# CUENTOS DE BALMORI

TRANSLATED BY PILAR EUGENIA MARIÑO

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# Preface

The Department of European Languages, College of Arts an Letters, University of the Philippines, commemorated last yea the first birth centennial of Jesus Balmori (1886-1948), one c the titans of Spanish literature in the Philippines.

The centennial program in 1986 included a lecture by Prof Araceli R. Kaluag on "Jesus Balmori, Poet," and a concert by th well-known *Tribung Pinoy* featuring *Kundiman* and other Filipin songs in Spanish. Interestingly enough, several songs had lyric penned by Balmori himself.

This anthology of twelve short stories, due to unforseen ci cumstances, comes a year late. However, no fitting tribute o homage is late in the final analysis. These short stories wer compiled and translated by Prof. Pilar E. Mariño of the Depart ment of English, College of Arts and Letters, University of th Philippines. Prof. Mariño has been collecting short stories i Spanish written by Filipino literati and translating them i English. *Her Anthology of Spanish Short Stories by Filipin Writers (1900-1941),* translated in English, will be published thi year. In editing this volume, I have always preferred as often a possible the English translation which would yield a "revers translation" closest to the original text in Spanish.

The funding for this anthology, without which the projec would not have been realized, was made available to the Depart ment of European Languages by the Embassy of the Kingdom of Spain. Then Ambassador Pedro Ortiz Armengol and First Secre tary Agustín Núñez were most supportive of this anthology in honor of Jesus Balmori.

EDGARDO TIAMSON MENDOZA

# Introduction

The Golden Age of Philippine Spanish Literature began during the first decade of the American regime and lasted until 1942. During this period the American government inaugurated a policy of attraction. This liberal policy greatly influenced and stimulated intellectual literary creations. This was a period when the literary harvest in Spanish was more voluminous than in any of the previous periods. There was a great increase in all types of genres: poetry, fiction, drama, essay. There was also an increase in the number of books of diverse themes and subject matters, like philosophy, politics, and sociology.[1]

Other factors which contributed to this literary flowering were: the proliferation of newspapers and magazines that published literary works; the holding of literary contests; the polemics in prose and verse, the poetical joust; and the continued use of the Spanish language in government, social, and religious circles.[2]

During this period, newspapers played an important role in the encouragement and dissemination of literature. Indeed, there was a close relationship between journalism and literature. Literary works were first published in newspapers before they appeared in book form. Poets, novelists, short story writers were often publishers, editors, or columnists as well.

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[1]Estanislao Alinea, *Historia Analítica de la Literatura Filipino-Hispana: Desde 1566 hasta medios de 1964* (Quezon City), August 1964), p. 85.

[2]Estanislao Alinea, "Philippine Literature in Spanish from the Literature of Protest to Efflorescence," *Brown Heritage: Essays on Filipino Cultural Tradition and Literature* by A. Manuud (Quezon City: Ateneo Press, 1967), p. 511.

The dailies proliferated unexpectedly during this period. There were two hundred all over the Philippines, but the most important were those published in Manila, Cebu, and Iloilo. The newspapers with the widest circulation were *El Renacimiento*, *La Democracia*, *La Vanguardia*, *El Debate*, *La Opinión*, *El Mercantil*, *La Defensa*, *El Heraldo de Cebú*, *El Pueblo de Iloilo*, and *El Tiempo*. There also appeared a number of magazines. Among the most important were *Cultura Social*, *Carnaval*, *Confetti*, *El Obrero*, *Excelsior*, and *Véritas*. Three magazines *The Independent*, *Philippine Free Press*, and *Philippine Review* were published in English and Spanish.[3]

Another factor that enhanced literature in Spanish was the many literary contests sponsored by such newspapers as *El Renacimiento* and *La Vanguardia*. More prestigious were awards given by the Zóbel Foundation more popularly known as the *Premio Zóbel* established in 1920. The award was given to the best works in literature, science, and history written in prose or verse in Spanish.[4] The biggest and most important of all these literary contests, however, was that sponsored by the commonwealth government, the Commonwealth Literary Award.

Polemics in prose and verse definitely played a major role in the growth and development of Philippine literature in Spanish. One of its direct effects was the awakening of literary consciousness. It also aroused even the interests of writers and readers who seemed to favor only the short stories, and the poets who would only read poems. They began to be enthusiastic readers of the articles of the "polemicists" in *La Vanguardia*.

The poetical joust was inaugurated by Jesús Balmori and Manuel Bernabé in 1924, at the Opera House in order to raise funds for the Holy Virgin of Antipolo (Nuestra Señora de la Paz y Buen Viaje). Their theme was *El Recuerdo y el Olvido*. Another interesting *polémica poética* was the one between Manuel Bernabé and Alejo Valdez Pica on "Occidente y Oriente".[5]

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[3] *Ibid*, pp. 515-516.

[4] *Ibid*, p. 516.

[5] *Ibid*, p. 515.

Another very important factor that contributed to the flourishing of Philippine literature in Spanish was the fact that during the first years of the American occupation, Spanish was employed in all the business of the government, of society, of the church, and in business transactions and correspondence.[6]

Of all the literary types that developed during this period, poetry was the most important. The highest ideals, the sublime aspirations, the dreams of liberty, and the most intimate personal feeling were all given eloquent expression in poetry of all types—narrative, lyric, and dramatic. Among the many poets of the period, two stood out: Cecilio Apóstol, known as the "Prince of Epic Poets," and Fernando Ma. Guerrero, "Prince of Lyric Poets". Flavio Zaragoza Cano followed in the footsteps of Apóstol and came in a close second to him. Other distinguished poets were Manuel Bernabé, who excelled in epic-lyrical poetry, and Jesús Balmori, who wrote in the lyrical-satirical mode. Claro M. Recto was an epic, lyric, and satiric poet all in one. Minor poets of the period were Emeterio Barcelón, Enrique Fernández Lumba, Adelina Gurrea, Evangelina Guerrero Zacarías, Isidro Marfori, Benigno del Río, and Alejo Valdez Pica.

The richness of the poetic yield of this period is best demonstrated in the many books of poetry that were published and avidly read by the public. Among the most popular were Cecilio Apóstol's *Pentélicas* (1941), Fernando Ma. Guerrero's *Crisálidas* (1914), Flavio Zaragoza Cano's *Cantos a España* and *De Mactán a Tirad* (1940), Manuel Bernabé's *Cantos del Trópico*, Recto's *Bajo Los Cocoteros* (1911), Jesús Balmori's *Rimas Malayas* (1904), *El Libro de mis Vidas Manileñas* (1928), and *Mi Casa de Nipa* (1940). Cano's *De Mactán a Tirad* won the 1940 Commonwealth literary award for poetry in Spanish, and Balmori's *Mi Casa de Nipa* was awarded special prize with the same cash value as Cano's prize.[7]

Although drama had its moment of glory especially in the vernacular during this period, dramatic writing did not have much

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[6] *Ibid.* p. 516.

[7] Estanislao Abinea, *Historia Analítica de la Literatura Filipino-Hispana. Desde 1566 Hasta Medios de 1954* (Quezon City, August 1964), pp. 85-86, 94

attraction for writers in Spanish. But while dramatic works were fewer compared with poems and short stories, they were enough to arouse public interest in the theater from 1903 to 1911. The introduction of movies in 1910, and their great popularity caused a decline in drama. But after Claro M. Recto's plays, "La Ruta de Damasco" (The Route to Damascus) and "Sólo Entre Las Sombras" (Alone Among The Shadows), were awarded first prize in national literary contests in Manila, these revived interest in drama which continued until 1941. Other important plays of the period were Luis Moreno Jeres' "Cuando el Amor Llama" (When Love Calls), Antonio Abad's "Dagohoy", "Calvario de un Alma" (Calvary of a Soul) (1918), "La Redimida" (The Redeemed) (1925); Jesús Balmori's "Aves de Rapiña" (Birds of Prey), "Filipinizad a los Filipinos", (Filipinize the Filipinos), and "La Flor del Carmelo" (The Flower of Carmel); Pascual Poblete's "El Amor Patrio" (Love of Country), and Benigno del Rio's "El Hijo de Madame Butterfly" (The Son of Madame Butterfly). [8]

Few novels written in Spanish during this period were as distinguished as poetry. Many novels were printed in beautiful editions; others were serialized in daily newspapers like *La Vanguardia, El Debate, La Opinión, El Mercantil.*[9]

Antonio Abad and Jesús Balmori were probably the most outstanding novelists of the period. Other novelists were Rafael Ripoll, Enrique Centenera, Benigno del Río, and Estanislao Alinea.

Considered the most outstanding novel of the period was *El Campeón* of Antonio Abad. It won first prize in the National Literary contest sponsored by the Commonwealth Government in 1939. Other Zóbel prize winning novels of Abad were *El Ultimo Romántico* (1927), and *La Oveja de Nathán* (1929). The novels *Bancarrota de Almas, Se desbojó la Flor* and *Los Pájaros de Fuego*

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[8]Luis Martinez, *Literature Filipina en Castellano* (Madrid: Editorial Nacional, 1974), pp. 56-57.

[9]Estanislao Alinea, "Philippine Literature in Spanish from the Literature of Protest to Efflorescence," *Brown Heritage Essays on Filipino Cultural Tradition and Literature* by A. Manuud (Q.C.: Ateneo Press, 1967), p. 512.

by Jesús Balmori enjoyed the patronage of the public. Buenaventura Rodriguez's *La Pugna*, also won the Zóbel prize in 1924.[10]

The essay in Spanish continued to enjoy great popularity during this period. Books of essays on every subject or theme appeared almost monthly, and individual pieces appeared in newspapers. The essays were either didactic or critical. Their subjects delved on folklore, literature, social, political, and even religious problems. In time, the essay developed into a formidable tool for formalizing public opinion.

