

One Time, Big Time

Only the faithful.

Only known as Kadil, a teenage boy with an infant, presumably his sibling. We are not given any other information.

Only because it's a headline. Only because it's trending.

Only they did not see four-year old Althea hugged by her father. The chief said she was used as a prop.

Only the fishermen were asked to dispose of the bodies.

Only joking. Only exaggerating.

Only you died, Jesus, but the source of life flowed out for souls and the ocean of mercy opened up for the whole world. O Fountain of Life, immeasurable Divine Mercy, cover the whole world and empty yourself out upon us. O blood and water, which flowed out from the heart of Jesus as a fountain of mercy for us, I trust in you. Holy God, holy mighty One, holy immortal one, have mercy on us and the whole world. Holy God, holy mighty One, holy immortal one, have mercy on us and the whole world. Holy God, holy mighty One, holy immortal one, have mercy on us and the whole world. Amen. Jesus, King of Mercy, we trust in you.

We have just, as one nation, started a beautiful three o'clock habit. We have just prayed to our Lord Jesus Christ for peace in our country and the whole world. We fervently hope that we started in you this three o'clock habit for you to keep and

offer a few seconds of your time each day to talk to Jesus and pray for forgiveness of sins and world peace.

Only son. Only a mother. Only no one around to claim the corpses.

Only referred to as a pregnant woman and her mother-in-law. One of the men the police were running after went to their house, so collateral damage.

Only “Despacito.”

Only photo on Aurora’s Facebook profile shows the real her.

Only an isolated case. Only scalawags and compromised. Only this should not stop the war and discredit the gains made from getting rid of vermin.

Only a matter of time.

Only slept there because his mom was taking his girlfriend to a prenatal checkup. It was the stepdad they were after. Hide would have turned 18 last August 23.

Only search results.

Only, Jefferson wanted to become a policeman, too. But his sister just had a baby and he decided to sleep at a friend’s. It’s his fault for hanging with the wrong crowd.

Only explanation must be he was an addict and a bad person. And a four-month old’s rapist.

Only because there’s a deadline.

Only, how do we survive this?

Only need to remember this is God’s work, what our country needs, what the children must be protected from, better the criminals, rapists, murderers, thieves than innocent, law-abiding citizens.

Only five-year old Danica did not get to wear the red shirt and red shorts she was excited to use for extramurals. So they bury her with them.

Only five-year old Francis was sleeping by the door, so he gets hit first before his father.

Only because his brother was not around, Justin, who liked riding his bike, is taken instead.

Only it happens everywhere, has happened, will happen. What makes now so special?

Only there are no words. Only “condolence.”

Only watching TV, seven-year old San Niño is hit by a stray bullet.

“Only in the Philippines!”

Only how could Raymart run when he had bilateral club feet?

Only if you do something illegal.

Only Angel had a Barbie doll with her, a gift she intended for a younger sister.

Only this time, love won't win.

Only hope of the family for a better life, Oman was scheduled to work in Dubai after graduation.

Only statistics. Only one of a few thousand. Only a few thousand and not six million.

Only Rowena was not part of the list. She wanted a house for her family and a comfortable life for their mother who wakes up early to sell fruits in the market.

Only #prayers.

Only two likes for a political post. 114 for a cute baby. 5,437 for a celebrity. Maybe buy bots for the dead.

Only these cannot bring you back.

Only they were naked when found by the funeral parlor workers. Yvonne, 22 years old, was seven months pregnant.

Only words.

Only reported as a fifteen-year old boy whose mother, Gretchen, cried out: "Anak! Anak!"

Only minutes before the raid, the teenage boys were dancing in a known drug den.

Only have to look away.

Only the father had to go with his son to the Pasay police station because he was afraid they'd kill him.

Only if it were a family member or friend. Sometimes not even.

"...Only human born to make mistakes." Only non-human.

Only need to fill out this template for the spot report:

Gun? Yes

Two sachets of shabu? Yes

Resisted arrest? Yes

Only Rex was given his toddler for shield.

Only the red motorcycle Mario drove during the "encounter" returned to the family.

Only Coldplay and the eclipse generated more interest.

