in that Old Spanish ancestral home where my Grandparents raised my Mother under strict upbringing to the point that it was already a deafening part of every phone call we had since I was five. I was also put under the impression that I should act properly as I am under the care of Lolo and Lola. This went through until they decided to start their small business and fully settle down when I was in first year in High School. However, this was completely different from my Grandparents' treatment of my cousin Mark, which seems a little different from that of how they treat me.

When Tita Janeth left Mark for what she said was only for three months, he was treated as if he was a fine piece of porcelain. Initially, I thought it was because of his skin which is clearly way fairer than that of my complexion as it was a common cause of bullying from my classmates. Yes, given that he was half-American and raised in Brooklyn, but I simply can't fully understand how, despite of our same age, he was doing nothing all day while I have to learn to help Lolo in doing chores. Not to mention, I'm really having the hardest time of my life understanding his gibberish language they call American accent. It's really hard understanding Makoy, I said to myself.

There was even a time where the two of us brawled when he kept bothering me with his naughty pranks that I got angry. To my surprise, we are both punished for our actions and eventually compelled by Lolo to shake hands as he said this was the manly thing to do.

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He'll eventually learn to adjust to our situation, just open up to him a little. Lolo said afterwards.

So I did as he said. The next day, I asked my friends and lots of other children from our area to play near the house. And Alas! Indeed, after a few days, the American boy learned to approach other children, especially among our peers, whenever he feels the want to play and gets tired of his toys. I never thought that in a few weeks' time, Mark Jones will be part of our circle of friends. He learned to swim, climb trees, and other things boys of our age will do. With this, we became the best of friends later on.

Indeed, the fair-skinned American boy we knew as Mark, turned into a Filipino boy, whom, other kids nicknamed as Makoy. Since then, changes occurred, and he grew well-liked by other people in the Barangay. After some time, we just simply realized Makoy was already speaking our local language as a major shift in his attitude. This started to confuse my young mind since then.

Meanwhile, what was said to be two months only turned out to be five years of him being separated with his parents. Despite this, it seemed as if Makoy was completely oblivious of the time and was able to adapt himself to the environment of our petty neighborhood. It was as if he knew no one in that far away place and that he had lost affection for his parents back in America.

Until one day, when Tita Janeth showed up on our doorstep. It was only that time we learned that Makoy's father died just last month after his five-year battle with cancer. As they want to protect the boy from the problems brought about by his father's condition, they have decided to let the boy stay with Lolo and Lola here in the province. On that moment, I took pity on Makoy as he broke down in deep sorrow and agony. Lolo could do nothing but cry and try to give him a shoulder to which he poured out all of the pain he kept inside all this time. I may never know, but I think I now have a clearer understanding of what he keeps within him.

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That afternoon, the sun was peculiarly reddish on the horizon. It was very strange to feel this way. It is as if a part of myself was lost when Makoy tearfully bid farewell to me and our Old Spanish house that night. Tears fell down my eyes as I finally get to understand Makoy.



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