The more significant essayists were Claro M. Recto, Teodoro M. Kalaw, Vicente Sotto, Epifanio de los Santos, Trinidad Pardo de Tavera, Jorge Bocobo, Rafael Palma, Fernando Ma. Guerrero, and Cecilio Apóstol.[11]

Some of the more representative essays written were: Claro M. Recto's *El Castellano Como Factor de Nuestra Nacionalidad*, Teodoro M. Kalaw's *Las Cinco Reglas de Nuestra Moral Antigua*, Rafael Palma's *Alma Mater*, and Epifanio de los Santos' *Filipinas, Filipinos, y Filipinistas*.[12]

Among the various literary types, it was the short story in Spanish which inspired the most numerous and the best writers. Many essayists, poets, dramatists, and newspaper editors tried their hand at writing short stories. Various literary contests stimulated the publication of short stories both in book form and in the literary sections of the newspapers, particularly *La Vanguardia*, *El Debate*, and *Nueva Era*.

Among the best writers of the period were Enrique K. Laygo, Buenaventura Rodríguez, Manuel S. Guerrero, Fernando Ma. Guerrero, Antonio M. Abad, Jesús Balmori, Francisco Rodríguez, Vivencio del Rosario, Carlos Ledesma, Alejo Valdez Pica, and Evangelina Guerrero Zacarías. Those who wrote for *Renacimiento Filipino* were José Mariño, Angel Guerra, and Pascual Poblete.

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[10]Estanislao Alinea, *Historia Analítica de la Literatura Filipino-Hispana: Desde 1566 Hasta Medios de 1964* (Quezon City, August 1964), pp. 94-95.

[11]Luis Mariñas, *Literatura Filipina en Castellano* (Madrid: Editorial Nacional, 1974), p. 53.

[12]Estanislao Alinea, "Philippine Literature in Spanish from the Literature of Protest to Efflorescence," *Brown Heritage: Essays on Filipino Cultural Tradition and Literature* by A. Manuud (Q.C.: Ateneo Press, 1967), p. 514.

Among those who won in literary contests were Enrique K. Laygo, Enrique Centenera, Vicente de Jesús, Marceliano Ocampo, José Hernández Gavira, and Estanislao Alinea. Other writers were Epifanio de los Santos, José Teotico, Rafael and Miguel Ripoll, and Benigno del Río. Most distinguished of these was Enrique K. Laygo, who won the Premio Zóbel for his collection of short stories *Caretas*.[13]

The most noteworthy collections of short stories were Enrique K. Laygo's *Caretas*, Benigno del Rio's *Prejuicio de Raza*, and Evangelina Guerrero Zacarías' *Primicías*.[14]

At this time, there also appeared two new forms of the short story: the "Instantánea" or "Ráfaga", a brief anecdote or account of incidents and the prosa romántica, full of figures of speech and told in flowering phrases.[15] Jesus Balmori excelled in these new forms.

Jesús Balmori, distinguished Filipino–Spanish journalist, poet, novelist, playwright, and a short story writer, was born on January 10, 1886, in Ermita, Manila.

He was first educated at home and later at the Ateneo Municipal. After completing his studies at the Ateneo, he enrolled at San Juan de Letran for a Bachelor of Arts Degree and received his B.A. diploma in 1900.

Balmori studied law on his own, and then he worked in the law office of Mr. Hartigou. Unable to adjust to the formalities of the law office, he turned to his real vocation, writing.

In 1902, he spent some time in Japan. He travelled to Spain in 1924, and there he was well received as a poet.

During the Japanese occupation, a prolonged illness forced him to withdraw from his hectic writing activities. After the Japanese occupation, he once more pursued a hectic literary career. This was cut short however, when he died on May 3,1948.

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[13] Estanislao Alinea, *Historia Analítica de la Literatura Filipino-Hispana; Desde 1566 Hasta Medios de 1964* (Q.C., August 1964), pp. 98-99.

[14] Alinea, "Philippine Literature in Spanish from the Literature of Protest to Efflorescence," *op. cit.*, p. 513.

[15] Alinea, *op. cit.*, p. 99.

J. Balmori published his first volume of poems entitled *Rimas Malayas* at the age of 17. These poems though written at a very young age, were remarkable for their spiritual and nationalistic fervor.

In 1908, in a poetry contest during the celebration of Rizal Day, three of his poems entitled *Specs, Vae Victis*, and *Himno a Rizal* won the first, second and third prize, and this event securely established him as a major poet. Another poem entitled *Himno a la Patria* garnered first prize in 1939. His collection of poems entitled *Mi Casa de Nipa* won the grand prize for poetry in 1940. On the eve of his death, he composed his last poem *A Cristo*, perhaps unconsciously anticipating his reunion with his Creator.

Balmori was also considered one of the outstanding novelists of his time. His first novel *Bancarrota de Almas* published in 1910, was considered quite remarkable for its time. This novel treats the theme of sensuality and the main character enunciates Balmori's modern and rebellious ethical concept that morality is an individual affair. His second novel *Se Deshojó la Flor* also on a similar theme advances a step further and satirizes the existence of God. Both novels present the principal characters at war with the hypocritical moral conventions of society and its limited aspirations. In his third novel *Pájaros de Fuego*. the protagonist does not only accept the existence of a supreme creator but also the limitations of society. Written during his forced retirement during World War II, this novel, distinctly patriotic in content, is considered the most important prose work of Balmori. The book was acquired by the Philippine Government and remains unpublished up to the present.

As a journalist, Balmori wrote in various newspapers like *El Renacimiento, La Vanguardia, El Debate, Día Filipino. Revista Filipina, Philippine Free Press*, and *Voz de Manila*: After sometime, he became editor of *La Vanguardia*.

Using the pseudonym Batikuling, Balmori wrote a daily column of satirical verses entitled *Vida Manileña* en *La Vanguardia*. In 1928, he compiled these satirical verses into a volume entitled *El Libro de Mis Vidas Manileñas*.

Balmori also wrote several plays. In 1904, his zarzuela *Aves de Rapiña* was performed at the Opera house, but as it was

not greatly acclaimed, Balmori did not write another drama until 1926. This poetic drama was entitled *Flor de Carmelo*. In 1940, he wrote his last drama *Filipinizad a los Filipinos*.

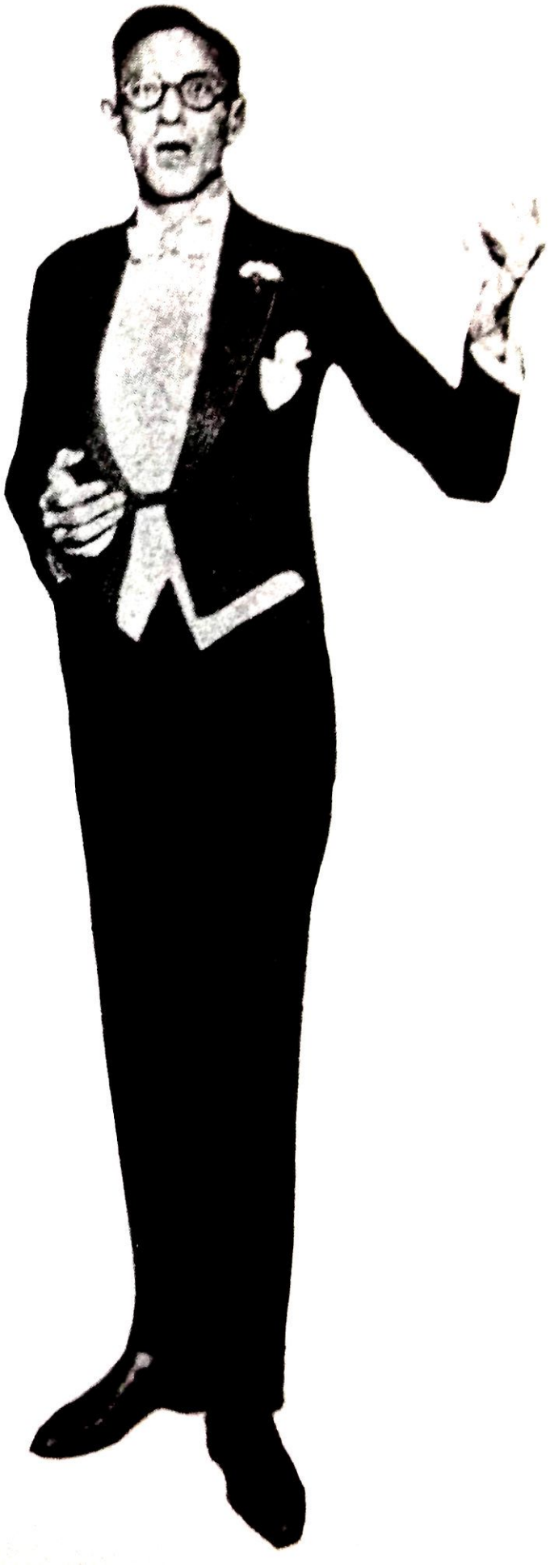
Balmori likewise distinguished himself as a short story writer. His multifarious stories, the quality and quantity he published from 1900-1941 in all the important newspapers and journals illustrate his extraordinary talent.

As a short story writer. Balmori concerns himself with middle and low class characters, but not with the ordinary days in their life. Balmori always presents a major event in these characters' lives. The characters appeal to our sympathies because they struggle against the forces of nature, or the restrictions of the social, moral, or even religious codes of their world, Their struggles either end in death or survival. Their survival is accompanied by a deeper moral awareness and reverence for life.

Balmori's concern with life of the middle and low classes, his sympathy for their wretchedness and suffering, his emphasis on ethical issues, all these, is what makes Balmori's short stories resemble the short stories of the French writers - Alphonse Daudet, Guy de Maupassant, and Prosper Merimee.

Two characteristics, however make them distinct: all of the stories whether serious or humorous emphasize the moral concern of the writer, and all of them display the writer's mastery of the Spanish language. Without doubt, Balmori's short stories constitute one of the most precious legacies of Philippine colonial literature and culture.

PILAR EUGENIA MARIÑO



# ALMAS LOCAS

(1908)

## I

Cuando él llegó, la encontró pálida, temblorosa, tratando de reír y hablar en nerviosismo intenso, en atropellamiento de fingires que ocultaban algo; pero no la hizo caso, no quiso ni debió entrever ninguna falta, y por eso, como todos los días, más cariñosamente aún, la besó con el beso purísimo, con el beso santo de los hombres buenos.

