



# The Umbrella Country (Ballantine Reader's Circle)

*Bino A. Realuyo*

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"Certain things are better kept than said. . . .

But certain things you have to find out now. . . ."

On the tumultuous streets of Manila, where the earth is as brown as a tamarind leaf and the pungent smells of vinegar and mashed peppers fill the air, where seasons shift between scorching sun and torrential rain, eleven-year-old Gringo strives to make sense of his family and a world that is growing increasingly harsher before his young eyes.

There is Gringo's older brother, Pipo, wise beyond his years, a flamboyant, defiant youth and the three-time winner of the sequined Miss Unibers contest; Daddy Groovie, whiling away his days with other hang-about men, out of work and wilting like a guava, clinging to the hope of someday joining his sister in Nuyork; Gringo's mother, Estrella, moving through their ramshackle home, holding her emotions tight as a fist, which she often clenches in anger after curfew covers the neighborhood in a burst of dark; and Ninang Rola, wise godmother of words, who confides in Gringo a shocking secret from the past--and sets the stage for the profound events to come, in which no one will remain untouched by the jagged pieces of a shattered dream.

As Gringo learns; shame is passed down through generations, but so is the life-changing power of blood ties and enduring love.

In this lush, richly poetic novel of grinding hardship and resilient triumph, of selfless sacrifice and searing revelation, Bino A. Realuyo brings the teeming world of 1970s Manila brilliantly to life. While mapping a young boy's awakening to adulthood in dazzling often unexpected ways, *The Umbrella Country* subtly works sweet magic.

*From the Trade Paperback edition.*

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