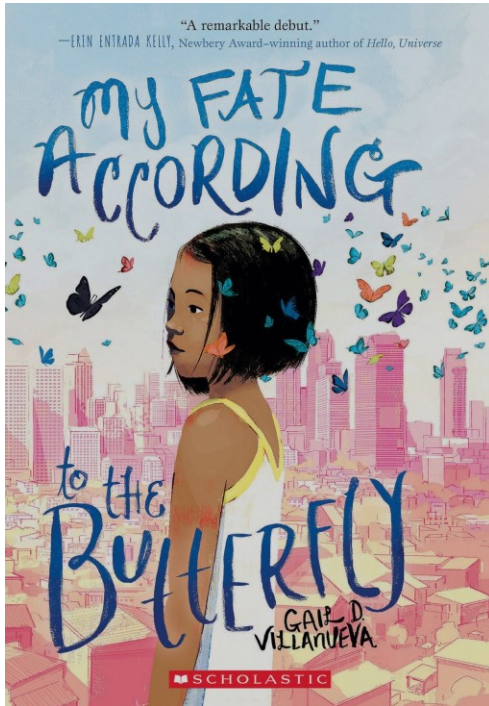


# MY FATE ACCORDING TO THE BUTTERFLY



*Juvenile*

**By Gail D. Villanueva**

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## **Book Summary:**

A ten-year-old girl attempts to fix problems within her family before the time comes when she believes she will die.

## **Summary of Concerns:**

This book contains inexplicit sexual activities; references to drug and alcohol abuse; alternate sexualities; references to racism; and controversial political, racial, and cultural commentary.

**2** /5

**Teen Guidance**  
BookLooks Review Rating

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11	“When Spain colonized the Philippines, they made sure we remember they’re better than we are. They had this whole tax system where rich white Spaniards paid little. We paid more even though we did more of the work, just because we’re brown,” she explained. “Our American colonizers weren’t any better. Sure, we got more rights and education and all that. But the mentality remained the same—white is beautiful, brown is not.”
16	Ate Nadine said it’s because Wendell doesn’t like the idea of being referred to as Dad’s brother instead of his boyfriend. ...I finish the last touches on my doodle—two men holding hands.
17	I’ve always considered Wendell “Dad Number Two” and Tito Ed “Dad Number Three.”
38	“The war on drugs isn’t just about the police operations, darling. My brother-in-law is a drug addict, but he’s trying to do better with help from his local government. Their rehab program is part of the war on drugs campaign.” ...“But you heard him. The president’s threatened to kill all those involved in the drug trade. That includes your own brother-in-law.”
39	“Don’t waste your talent on that paper, darling. They’re fake news who like to sensationalize events to make the president look bad.”
40	I’ve always kept my hair long. Mom said I should wait until I actually have boobs so no one mistakes me for a boy if I cut it short.
43	A boy, who looks just a few years older than Pepper and me, meets my gaze. There’s a huge scar running down his right cheek, like somebody tried to slash his face. The boy points at me, then at Pepper, puckering his lips. “Gross!”
47	We pass by a café, where my sister greets classmates smoking cigarettes and sipping lattes.
48	“Miss! Come and take a look.” A scrawny woman approaches my sister, waving a plastic bottle at her face. “For thirty pesos, you can become as beautiful as this white girl. Generic only, but it’s better than the skin whiteners you buy at the grocery. Here, try some!” “Get away from me,” Ate Nadine growls. “It’s because of people like you that we Filipinos can’t ever get past this awful colonial mentality. Just because someone’s white doesn’t mean they’re prettier or better.”
55	The big-eyed look never works for me. I’m just not white and pretty enough.
57	I wouldn’t be surprised if he’s also a drug addict.
66	Like, for example, this photo of an organizational chart entitled “Drug Trade in Pignatelli.”
84	He says this one is reserved for women, children, senior citizens, people with disabilities, and “pretty girls” like Pepper. I doubt we’d get such special treatment if my friend hadn’t been white. Because, in a country of brown-skinned Filipinos, white people “deserve” only the best. Refusing this privilege would have been the right thing to do. It’s not fair to everyone else who is squeezing themselves into the more crowded cars.
91	“Someone needs to do something about the drug problem in Pignatelli, Jepoy.” Ate Nadine’s lips form a grim line. “It ruins lives. Families. My report is going to help the police bring these sellers to justice.”
105	While it’s okay most of the time, not everyone will let her get away with things just because she’s white. Colonial mentality (as Ate Nadine calls it) may be the case for most people, but