— ¿Has tenido mucho trabajo hoy?

— Sí, mucho, como siempre, pero no me canso ¿sabes?; no me canso porque sobre el trabajo estás tú, te veo a ti, y tú endulzas mis horas de tarea en un recuerdo de amor, en el ansia inmensa de terminarlo, de acabar pronto, pronto para correr a ti, para amarte a ti y descansar en ti, vida de mi vida, vida del corazón. . .

## II

¿Estaría enferma? ¿sería acaso aquello un síntoma, un anuncio?

Sonrió el pobre hombre sobre la alegría del pensar, ante aquella esperanza de hacía dos años—los dos años de su boda—; y se lo dijo a ella, mirándola mucho, poniendo en sus ojos ilusiones y luz.

— ¿Tienes eso? . .

No, no tenía eso, no estaba enferma; que no fuera él inquisidor y cursi, las mujeres lo que tienen son días tontos, horas tontas de aburrimiento y nostalgia. . .

Insatisfecho, dolorosamente triste también él ahora, la miraba, la miraba despacio, sin ternuras, analizando en su fondo aquel

# CRAZY SOULS

## I

When he arrived, he found her pale, trembling, trying to laugh and talk very excitedly, disregarding all pretences that concealed something, but he did not mind her. He did not want to nor did he want to suspect any misdeed, and therefore, like every day, even more affectionately, he kissed her with the most chaste kiss, with the saintly kiss of the good men.

"Did you have a lot of work today?"

"Yes, as always, but I do not get tired, you know? I do not get tired because in addition to the job you are there, I see you and you brighten up my working hours in memory of love, in the immense desire to finish it, to finish quickly, at once, so I can run to you, to love you, to confide in you, my dearest darling, my dearest love."

## II

Could she be ill? Could that perhaps be a symptom, a sign?

The poor man smiled over the happiness of the thought, before that expectation of almost two years—two years of his marriage; and he told her, looking at her intently, causing illusions and light in his eyes.

"Are you...?"

No, she was not, she was not ill; he should not be inquisitive and vulgar; what women have are silly days, silly hours of boredom and nostalgia...

Unsatisfied, now also painfully sad, he looked at her, looked at her slowly and without tenderness, searching deeply the whys

caso raro presentado luego de dos primaveras de paz y amor en su hogar dichoso; y una idea loca hija de la pasión y el egoísmo, hija de ese pobre sentimiento que nos hace temer la pérdida de lo que nos costó tanto, de lo que nos hizo dar sangre y lágrimas, invadió su cerebro y fue agrandándose, agrandándose. . .

## III

Fingió, dormir, como todas las noches, a la paz de Dios. Junto a él su mujer, aquella mujer tan adorada estaba quieta, estaba como dormida también.

Era el silencio; por el balcón abierto la luz de la luna invadía la alcoba; un reloj de gran péndulo sonaba las horas monorrítmicamente.

Las IX, las X, las XII. . .

Oía las horas, las horas tristes, las horas que se van llevando poco a poco la vida; ¡que tarde ya! por fin, a las II. . .

Sintió pasos en la calle, sintió a su mujer, silenciosa ladrona de honor, levantarse lentamente del lecho. . .

Y no sintió más, no sintió más, porque la vida,—larga y siempre miserable vida—pareció huir de él, hundirle bajo muchos, muchos metros de tierra.

## IV

La luz del alba, yerta, luz alumbradora del alma en desolación, envolvía la escena.

Tornó ella silente, sigilosa, andando con las puntas de los pies por no despertar, por no levantar ni un eco; entonces él rió una carcajada y avanzó a su vez, avanzó hacia ella cauteloso, arrastrándose hasta ceñirla en un abrazo último, hundiendo las uñas de sus manos en el cuello de ella, desnudo y albo como lirio de ensueño. . .

Inclinó los ojos sobre el cuerpo muerto; de la alfombra roja surgían en blancura de estrellas las formas esculturales; la cabellera suelta en halo de misterio en torno al rostro levemente azulado, con los labios en sangre y los ojos semiabiertos en sombra encantadora de violetas. . .

of that peculiar happening in their happy home after two springs of peace and love. And a crazy idea, child of passion and egotism, child of that poor feeling that makes us fear the loss of that which had cost us so much, that which made us shed blood and tears, overcame his brains and began growing, expanding...

## III

He pretended to be asleep soundly, like in the past nights. His wife beside him, that so adored wife was quiet and seemed to be sleeping also.

It was the silence; through the open balcony the moonlight flooded the bedroom; a big pendulum clock chimed the hours monotonously.

Nine, ten, twelve o'clock...

He heard the hour, the sad hour, the hours that little by little take life away. How late it was! Finally, it was two o'clock.

He heard footsteps on the street, he heard his wife, Honor's silent thief, get out of bed very slowly.

And he heard nothing more, he heard nothing more because life,—long and always miserable life—seemed to flee from him, to bury him beneath many, many meters of earth.

## IV

The light of dawn, harsh, illuminating light of a soul in desolation, enveloped the scene.

She returned silently, stealthily, walking on tiptoe so as not to rouse, so as not to stir up even an echo. Then he burst out laughing, and in turn advanced, moved toward her cautiously, dragging himself until he got hold of her in one last embrace, sinking the nails of his hands in her neck, naked and white like an ideal lily.

He turned his eyes over the dead body; from the red rug emerged in the starry whiteness sculptural forms; the loose hair in a mysterious halo around the slightly bluish face, with the bloody lips and half-closed eyes in an enchanting shade of violets.

Y al verla tan dulcemente preciosa, un soplo de piedad trágica erizó sus cabellos, escalofrió su cuerpo y le hizo llorar por amor a la forma, y por la muerte, dolor de los amores.

¡Qué bella!. . .

JACINTO

And upon seeing her so sweetly beautiful, a gust of tragic piety made his hair stand on end, chilled his body, and made him cry for love of the form, and for death, loves' grief.

"How beautiful!..."

---

Thomas Aquino Manila (August 1918), pp. 41-42.

# MATERNIDAD

(1918)

## I

ROSARIO FORTUNI, divina flor de carne y luz blanca, milagrosa gardenia abierta como una estrella en la vida, para reina de la vida, embriagarla toda de ilusión y hermosura, se había casado al fin por sobre la voluntad de toda su familia, por sobre el asombro de todos sus amigos, por sobre la carcajada larga y general de toda la sociedad.

Porque ella, tan ansiosa y enormemente codiciada y enamorada por todos los petimetres de salón; ella que, por obra y gracia de su sola gentileza, de su sola belleza, arrastraba a su paso y postraba a su paso a toda una legión de invictos adoradores; se había casado, despreciando lujos, vanidades y murmuraciones y consejos, con un cualquiera, con un pobre literato sin nombre y sin fortuna, pobre hombre con la frente llena de ensueños y la ropa de zurcidos, que, a pesar de su pobreza material, supo, acaso en una gentil hora de mariposísmo de la gentil, interesarle y de amores llagarle y rendirle el corazón.

Y alla estaba, casada hacía un mes, o dos, o tres, palpitando de amor, como una paloma, en un mísero nido de cañas y de nipas que él pudo darle a cambio de los salones de su casa, comiendo pescaditos y *gulayes* y arroz moreno que la madre de él cocía para todos; vestida burdamente, como cualquier hija del pueblo, sin más esencias que las de las malvarrosas y las camias del solar, ni más joyas que los claros diamentes de su ciega pasión inmensa . . . allá estaba, sin un espejo a cambio de los incontables gigantes espejos de su casa, donde verse tan bella, más hermosa ahora, sin

# MOTHERHOOD

## I

Rosario Fortuni, divine flower of mortal flesh and white light, miraculous gardenia, open like a star never seen in a million years, queen of life, in order to enrapture her all over with dream and beauty, got married finally against the wishes of all her family, to the astonishment of all her friends, despite the long and general burst of laughter of the whole society.

Because she had married a nobody, ignoring luxuries, vanities and gossips and advice, a poor writer, unknown and without a fortune, a poor man with his head full of dreams and his clothes all mended, who, despite his material poverty knew, perhaps in a pleasant moment of the charming young girl's flirting, how to arouse her interest, how to wound her with love, and make her surrender her heart; she who had been so eagerly and extremely coveted and loved by all the drawing room fops; she who solely by the grace of her charm, of her beauty, would draw to her path, would make a legion of unconquered admirers prostrate as she passed by.

And there she was, married a month ago, or two, or three, throbbing with love like a dove, in a miserable nipa hut that he was able to give her in exhange for the drawing rooms of her home, eating small fishes and vegetables and brown rice that his mother cooked for everyone. She was dressed coarsely like any village girl, without any perfume than that of the rose mallows and the *camias* from the yard, without any jewels except the bright diamonds of her blind great passion... there she was, without any mirror in exchange for the innumerable giant mirrors of her house, where she could see herself so beautiful now, without any

más adornos que sus largos cabellos sueltos por todo su cuerpo, transparentando su blanca carne ideal y divina a traves del basto *sinamay*, calzando sus piececitos tan breves, tan bellos, tan de rosa, con unos corchos destendidos y míseros. . . . Allá estaba, soportándolo todo en aras de su amor, en oblación santísima a su amor, completamente enferma, loca, moribunda de amor. . . .

## II

Los primeros meses, aún tuvieron algo que comer; después. . .

Después el hambre se lo mataron con lágrimas y besos, hasta que ella, ante el impotente para la lucha, el triste fracasado de la vida, desesperada, se dirigió, en vano, a los suyos, buscó, en vano trabajo para él y para ella; y no pudiendo nada, nada, nada, contra la ola inmensa de tristeza y miseria que venía a arrollarles se sintió sucumbir, sucumbió estrellada por la ola. . .

¡Oh, su vida!. . . ¿Qué había ella hecho de su vida?. . .

Poco a poco la ilusión del amor se iba fugando. . . . Ella sentía que sus blancas rosas perdían su perfume, que las blancas palomas alzaban su vuelo; que las blancas estrellas se apagaban poco a poco. . .