Only admin where advocating for human rights is considered not helping and protecting criminals. A Western ideal.

Only the local broadsheet has stopped updating its kill list. I used to go through it every day, reading the dead's names, thinking that mattered.

Only Ronnie wasn't saved even after dancing in several Zumba sessions.

Only the rain lessens the death count.

Only an earthquake, the big one, might stop this.

Only reason must be I know a user, too, or have friends who are addicts, says my mom.

Only the guilty.

Only Quezon City, Manila, and Bulacan. Only Cebu and Caloocan.

Only need to be on the list.

Only drugs can actually be wonderful if used occasionally.

Only the privileged can say that.

Only the left is no longer left.

Only Ru Paul's Drag Race. On free Netflix from made-up email addresses.

Only creative imagination.

Only my friends are still smoking weed. Sometimes I want to for the sake of resistance.

Only over 13,000 and still no pushback. Still not the tipping point.

Only orphans and wives. Only it has been common to play with toy guns and pretend you're holding a raid. "Tokhangin kita dyan e!"

Only I can never look a supporter in the eye. I have cut ties with friends and family this term, and do not regret it.

Only is this the place for this?

Only moonlight never reaches this house.

Only bad poetry can exist at this point. It is necessary, but probably not useful.

Only the naive and sycophants believe that Resorts World story.

Only outrage. The poor cannot claim their dead.

Only Marvin had the unfortunate timing of picking up on his trike a drug suspect after his court hearing.

Only Rodel had already served a three-year sentence and been out for two months.

Only can Zonrox be used to clean up blood?

Only woke up early for the pandesal. Only stayed up late to get something to eat. Only outside the neighbor's house drinking. Only stepped out from his birthday party to buy cigarettes from the sari-sari store.

Only a thesis. Only rent. Only weight gain. Only lack of sex. Only credit card debt. Only a court case.

Only Kristine, a 12-year old, was there for mass.

Only hard the first time.

Only Gloria and Anthony were invited for drug testing prior to their executions.

Only for a few days. Until the next scandal comes along.

Only fear.

Only two who were found with a sign that says: #nagmahal #nagbasag kotse #nagtulak #namatay

Only three brothers: Jay, Jake, and Jave, all in one night, one place.

Only what is a word for those who knew this would happen and yet voted for him?

Only Efren survived out of the five who played pool that night, taken in by the police, made to face a wall, and shot one-by-one. When he heard the murderers gone, he crawled out to a ravine, scrambled up the nearest highway, where a jeepney driver found and drove him to the nearest infirmary. He and the families of his friends have filed a criminal case against the cops.

Only to meet a quota.

Only a dear friend still thinks it's funny not too many people showed up for the rally last night.

Only keep happening.

Only bored. Only rhetoric. Only free data.

Only there is proof: Zenaída of the Citizens Crime Watch in Calapan was murdered by two plainclothes police officers. Apparently, a lack of coordination there as they were pursued by their colleagues and almost shot (“Tropa! Tropa!!!”).

Only because he's Korean.

Only we might be the ones who'll need body cameras (or hidden ones in our persons).

Only journalists and cops always refer to it as pot session when they mean shabu session.

Only a friend's brother, an acquaintance's brother, and a friend's boyfriend's driver.

Only a house was broken into in the dead of the night, the couple shot several times while their three-year old wailed.

Only Herminio was a runner for a drug-pusher policeman and had to be silenced.

Only how could Michael Jayson fit in a sack? He was hogtied, feet almost to his head, that the woman who found him thought at first it was a dead pig.

Only a matter of an autopsy and ballistics test, but of course these will not happen.

Only I am projecting.

Only, she had soft, brown hair, curly ends. An unrehearsed grin for the camera. Small feet dangling on a swing. This is what makes her mother break down. The coffin is kept closed.

Only an end. Only the beginning. Only we're in the thick of it.

Only a daily rehearsal for that play where everything is tied up nicely, the resolution tortures everyone into submission, and the dead simply get up and take a bow.

Only silence.

Only this. But so much more.

VYXZ VASQUEZ teaches creative writing and literature at the University of the Philippines