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	there are folks like this man who won't put up with it. For some weird reason, I'm glad he didn't. I respect him for it.
109	"I based her likeness on the one I consider my soul mate. He was my best friend. But we were young; we partied a lot. We made bad choices we very much regret now. I heard he has a family now—two daughters, my friend Greg said—but I never got to meet them. I guess I'm just too ashamed to, if they knew the things we did. But I do hope to meet them one day."
112	"It's just that ... Your lola Cordia was religious and conservative. I thought you didn't know—" "That our dad dates men and women?" Well, I can't blame him for thinking that way. I read online that Dad's identity is something not everyone will understand. "I think we're lucky. Ate and I have three dads!"
114	He does, however, have a lot to say about how the government and media are dealing with the substance abuse problem. "The media should also be promoting health services for substance abuse, but the government itself should put more money into those projects instead of unlawful arrests that almost always end badly."
117	Recovery. Rom explained that's basically what his exhibit was about. He didn't mention it, but it was on the gallery description and pretty obvious in the art: It wasn't just about any recovery. It was about recovery from substance abuse. Substance. I've encountered that exact word online. If I remember right, it was on the same website that told me what the purple-and-pink building in Pasig is for. The place wasn't just for people who have mental illness. It was also a rehabilitation center for patients recovering from alcoholism and drug addiction.
119	"Dad was in rehab for his drug addiction. He is a recovering addict."
121	After all, who wants a friend with an ex-addict dad?
128	"My dad is a recovering drug addict." ..."I wasn't sure until we met Romeo Gamelon. He said they used to party a lot ... Parties are usually where people get their drugs. And that gallery was kind of a dead giveaway."
134	"The stylist said there's nothing to worry about if you're not doing or selling drugs." "In essence, yes. There are some places where it works as it should," Ate Nadine says. "But there are trigger-happy cops who abuse their power, and corrupt officials who use it for their own gain. So people die." I've heard Tito Ed mention having police operations against the drug trade, but I never knew what it's called. I didn't think it involved people dying either. After all, Tito Ed himself used to be a correctional facility officer, focusing particularly on those who needed help from drug use. I can't imagine him shooting somebody just because they're suspected of doing illegal activities. I can't imagine him hurting anyone, period. But after the past week? I don't know.
135	"Why do people get special treatment just because they have more money? No offense." "None taken. It's called 'privilege.'" Ate Nadine gives Pepper a smile. "It's just like when the security guard let you take the 'better' train car because he thinks your being white makes you deserve it." Pepper pouts. "It's not my fault I look like this." "That's true, of course. But this privilege is given to you without question, willingly, because of our culture steeped in the scars of a colonized past. It's up to you what to make of it. You can either recognize and understand your privilege so you can make our society better, or you don't and let things stay the same."

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	<p>“Didn’t Daddy take advantage of his privilege, Ate?” I ask, sneaking a glance at Kuya Jepoy, who’s been hanging back to give us privacy. He’s trying to turn his life around. But Kuya Jepoy can’t afford a college education, nor can he accept a scholarship, because he needs to work and feed his lola and five sisters.</p> <p>Dad threw away an entire semester because of his addiction. He wasted the very opportunity many people would love to have. He did something illegal and escaped the consequences because he had money.</p>
136	<p>“He was caught by the police selling drugs,” Kuya Jepoy continues.</p>
138	<p>“POLICE! Taas ang kamay!”</p> <p>From the safety of my corner, I see the internet café owner, Kuya Jepoy, Pepper, and my sister raise their hands in the air as two cops walk inside. I do the same, and one of the officers sees me. He beckons me to come to the front with my sister and friends. I willingly follow.</p> <p>“Put your hands down,” says his partner. He points at Kuya Jepoy. “Except for you.”</p> <p>“What? No.” I spread my arms wide in front of Kuya Jepoy. “He didn’t do anything.”</p> <p>The officer scowls at Ate Nadine. “Tell the girl to get out of the way or she’s coming with us to the precinct.”</p> <p>“It’s okay, Sab.” Kuya Jepoy gives me a sad smile as the cops cuff him. “I’ll be fine. They’re just going to ask me questions.”</p> <p>Didn’t they just say bad cops will only treat people well if they have money? “But—”</p> <p>“Sab, don’t.” Ate Nadine grips my shoulders. “I’ll ask Tito Ed to handle this.”</p> <p>The door chimes tinkle once again, and Kuya Jepoy leaves with the mean cops.</p> <p>I think I’m going to throw up. They’re taking my friend like he’s a criminal.</p>
141	<p>“Not all cops are like Tito Ed. There are those who wouldn’t even give Jepoy due process. Many people are framed and killed because some cops just want to impress the president. Or maybe the bad cops sold drugs themselves and just want to cover up their deed. Our justice system isn’t the same as what you see on American TV shows. Corruption makes it hard for the majority of Filipinos to have a day in court.”</p>
163	<p>I take a deep breath. Here goes. “Did you do drugs because you had Ate Nadine and me?” If he says yes, it’ll break my heart. But I have to know. “Did you ever love us, Daddy?”</p>
174	<p>I also wished to write a story that would be a mirror for anyone who sees themselves in Sab. I’m brown and flat-nosed. Someone who looked like me was never the heroine in the books I read as a young girl. And as Nadine explained, colonial mentality is a reality in our culture—it made the lack of representation worse for me. So I promised myself I would one day write a book about Filipinos.</p> <p>...Sab assumed that someone like Jepoy was probably trouble—and that was also the assumption the cops made when they arrested him. But Jepoy was drug free. It was Sab’s own middle-class dad who had an addiction problem.</p> <p>There are times when incorrect assumptions can take a deadly turn, like what happened to a seventeen-year-old student named Kian Loyd delos Santos in Metro Manila in 2017. Similar to Jepoy, Kian was suspected of being involved in illegal drugs. But he wasn’t as fortunate. Kian was shot by the police. They claimed he resisted arrest, but witnesses and CCTV footage said otherwise.</p> <p>Kian’s death became the subject of a Senate hearing, eventually resulting in stricter guidelines in the implementation of Operation Tokhang. On November 29, 2018, the Caloocan Regional Trial Court Branch 125 found the three cops involved guilty of his murder.</p>

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	Still, Kian's death and thousands of others remain a bloody footprint in this war on drugs. Kian died because of wrong assumptions, just because he fit the "profile" of a drug runner—a teenage boy from a low economic class.