Lo sentía, lo sentía llorando, lo sentía clamando, lo sentía muriendo, lo sentía en su alma y en sus carnes fustigadas por el dolor del amor que se moría!. . . . y, oh, lo más cruel y espantoso era que aquel Luis, su hasta entonces divino héroe de fantásticos ensueños, se borraba en su vida como un sueño, como otro sueño del que ella, la mísera, no quería despertar!. . .

## III

Y al fin llegó, en una triste tarde de lluvia y desolación, la hora esperada y cruel.

– Tú veras, dijo ella angustiadísima, resuelta, dispuesta a todo, tu verás la forma de acabar esta vida así . . . . . Yo estoy enferma, Luis, yo no estoy bien. . . .

– Ah, suspiró él, abatido, derrotado, lagrimoso. . . . ¿Crees tú, puedes creer tú, imaginarlo tan siquiera que yo quiero esto que yo puedo vivir también así viendo esta vida, viéndote a ti en dolor, sumida dolorosa de mi alma?. . .

adornments other than that of her long hair flowing over her body, revealing her white, lovely, and gorgeous flesh through the coarse *sinamay*, wearing faded and wretched cork slippers on her feet so little, so beautiful, so very pink... There she was, enduring everything for the sake of her love, as a holy offering to her love, completely lovesick, madly, and helplessly in love.

## II

The first months, they still had something to eat; afterwards . . .

Afterwards they staved off their hunger with tears and kisses, until she, desperate before one who is helpless in struggle and the sad failure of life, turned in vain to her family, searched in vain for work, for him and for herself; and being able to do nothing, nothing, against the immense wave of sadness and misery that swept them away, succumbed, shattered by the wave.

Oh, her life!... What had she done with her life?

Little by little the lovely dream was vanishing... She felt that her white roses were losing their scent, that the white doves were taking off, that the white stars were dimming little by little.

She was sorry, she regretted bemoaning, she regretted crying out, she was grievously sorry; she deeply regretted in her heart pierced by the pain of love that was dying! . . . and what was most cruel and terrifying was that he, Luis, who until then was the divine hero of her fantastic dreams, was being erased from her life like a dream, like another dream from which she, the miserable, did not want to wake up.

## III

And finally, in a sad afternoon of rain and desolation, the awaited and cruel hour arrived.

"You will see," she said, very distressed, determined, willing to do everything, "you will see the way this life is going to end soon... I am sick, Luis, I am not well."

"Oh," he sighed, dejected, defeated, tearful... "Do you believe, can you believe, can you even imagine that I like this, that

— Pero es que ni tu cariño ni tu intención me salvan, nos salvan de esta vida así!. . .

— Y ¿qué quieres tú que yo haga, si parece que una fatalidad me cierra todas las puertas y me persigue a todas partes?. . . . .

— ¡Oh!

— Tú sabías, mujer, tú sabías que yo era pobre y me quisiste pobre; ¿a qué ahora esa tu desesperación?

Ella no pudo ya; se ahogaba; y se alzó clamorosa: — Pobre!. . . pobre!. . . ya lo creo que sabía que eras pobre, pero pobres hay miles y todos comen, y todos trabajan y hasta son felices!. . . . Tú eres un hombre de talento, fuerte, joven, sano; ¿por qué, si no encuentras un trabajo intelectual, no lo buscas por ti y por mí, y por tu madre, y nuestro amor, aunque sea cavando piedras en las calles? Eso no te debía avergonzar; ¡eso no avergüenza a nadie! Todo lo contrario. Sería tu mayor honor. Sería la gloria para ti!

Y no dijo más, doblándose como una dulce flor sobre el tallo tembloroso de su cuerpo, sollozando locamente ante el esposo mísero, que, espantado y humillado y pisoteado, con las manos abiertas sobre el rostro, de cara a la pared, sollozaba también.

## IV

Una noche, una de esas noches locas de estrellas y de flores y brisas, Rosario Fortuni, en total renuncia de ilusiones y miserias, de su vida y de su amor, comenzó a dar oídos a las tentaciones de una nueva vida y de otro nuevo amor, deslumbrantes y fastuosos, que de rodillas a sus pies la brindaba uno de sus antiguos galanes de salón.

Y, decidida a todo, al escándalo, a la muerte, a lo que fuera, en ausencia del marido que desde la mañana se había ausentado en la ciudad vagando en busca de trabajo, se dispuso, abandonándolo todo, hasta el pobre *tampipi* de las cuatro sayas y camisas que cubrían su cuerpo, a huir del hogar de su amor y su lloro, para siempre jamás.

I can also live like this seeing this life, seeing you in pain, you, the deepest sorrow of my soul."

"But neither your love nor your pain will save me, will save us from this kind of life!"

"And what do you want me to do? It seems that fate closes all doors to me and pursues me everywhere."

"Oh!"

"Woman, you knew, you knew that I was poor and you loved me poor as I was; why do you despair now?"

She could not stand it anymore, she was suffocating, and she stood up complaining: "Poor! Poor!... of course I knew you were poor, but there are thousands of poor people and everyone eats, and everyone works, and they all are even happy! You are a man of talent, strong, young, healthy: why, if you cannot find work that requires the use of the mind, why don't you look for work for you, for me, for your mother, and our love, even if it is digging rocks on the streets? That should not be shameful to you, that isn't shameful to anybody. On the contrary, it would be your great honor. It would be a glory for you!"

And she said nothing more, stooping like a sweet flower on a trembling stem of its body, sobbing bitterly in front of her miserable husband who, scared and humiliated and trampled on, with his open hands over his face, facing the wall, was sobbing also.

## IV

One night, one of those nights full of stars, flowers, and breezes, Rosario Fortuni, in total renunciation of her dreams and miseries, of her life and of her love, began listening to the temptations of another new love and a new life which one of her former dazzling and lavish suitors was offering her on bended knees.

And, having made up her mind to do everything to face the scandal, to die, to whatever may happen, during the absence of her husband who since that morning left for the city wandering in search of work, she got ready, leaving him everything, even her poor "tampipi" containing the four skirts and blouses that covered her body, to run away from the home of her love and tears, for ever and ever.

Resueltamente se bajó, sin despedirse de la madre de él, sin despedirse de nadie, ni de su dulce y doloroso pasado, no queriendo volver los ojos ni el alma atrás. . . Y así llegó tambaleando como una ebria, como una enferma hasta la puerta del solar y de la calle. . . .

Iba a ser libre; iba a ser feliz al fin, por fin; iba a volver a todos los esplendores, a todas las galas, a toda la vida del ayer tan lejano ya, tan brumoso, pero tan encantado, tan de remanso y paz . . . . Nunca, como una vez perdida, pudo ella apreciar y darse cuenta de lo que en la vida valía ese oro que desprecian los poetas y los locos como su esposo. . . . ¡Nunca!. . . . .

Pero no pasó la puerta que separaba el pobre nido de cañas y nipas de su entero y dorado porvenir; no pasó la puerta que separaba la santidad de su amor y su pobreza del camino del deshonor y el bienestar lujoso; y no la pasó, ni pudo pasarla, ni la pasaría ya jamás, porque, en el mismo instante que trasponía su dintel, sintió que del fondo de sus entrañas se alzaba, paralizándola toda, en sus pies, en su cerebro, en su alma y su corazón, un temblor divino y angustioso, glorioso y celestial, de una nueva vida y una nueva alma que, como una flor en el fondo más hondo de su ser, se abría lentamente. . . .

Y Rosario Fortuni quedo allí, apoyada como una mata de rosas abrumada, contra las viejas cañas del cerco del solar, que se venía abajo. . . . Quedó allí, como clavada, como muerta, riendo, llorando, mucho tiempo, tanto que, cuando Luis llegó jadeante, con la buena nueva de un trabajo importante que le dieran al fin, que significaba sueldo y participación jugosos, substanciosos, permanentes, más que bastantes para hacer felices a los dos, y asegurar su porvenir, en la dirección de una poderosa empresa periodística, la encontró aun allí, acurrucada todavía, toda bañada por la luna, hermosa y pura como una Inmaculada, alzándose ante él y cayendo en sus brazos, en su alma, a refugiarse en ellos para toda su vida. . . .

— Luis, Luis, Luis mío!. . . Abrázame, bésame, así, así, más fuerte todavía!. . . . .

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*Revista Filipina.* (1918), pp. 714-716.

Resolutely she went down the house, without bidding goodbye to his mother, without bidding goodbye to anybody not even to her sweet and painful past, not wishing to turn her eyes nor her soul back. And so she reached as far as the gate of the yard and the streets staggering like a drunk, like a sick woman.

She was going to be free; she was going to be free at last, finally; she was going to return to all those splendors, to all her finery, to all that life of yesterday now so distant, so misty, but so enchanting, so safe and peaceful . . . Never, if lost once, could she appreciate and realize how valuable in life was that gold that poets and madmen like her husband despise... Never!...

But she did not cross the gate that separated the poor nest of bamboo and nipa from her entire and golden future, she did not cross the door that separated the sanctity of her love and her poverty from the road to dishonor and luxurious well-being; and she did not cross it nor was she able to cross it, nor would she cross it ever, because at the very moment that she was crossing over its threshold, she felt from the depths of her entrails, paralyzing her all over, rising in her feet, in her brain, in her soul, and her heart a divine and distressing, glorious and celestial stirring of a new life and new soul that like a flower in the deepest part of her being, was opening slowly...

And Rosario Fortuni remained there, like a crushed rosebush leaning against the old bamboo of the yard's fence that was falling down. She remained there as though dumbfounded, like a corpse, laughing, crying for a long time, so much so that when Luis arrived panting, with good news of an important job given him at last in the editorship of a powerful newspaper, which meant a lucrative, substantial, and permanent salary and profit sharing, more than enough to make both of them happy, and to assure their future. He found her still there, still curled up, bathed all over by the moonlight, beautiful and pure like the Immaculate Conception, rising up before him and falling into his arms, into his soul, to seek shelter in them for the whole of her life.

"Luis, Luis, my Luis!... Hold me, kiss me, like this, like this, even stronger!...

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*Revista Filipina.* Manila (September 1918), pp. 714-716.

# EL MAYOR PECADO

(1920)

## I

Pues señor, este era un niño llamado Juanito, que tenía una madre más hermosa que una rosa y un padre más bueno que el pan.

Vivían en una casa muy bonita, toda azul, rodeada de jardines llenos de flores, de pájaros, de mariposas y de brisas.

Y Juanito, que acababa de cumplir tres años, tenía puesta el alma en el jardín.

Una vieja ama le seguía cuidadosa, de cerca, en sus locas correrías por entre hojas y flores y espesuras, en los días de sol y las noches lunares. Porque Juanito, a pesar de ser bueno, era un poco travieso, y al menor descuido se zambullía en la pila del estanque para apresar por las alas un pato, o volvía con las ropas y la cara desgarradas por las espinas de un rosal. . . .

El aya vociferaba entonces: "Pero, ¿ha visto usted, señor mío Jesucristo?. . .

Mientras el niño se excusaba ingenuamente: "Estaba yo cogiendo el rabo del patito, y me cayó en el agua. . ."

## II

Juanito no era el único niño de la casa, ni era el único rondador de los jardines.

Muchas veces, tumbado panza arriba bajo un árbol de fuego que le iba echando sus sangrientas flores, otro niño, con los ojos abiertos al cielo, se pasaba tendido sobre el césped horas y más horas indolentemente.

# THE GREATEST SIN

## I

Well, sir, this was a boy named Juanito, who had a mothe more beautiful than a rose and a father who was kindness itself

They lived in a very nice house, all blue, surrounded by gardens full of flowers, birds, butterflies, and breezes.

Juanito, who had just turned three years old, had his hear set on the garden.

An old nurse followed him carefully, closely, in his wil trips between leaves, flowers, and thickets on sunny days an moonlit nights. For Juanito, despite being good, was a littl mischievous, and if the attention of the nurse wandered for minute, he would plunge into the basin of the ornamental lak in order to grasp by its wings a duck, or he usually returned wit his clothes and face rent by the thorns of a rose bush.

The nurse would then shout: "Jesus Christ, just look at him.

While the child excused himself ingenuously saying: "I wa catching the tail of the duckling and I fell in the water!"

## II

Juanito was not the only child of the house, nor was h the only one who prowled in the garden.

Many times, while lying on his back under a flame tree whic kept showering its blood-red flowers on him, another boy wit eyes staring at the sky, lazily stretched out on the lawn for hour and hours.

Este niño era mayor que Juanito algunos años; se llamaba Pepito; era un verdadero diablo; y si estaba allí, era por ser hijo del mayordomo de la casa.

Pocas veces jugaban juntos, pero en cuanto el ama se descuidaba y los niños se juntaban, Pepito enseñaba al pequeño a disparar piedras con un tirador hecho de elásticos, contra todos los pájaros, todas las mariposas y todas las ramas abrumadas de flores.

A más de pegar con un bejuquillo a los pobres patitos del estanque, o a los nevados gansos que huían parpando, distendiendo las inmaculadas eses de sus cuellos, antisonoramente. . . .

## III

Un día el ama sorprendió a Juanito con un palpitante pajarito, sin voz ni plumas, en el cuenco de las manos.

— ¿Qué es eso, Juanito?. . .

— ¡Etaba yo con Pepito juegando y él se subió en el albor y sacó la casa del pajarito!. . .

¡El dichoso Pepito del demonio!. . . Nada, que efectivamente. que se había subido al árbol de fuego, trepando como un simio por sus ramas expuesto a romperse el alma, y mire usted que gracia, hombre! . . . Todo por a robarle el nido a una pobre *maya* que estaría a estas horas loca de dolor buscando al tierno hijuelo, al pobre pajarito aquel, que tiritaba de frío y de temor entre los dedos mal cerrados del chiquillo. . .

— ¿Y qué vamos a hacer ahora con ese infeliz? . . .

— ¡Yo quiero que lo cuides tú también, yaya! . . .

—"¡Pero si era muy chiquitín!. . . Sí se moriría separado de su madre, sin que su madre le pusiera con su pico en el piquito los partidos granos y los levísimos insectos de colores de su sustento diario!. . ."

— ¡Pues yo. . . yo quiero que lo cuides!. . .

— ¡Vamos!. . . ¡Qué fuera razonable!. . . ¡lo ves!. . . ¿Cómo iban a arreglarse para cuidar al pajarito sin su mama?

Juanito reflexionó un instante, con la frente abatida sobre el pecho, dudando si capitular ante el ama que ahora hablaba de volver el pajarito al nido, al árbol, a la madre!. . .

This boy was a few years older than Juanito. He was called Pepito and was truly devilish, and if he was there, it was because he was the son of the butler of the house.

A few minutes the two played together, but if the nurse was not careful and the boys got together, Pepito would teach the younger boy to shoot stones with a slingshot made of elastic rubber at the birds, at all the butterflies, and all the flower-laden branches.

Besides beating with a small rattan stick the poor ducklings of the pond or the snow-white geese that fled cackling dissonantly stretching their immaculate S-shaped necks...

## III

One day the nurse caught Juanito unawares with a trembling bird which had no voice or feathers, in the hollow of his hands.

"What is that, Juanito?"

"I was playing with Pepito and he went up the tree and took the nest of the little bird!"

That cursed devilish Pepito! Well, in fact, he had climbed up the flame tree, scaling its branches like a monkey and taking the risk of breaking his neck, and what a dirty trick it is, man! It was all just to steal the nest from the poor sparrow who probably at this hour is mad with grief searching for its young birdie, that poor little bird that is shivering with cold and fright in the hardly closed fingers of the boy.

"And what are we going to do now with that poor thing?" said the nurse.

"I want you to take care of him also, nurse!" said the boy.

"But it is very small! It will surely die if separated from his mother, without its mother putting with her beak the split grains and the very light colorful insects into its little beak as its daily food."

"Well I... I want you to take care of him!" said the boy.

"Come now! Be reasonable! See! How would one manage taking care of the little bird without its mother?"

Juanito thought for a little while, with his forehead lowered on his chest, doubting whether to agree with the nurse who was

Pero de pronto alzó la cabeza triunfalmente, radiante y altanero. . .

¡No!. . . ¡Qué no lo devolviera!. . . Pepito lo había cogido para él, y se había hasta hecho daño, se había hecho pedazos los fondillos por cogerlo para él. . .

— ¡Si no le puede cuidar tú, búscale otra yaya al pajarito!

## IV

Han pasado días, muchos días, meses.

En su dorada jaula canta el *mayanpaking* sonoro y musical.

Su canto llena de alegría el corazón del niño que se ha hecho tan su amigo, que desde que abre los ojos, corre a él y le regala con cuantos granos y golosina a que sabe le son gratas y propicias.

Y está hermoso y bello el pajarito, que también tiene un nombre: Pinpín. ¡ Con sus rizadas plumas de colores, se dijera el arlequín de las flores en la perpetua fiesta de su vida!

— Canta una cosa, Pin-Pín. . ..

¡Pin-pín llena los aros de su jaula de trinos, como si todo él fuera un pentagrama, sobre el que volaran las notas como pétalos!.

Y Juanito ha olvidado sus juguetes: el fusil, el muñeco, la trompeta, la bola, el caballo, el tambor. . . Ha olvidado el estanque con su nieve de gansos y patitos. . . Ha olvidado los jardines con sus auras, sus aromas, sus corolas. . . Ha olvidado a Pepito. . . Ha olvidado a la misma yaya. . . . . ¡Sólo vive por Pin-pín!. . . ¡Por Pin-pín, mimado y regalado, que ahora mismo, aprovechando la ingenua confianza del niño, que le ha abierto la puerta de la jaula para llenarle de agua azucarada la tacita de cristal, sale de un brinco por la puerta, revolotea un instante por la estancia, y al fin, convencido de la fuerza de sus alas, las abre de par en par y huye por el balcón, rasgando el azul de aire, hasta perderse de los ojos, del alma, del amor del chiquillo, sin volver ni una vez la cabeza para decirle adiós siquiera, ebrio de luz, de vida y libertad!.

talking about returning the little bird to the nest, to the tree, to its mother!

But suddenly, he raised his head triumphantly, radiant, and proud.

No! She was not to return it! Pepito had caught the bird for him, and Pepito had even hurt himself and had ripped the seat of his pants, trying to catch it for him...

"If you cannot take care of it, look for another nurse for the little bird!"

## IV

Days passed, many days, months.

In its gilded cage sings the *mayanpaking* sonorously and melodiously.

Its song fills with happiness the heart of the boy who had made himself so much its friend, that from the time he opens his eyes, he runs to the bird and gives it some grains and titbits knowing what pleases it.

And the little bird is handsome and beautiful, and it also has the name Pin-pín. With its curly colored feathers, it could be said it was the harlequin of the flowers in the continuous happiness that was his life.

"Sing something, Pin-pín!"

And Pin-pin fills the hoop of its cage with warbles, as if all of him were a musical staff, over which the notes flew like petals!

And Juanito has forgotten his toys: the gun, the boy doll, the trumpet, the ball, the horse, the drum... He had forgotten the pond with its snow-white geese and ducklings. He has forgotten the garden with its gentle breeze, its fragrance, its flowers. He has forgotten Pepito. He has forgotten his own nurse. He lives only for Pin-pín! For Pin-pín, pampered and dainty, that even now, taking advantage of the naïve trust of the boy, who has opened the door of his cage to fill the little crystal cup with sweetened water, flies out instantly by the door, flutters an instant by the living room, and finally, sure of the strength of his wings, opens them wide and flees through the balcony, tearing through the blue sky, until he disappeared into the distance, from the soul, from the love of the little boy, without turning

Mas ¡ay!. . . Pepito, al otro lado del jardín, ha visto la encantada rosa de sus plumas temblando en el azul. Y fiel a sus instintos perversos, le ha disparado de improviso una piedra que le ha hecho pedazos la cabeza. Ahora cae, va cayendo en largos círculos temblorosos, como un herido corazón, como una llama, como una lágrima de sangre girante por los aires. . . . Ya está sobre la grama, ensangrentado, roto, muerto, borrados todos sus hermosos colores por el solo color de las purpúreas gotas que va manando la tremenda herida. . .

¡Se acabó el pobre Pin-pín!. . .

## V

Juanito ha enfermado de dolor y de pena.

Su alma purísima, su alma llena de amor y de ternura, violentamente sacudida por la visión del crimen, le ha inundado de fiebre y de delirio.

Ahora está la madre junto a su camita blanca, contándole un cuento de hadas, en el que un príncipe tan ingrato como Pin-pín y tan malo como Pepito, es convertido por la varita mágica de un hada en un murciélago hediondo y horroroso. . .

La voz de la madre suena lenta, dulce, santa y consoladora como una melodía. Juanito tiene muy abiertos los ojos, fijos en los ojos de la narradora gentil que ahora murmura: — Porque Dios siempre castiga a los ingratos, por medio de las hadas o por medio de los demonios. . . Pero siempre, siempre castiga sin palo ni piedra!. . .

El niño abre los ojos y los labios. Por primera vez en su vida filosofa.

Debilmente interroga: — ¿Era acaso un ingrato Pin-pín?. . .

— Sí, hijo mio, sí!. . . Un grandísimo ingrato!. . .

— Pues Dios le castigó con piedra, mamá! Con la piedra de Pepito!. . .

La madre cerró sus labios con un beso.

— ¡Si, tenía razón; ella se había equivocado; no se había acordado que la ingratitud es el mayor pecado de la vida y que los que pecan de ingratos pueden tener cualquier clase de castigo ya sea de las leyes humanas, ya de las divinas en los santos reinos de Dios nuestro Señor!

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*Revista Filipina.* Manila (July 1920), pp. 429-432.

once his head even to say goodbye, drunk with light, life and liberty!

But, oh!... Pepito at the other side of the garden, had seen the enchanting red spot of his feathers quivering in the blue sky. And true to his perverted instincts, unexpectedly hurled a stone that smashed the bird's head to pieces. Now the bird falls, starts falling in large staggering circles, like a wounded heart, like a flame, like a teardrop of blood gyrating in the air... Now he is on the Bermuda grass, bleeding, crushed; dead; all his beautiful colors erased solely by the color of the purple drops that keep flowing from the tremendous wound.

It was all over for Pin-pín.

Juanito fell sick with sorrow and a broken heart.

His extremely pure soul, his heart full of love and tenderness violently shaken by the sight of the crime, was overwhelmed with fever and delirium.

Now the mother is beside his white small bed, telling him a fairy tale, in which a prince as ungrateful as Pin-pín and as bad as Pepito, is transformed by the magic wand of a fairy into a stinking and horrible bat.

The voice of the mother sounds slow, sweet, saintly, and soothing like a melody. Juanito's eyes are wide open, fixed on the eyes of the gentle narrator who now murmured: "Because God always punishes the ungrateful, through the fairies or through the devils. But always, always he punishes without a stick or stone."

The child opened his eyes and lips. For the first time in his life he philosophises.

Weakly he asked: "Was Pin-pín perhaps ungrateful?"

"Yes, my son, yes! He was very ungrateful!"

"Then God punished him with a stone, Mama! With the stone of Pepito."

The mother silenced his lips with a kiss.

Yes, he was right; she had been mistaken, she had not remembered that ingratitude is the greatest sin in life, and those who sin by being ungrateful can receive any kind of punishment be it by human laws, or by the divine laws in the holy kingdom of our Lord!

*Revista Filipina.* Manila (July 1920), pp. 429-432.

# EL TRIUNFO DE LA VIDA

(1920)

## I

Comenzaba Noviembre, frío, brumoso, bajo una leve lluvia sutil como de lágrimas, como de pétalos. . . . Y aquel día, que era el dia de los muertos, doblaban las campanas de todos los templos dolorosamente.

En su lecho albo, perfumado, cálido, oloroso a flores, a carne de mujer, a amor, despertó, heridos los párpados por la ya alta luz del sol, Julio Santana. A su lado, de un lado dulcemente dormida aún, su hermosa y joven desposada agitaba su moreno pecho en un tenso y vagoroso suspiro.

La contemplaba el esposo, enamorado y rendido entre los encajes de las sábanas y las flores que la fue despetalando sobre todo el cuerpo en la noche anterior, en el encantado idilio. Un rayo de sol penetrando por el cristal de la ventana y por el tul del pabellón del lecho, acariciaba su negra cabellera destrenzada, enroscada a todo su cuerpo escultural como un manojo de olorosas serpientes retorcidas, por sus desnudos brazos, por su desnudo pecho, por toda su espalda, hasta el borde de los descalzos pies lechosos y juntos como las blancas alas de una paloma. . . . .

Julio Santana se incorporó, adorando el tesoro palpitante de divinas gracias que a su lado reposaba; el arca de todas las fragancias y todas las ternuras que a su lado descansaba; al vaso de cristal de vida y alegría y maravilla en cuyo fondo el alma dormía como una rosa. . . .

La besó en los ojos dormidos; en los labios entreabiertos, rosados, olorosos; en la frente hermosa que soñaba; en las manos,

# TRIUMPH OF LIFE

## I

November was beginning, cold, misty under a light thin rain as if it were of tears, of petals... And that day, which was the day of the dead, the bells in all the churches tolled sadly.

In his white bed, perfumed, warm, fragrant like flowers, like a woman's flesh, like love, Julio Santana awakened, his eyelids hurt by the already warm sunlight. Beside him, still sweetly asleep on her side, his beautiful and young wife heaved her brown breast in a tense and lingering sigh.

The husband contemplated her, enamored and exhausted between the laces of the blankets and the flower whose body he had been touching all over the night before, in the enchanting idyll. A sunbeam penetrating through the window pane and through the tulle of the bed's canopy, caressed her black hair, unbraided, coiled over all her shapely body like a heap of fragrant serpents twisted over her bare arms, her bare breast, all over her back, until the tip of her bare feet, milky and close together like the white wings of a dove.

Julio Santana sat up, adoring the palpitating treasure of divine graces that rested at his side; the chest of all the fragrances and all the tenderness that was lying at his side; the crystal vessel of life and happiness and marvel in whose bottom the soul slept like a rose...

He kissed her on her sleepy eyes; on her half open lips, rosy and fragrant, on her beautiful head that was dreaming; on her hands, on her feet.

en los pies. . . .

Y ella, sonriendo, fue abriendo lentamente los párpados, los morenos transparentes párpados, tal que sus largos pétalos en el abril, el ilang-ilang de oro. . . . .

Mientras, las campanas de todos los templos seguían doblando por el día de difuntos, triste, tensa, sonoramente.

## II

Adorable y adorada la mañana con un suave frío que invitaba a emperezarse, a refugiarse en el albo alcor aquel lleno de tibieces y galas, santuario de lo más divino de la vida: el amor.

Pero la esposa se alzó sobresaltada, con las manos cruzadas sobre el pecho como dos lirios en cruz.

— Tocan a muerto, ¿Julio?

— Sí, hace horas, desde que amanecía.

— Y ¿por qué?. . . . . ¿Por quién?. . . . .

— Por todos los muertos; hoy es día de difuntos.

— ¿Hoy?. . . . . .

— Sí, mi amor; pero no pongas esa cara; no te asustes; no te pongas triste. . . . .

A los ojos de la hermosa pugnó por asomarse el llanto. Lo evitó. Suspiró: — ¿Es que, sabes Julio mío?. . . . . Me acuerdo de mamá, tan buena, tan santa, durmiendo la pobre ahora debajo de la tierra. . . ¡Y del pobre de papá, tambien tan bueno, tan cariñoso y alegre!. . . . ¡Y de mi hermano Luis. . . de todos, de todos los que tenía, muertos!. . . . .

Reclinó la cabeza contra el pecho del marido; él la sostuvo entre sus brazos delicadamente, como a una frágil, diáfana rosa maravillosa. . . .

— Vamos a vestirnos, Julio, vamos a llenar de flores las tumbas de los muertos. . . .

Y luego, mediada una breve pausa en la que él quedaba meditativo, como recogido en alma. . . . .

— Y por los tuyos, también, Julio por tu madre, por tu padre, por tus hermanos. . . . . ¿Quieres?

Las campanas seguían doblando lentas, tristes, llorosas, alzando un temblar de amargura con todas sus campanadas. . . . .

And smiling, she slowly opened her eyelids, the brown transparent eyelids, that were like the long petals of the golden *ilang-ilang* in April.

Meanwhile, the bells in all the churches continued tolling sadly, tensely, sonorously because it was the day of the dead.

## II

The adorable and adored morning, with its gentle coldness that invited one to laziness, to take refuge in that white hill, full of mildness and finery, sanctuary of the most divine in life—love.

But the wife rose up startled, with her hands folded over her breast like two crossed lilies.

"Are they tolling the knell, Julio?"

"Yes, hours ago, since dawn."

"And why? For whom?"

"For all the dead; today is All Souls Day."

"Today?"

"Yes, my love; but do not look like that; do not be frightened; do not feel sad."

The tears struggled to break out from the eyes of the beautiful wife. She tried to repress them. She sighed.

"Well, my dear Julio, you know? I remember mother, so good, so saintly, the poor one now sleeping beneath the earth. And poor papa, also so good, so loving and happy! And my brother Luis... all of them, all those whom I had, dead!"

She rested her head on the chest of her husband. He held her in his arms tenderly, like a fragile, diaphanous, marvelous rose.

"Let us get dressed, Julio, let us fill the tombs of the dead with flowers."

And then halfway through a brief pause he meditated, like one withdrawn in his soul...

"And for your dead too, Julio, for your mother, father, brothers... Do you want to?"

The bells kept on tolling, slowly, sadly, tearfully, arousing a sorrowful quiver with all its ringing.

## III

Acababa de vestirse ella ante el espejo del tocador, yo ella prendía en los lóbulos de las orejas las rosas de brillantes.

En la sala, encargadas por ellos hacía rato, había un mundo de flores en guirnaldas, en cruces, en coronas. . . . .

Irían a los cementerios, a poner por sí mismos todas las flores a sus muertos queridos. Se besarían idealmente ante las tumbas de sus padres. Recordarían juntos; orarían juntos; llorarían también juntos.

Sencillo y elegante y adecuado al luctuoso día, el traje de la hermosa, en largas y anchas rayas blancas, negras, lbajo la sobrefalda gris y plata; gentilísima y bella cual nunca a los amantes ojos del marido que la contemplaba embelesado, como un viejo esclavo a los pies de su reina!. . . . . .

Ella, notándole la adoración, se volvió de pronto, sonreídora, concluido su tocado: — ¿Qué?. . . . ¿Estoy bien?. . . . . ¿Le gusta a mi Julio así?. . . . ¡La gloriosa!

Temblábanle a él el cuerpo entero, el alma entera, al sentirla tan bella y tan suya en el dulce quietismo langoroso de la estancia y de su vida. . . .

Y de pronto, loco, inconsciente, arrebatado por una llamarada de pasión inmensa, de quimera deslumbradora, la ciño a sí febril, en un entero abrazo imposible de romper.

Y su voz se alzó temblorosa, como un incienso a la vida, a la par que las lúgubres notas de las campanas que seguían plañiendo, que seguían llorando.

— ¡No, hermosa mía, no!. . . . ¡Dejemos que nuestros pobres muertos duerman en paz!. . . . ¡No vayamos a turbar con palabras, ni con flores, ni mentiras su reposo en el Señor!. . . . Lejos todo convencionalismo social, toda rutina, toda hipocresía. . . ¡Las flores se marchitan en los sepulcros! Las lágrimas se evaporan en el aire! ¡Solo la oración es buena, es grande, es fructífera y llega a Dios!. . . . . ¡Ven, despójate de todas tus galas, de todas tus ropas, de todas tus tristezas, y digamos juntos y confundidos en el alma y la vida, la oración de las oraciones, la plegaria santa, ideal, divina del amor!. . .

## III

She had finished dressing infront of the mirror of her dresser, and was fastening on her earlobes the rose-shaped diamond earrings.

In the living room, there was a profusion of flowers in garlands, crosses, and wreaths which they ordered a short time ago.

They would go to the cemeteries and place all the flowers themselves on the tombs of their beloved departed. They would ideally kiss each other before their parents' tomb, together they would remember, together they would pray, together they would also cry.

Simple and elegant and fitting for the mournful day, was the dress of the beautiful wife in long and wide white and black stripes, under the gray and silver overskirt. Never before did she seem so attractive and beautiful to the loving and enraptured eyes of the husband that contemplated her like an old slave at the feet of his queen.

Noticing his adoration, she quickly turned around, smiling, having finished her hairdo.

"What? Am I alright? Does my dear Julio like me this way?"

The vainglorious!

His whole body shook, his whole soul as he saw her so beautiful and so completely his in the sweet, langorous stillness of the room, and of his life.

And all of a sudden carried away wildly and unconsciously by an outburst of immense passion like a dazzling daydream, he caught her to him feverishly in a firm embrace impossible to break.

His voice rose tremulously, like an incense to life, at the same time that the lugubrious sounds of the bells continued pealing mournfully.

"No, my beautiful one, no! Let us leave our dear ones to sleep in peace! Let us not disturb with words, nor with flowers, nor with lies their repose in the Lord. Away with all social conventions, all routine, all hypocrisy. Flowers wither on the tombs! Tears vanish in the air. Only prayer is good, is great, is fruitful and reaches God! Come, take off all your adornments, all your

## IV

Y trocado así en día de amor el día de dolor para los esposos, transcurrió raudo y feliz, neblinoso y poblado de llamadas a oración.

Pero a la tarde surgió el sol en todo su celeste y vivo resplandor, rompiendo nubes y evaporando gotas de lluvia y llanto con sus rayos. Fue su crepúsculo triunfal y altanero a modo de un incendio enorme por las nubes, por los aires, por los cielos, donde zigzagueaban sus llamaradas de colores, sus vibrantes sierpes luminosas. . . .

Julio Santana reposó a los pies de su dulce compañera, bajo un árbol de fuego, lleno de pájaros y fulgores solares, lleno también de ramos cuajados de sangrientas corolas. . . .

La tarde también iba a morir en el día de los muertos. El sol se iba apagando poco a poco; íbale restando poco a poco su lumbre vital. Y ya levemente sonreía la primera estrella, diáfana, velada. . . . Y la luna, hostia santa de todos los amores y todos los poetas.

El habló, triste a su vez, sin quererlo, sin saberlo, sin pensarlo siquiera, contagiado por toda la gran tristeza del día y no supiera qué otra especial tristeza del ambiente: — Todo muere, ¿ves, amor mira? . . . . ¡La tarde también se va! . . . . .

Ella sonreía, gentilísima, gloriosa: — Y nuestro amor, Julio, ¿habrá de morir también?. . . . .

— ¡El amor nunca muere si es verdadero amor!. . . . .

— ¿Lo crees tú?

— Hago más que creerlo; lo siento, lo palpo, lo sorbo en la vida misma. . .

— Pues entonces, Julio, entonces, segura de ti y de tu amor por mí, voy a recompensar tu inmensa bondad con un beso de mi alma a tu alma, de todo mi corazón a tu corazón. . . .

— ¿Qué quieres decir?. . . . . .

clothes, all your sadness, and together and united in spirit and in life let us say the prayer of prayers, the holy, ideal, divine prayer of love!..."

## IV

And so the day of pain converted into a day of love for the couple transpired swift and happy, foggy and full of invitations to prayer.

But in the afternoon the sun shone in all its celestial and lively splendor, tearing away clouds and vanishing the raindrops and teardrops with its rays. Its twilight was triumphant and proud and like an enourmous fire towering over the clouds, over the air, over the skies, where its colorful sudden blazes, its luminous vibrant serpents zigzagged.

Julio Santana rested at the feet of his sweet companion under a flame tree full of birds and covered with the brilliant sunbeams, full also of branches filled with bloodstained corollas.

The afternoon would also end on that day of the dead. The sun began fading little by little; the sun would also take away from the afternoon its vital light. And lightly the first star, diaphanous, hidden, began to twinkle... And the moon, holy host of all loves and all poets.

In turn, he spoke sadly without wanting to, without knowing it, without thinking at all, affected by all the great sadness of the day and a certain especial kind of gloominess of the atmosphere.

"Everything dies, you see, my love? The afternoon also ends."

She smiled, very charmingly, vaingloriously. "And our love, Julio? Shall it die also?"

"Love never dies if it is true love!"

"You believe it?"

"I do more than believe it; I feel it, I touch it, I drink it in life itself..."

"Well then, Julio, sure of your love and of your love for me, I shall repay your immense kindness with a kiss of my soul to your soul, of all my heart to your heart."

"What do you mean?"

Pausa. Cayeron, sacudidos por la brisa algunos pétalos sangrientos del árbol de fuego. Los pájaros lanzaron su último trino. Y la esposa ciñéndose al esposo, le secreteó breve, loca de rubor y pasión al oído. . . . .

¡Y sí, que siguiera muriéndose la tarde; que siguieran doblando a muerto las campanas; que todo cuanto les rodeara en las tierras y en los cielos les diera la augusta sensación del más allá!. . . A ellos esto les importaba nada, nada, nada. . . Porque de entre las sombras de tanta desolación y tanto luto, una virgen había sentido florecer en sus divinas entrañas la rosa de su amor, y gloriosa, inmarcesible, inmensa, divina, triunfaba la vida!

A pause. Some blood-red petals of the flame tree fell, shake by the breeze... The birds trilled their last song. And the wif embracing her husband, beside herself with bashfulness an passion, whispered into his ears timidly.

And yes, the afternoon could continue to come to a clos let the bells continue tolling for the dead, let everything tha surrounded them on earth and in heaven give them that augu sensation of the beyond. To them this did not matter at al nothing at all... Because out of the shades of so much desola tion and so much mourning, a virgin had felt the stirring of lif in her divine soul, the rose of her love, and the glorious, unfadin immense, and divine life triumphed.

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# BIENAVENTURADOS LOS HUMILDES

(1920)

## I

En un rincón de la dormida selva, se alzaban solitarios el verde pino y el negro *kamagón*.

Estaban frente a frente, altivo el pino y triunfal, coronado de sol y pájaros, perfumado y bello, y lleno de los besos de la brisa. Humilde y feo el *kamagón*, bajo un tendal de renegridas retorcidas ramas, sin un canto, ni un beso, ni un aroma en su copa.

La mañana tenía la selva con todos los divinos colores del abril, el rocío caía de las flores gota a gota como un lloro celestial; y entre el azul del cielo y el azul del boscaje, reía luminoso y áureo el sol.

El *kamagón* inclinaba sus sarmentosas ramas: — ¡Buenos días, gentil vecino!

El pino se estremeció altivo y desdeñoso; ceremoniosamente susurró: — ¡Buenos los tenga Vd.!. . . .

— Parece que hoy hemos madrugado. . .

— ¡Y cómo poder dormir con tanto amor!. . . ¿No ve Vd. que mundo de amores y de nidos en mi copa?. . . ¡Me están matando a besos las alas de las aves y las brisas!

— El amor busca juventud y hermosura. ¿De qué se queja usted?

— ¡Oh, es que tanto rendimiento me abruma!. . .

— Sin embargo, ¡cuántos envidiarían su ideal fortuna! . .

— Vd por ejemplo, abuelo.

— Yo no, amigo mío, yo ya soy viejo, yo ya estoy curtido de desengaños, y sé que el amor y la fortuna son para mis pobres

# BLESSED ARE THE MEEK

## I

In a corner of the sleeping forest, rose the solitary green pine tree and the black *kamagon*.

They were face to face; the pine was arrogant and triumphant, crowned with sunlight and birds, perfumed and beautiful, and full of the kisses of the breezes. Humble and ugly was the *kamagon* which stood under a heap of black twisted branches without a song, not even a kiss, nor fragrance on its crown.

That morning, the forest had all the divine colors of April; the dew fell from the flowers like celestial tears; and between the blue of the sky and the blue of the copse, the sun was smiling, luminous, and golden.

The *kamagon* bending its branches said: "Good morning charming neighbor!"

The pine tree shaking itself arrogantly and disdainfully formally answered: "A good morning to you!..."

"It seems that today we have waken up early..."

"And how can one sleep with so much love!... Do you no see what a world of love and nests are on my crown. The wing of the birds and the breezes are plaguing me with their kisses."

"Love seeks youth and beauty. What are you complainin about?"

"Oh, it's because so much obsequiousness overwhelms me!

"However, how many would envy your ideal fortune...

"You, for example, old man?"

"Me, no, my friend, I am old, I am already inured to di illusionment, and I know that love and fortune are for my poc

huesos como las sombras, como las nubes. . . Antes que Vd. naciera sí, solía diademarme de trinos y perfumes. . . Hoy todo eso es para mí un recuerdo nada más. . .

— ¡Tan inútil se cree?. . .

— Amigo mío, me he mirado en la neblina esta mañana, antes que el padre sol la barriera con sus rayos y me he visto tan deforme y tan negro que me he dado lástima a mí mismo.

— Pero. . .

— ¡Es inútil cuanto pueda decirme; ya hasta los cuervos y los lagartos me desdeñan! . . .

El pino sonriente, halagado ante la humillación del fuerte y viejo *kamagón*, se mecía altanero, reventado de orgullo. Y comparaba su corteza de un fresco verdor de jades y esmeraldas con la carcomida costra del viejo; y ¡el florón de sus penachos de hojas como estrellas, con las ramas resecas, desnudas y sombrías del abuelo!

Lo dejó con la palabra en las ramas, despectivamente, y se recogió en sí mismo y en su divino amor de la primaveral mañana llena de ondas perfumadas, llena de sol, llena de azul. . . .

## II

Toda la selva ardía con un calor de fragua, de infierno, a pesar de haberse ocultado el sol y yacer el boscaje envuelto en densísimas sombras y tinieblas.

De vez en vez, el fulgor de un relámpago sacudía las nubes como un latigazo. Y después de un instante tableteaba el trueno lejano y ronco. . .

Habían huído a refugiarse en no importaba donde las bellas aves de la primavera. Las grandes flores rojas, amarillas, blancas se tronchaban marchitas sobre sus tallos inclinados. Un raudo viento cortante y cálido como el vaho de un cráter lo alfombraba todo de pétalos y hojas destrozadas.

El verde pino, trémulo y temeroso, habló:

— Abuelo *kamagón*,, ¿no sentís miedo?

El *kamagón* sonreía: — ¿Miedo a qué, de qué?. . .

— A la tempestad que llega. . .

El *kamagón* seguía sonriendo: — ¡Bah!. . . Amigo mío; no todo ha de ser encanto y luz y flores y besos. . . En la vida más

bones like shades, like clouds . . . Before you had been born, yes, I used to crown myself with trills and perfumes... Now all of that is for me a memory, nothing more."

"So useless, do you think?"

"My friend, I have looked at myself in the mist this morning, before Father Sun swept it away with his rays, and I saw myself so deformed and too black that I pitied my ownself."

"But..."

"Everything you will tell me is useless; even the ravens and the lizards disdain me now!..."

The pine three smiling, flattered by the humility of the strong and old *kamagon*, swayed haughtily, bursting with pride. And he compared his bark of cool greenness of jades and emeralds with the worm-eaten crust of the old tree; and the large flowers of its leafy crests which were like stars, with the parched, bare, and lonely branches of the old tree.

He contemptuously stopped *kamagon* from speaking any further and withdrew into himself and in his divine love of the spring morning filled with the fragrant waves of his leaves, flooded by sunlight, and covered with blue...

## II

The whole forest burned with the heat of a forge, of hell, even if the sun had hidden itself and the thicket lay enveloped in very dense shades and darkness.

From time to time, the flash of lightning shook the clouds like a crack of a whip. And after an instant the thunder rumbled harshly in the distance . . .

The beautiful birds of spring had sought refuge anywhere they could. The big red, yellow, and white flowers, withered over their bent stems, fell. A swift wind, hot and cutting like the vapor of a crater carpeted everything with petals and shattered leaves.

The green pine tree trembling and frightened spoke: "Old *kamagon*, are you not afraid?"

The *kamagon* smiled: "Afraid? Of what? . . ."

"Of the storm that is coming."

The *kamagon* continued smiling: "Bah!... My friend; not everything has to be enchantment, light, flowers, and kisses...

feliz hay muchos días de tempestad como éste; yo he visto muchísimos, tantos que hoy ya lo mismo se me da que alumbre el bosque el fuego de los rayos como la dulce y blanca luz de la luna llena. . . Además, que la tempestad pasa, como pasa todo, la juventud, el amor, la misma gloria. . .

— Sí, pero la tormenta vuelve. . .

— Y ¿quién os dice que no vuelven la juventud, la gloria y el amor?. . .

El aire iba entenebreciéndose más; los relámpagos eran cada vez más vivos y continuos; el trueno retumbaba cerca; y algunas gotas de lluvia grandes y pesadas caían indistintamente, alzando un rumor de latigazos.

En la selva alborotada se oía el silbar de los reptiles, el grito de los *kálaws*, las quejas de los árboles heridos. Un fuerte ventarrón se alzaba arrollándolo todo ante su paso, tirando nidos y desgarrando ramas. . . De pronto una roja llamarada incendió la selva y seguido de un estrépito infernal que conmovió la tierra en sus entrañas, cayó el primer rayo enroscándose como una culebra de restallantes brasas al hermoso y altivo ilang-ilang que se dobló pesadamente hecho pedazos.

Pasado el estruendo desolador, el *kamagón* miró al pino con lástima. Se había despojado de toda su altivez, de todo su necio orgullo y aparecía acuciado y tembloroso, víctima del pavor que le corróla hasta la savia de las más hondas raíces. Cubierto por sus gentiles ramas que azotaba despiadada la lluvia, parecía llorar todas las gotas de agua que le volaban por las hojas; el *kamagón* compadecido, le habló entonces, por sobre la voz tremulante de los desatados elementos.

— No tembléis, no lloréis, esto pasará. . .

— ¡Oh, abuelo, tengo miedo de morir!

— Ni moriréis. Sois joven todavía; pero si está escrito que dejéis de existir hoy, eso, ¿qué más os da?. . . Tarde o temprano tendrá que ser; todos vamos por el mismo camino; es cuestión solamente de unos años más o menos. . .

El retumbo de otro trueno ahogó su voz; otra llamarada infernal los cegó; y ambos escucharon como a sus mismas espaldas se derrumbaba secamente otro pobre ilang-ilang herido por el rayo. . .

In the happiest life, there are many days of storm like this; I have seen so many, so many that now it is all the same to me whether its the fire of sunlight or of the gentle and white light of the full moon that illumines the forest. Furthermore, the storm passes away, like all things do; youth, love, and glory itself."

"Yes, but the storm returns..."

"And who tells you that youth, glory, and love do not return?"

The atmosphere was becoming darker, the lightning each time sharper and almost without interruption, the thunder rumbled nearby; and some great drops of rain started falling indistinctly, raising a rustle of whiplashes.

In the agitated forest one could hear the hissing of the reptiles, the screech of the *kalaws*, and the groans of the injured trees. A strong windstorm rose destroying everything in its way, throwing down nests and tearing down branches... Suddenly a red flame set the forest on fire, and it was followed by an infernal noise which stirred up the depths of the earth. Then the first thunderbolt fell, coiling itself like a snake of crackling embers around the beautiful and proud *ilang-ilang*, which slowly fell in pieces.

When the devastating roar passed, the *kamagon* looked at the pine tree with pity. He had been stripped of all his arrogance, of all his stupid pride, and he seemed harassed and tremulous, prey of a terror that corroded even the sap of his deepest roots. Covered by his graceful branches which the rain mercilessly lashed, he seemed to be crying, shedding all the drops of water that were blown through his leaves. The *kamagon* feeling sorry for the pine tree, spoke to him then over the tremulous sound of the wild elements.

"Do not tremble, do not cry, this will pass."

"Oh, grandfather, I am afraid to die!"

"You will not die. You are still young; but if it is written that today you will stop existing, what difference does that make? Sooner or later it has to happen. All of us go the same way. It is only a question of some years more or less."

The echo of another thunder drowned his voice. Another infernal blaze blinded them, and both listened as at their very back a poor *ilang-ilang* tree scorched by the thunderbolt dryly

El pino más espantado todavía se alzó en un grito de protesta desesperada.

No, no, él no quería, no podía, no debía morir, y morir así, partido por un rayo. Era joven aún y apenas había gozado de las dulzuras divinas del abril. ¿A qué arrancarle por la negra hedionda parca de sus noches de plata olorosas a flores y luna, de sus días de oro poblados de alas y de rosadas auroras?...

Calló de pronto, estremecido, agitado por un horrible estertor, doblando la copa ideal que un rayo ahora veteaba con su azul y roja y verde ya amarilla fosforecencia, como un largo collar de turquesas y rubíes y esmeraldas y záfiros colgante por su muerto tronco; el pobre pino era un sueño más que caía, un inmenso sueño de grandeza perdido en la grandeza universal!...

## III

En tanto la tormenta arreciaba y el bosque a cada instante se inflamaba con un cárdeno, intensísimo fulgor.

Ya nada se podía escuchar sino la voz horrísona del trueno que por todas partes cabalgaba como una gigantesca diabólica cuadriga pateando con sus cascos de lumbre la celeste veste de la altura.

Y el *kamagón* sintió a su vez, de pronto, que una serpiente de fuego ardiente le corroía todo por entero, abrasando su frente, sus brazos, sus entrañas...

Luego no sintió nada más. Había sido herido de muerte también. Y entonces el cielo fue aclarándose y poco a poco se apagó la tempestad.

## IV

Pasado un año, en otra luminosa mañana de abril, algunos leñadores invadieron la selva.

Y entre los troncos y las ramas frescas de los árboles que derribaron a bolazos y a hachazos se llevaron consigo los resecos despojos del verde pino y el negro *kamagón*.

plunged to the ground...

The pine tree even more terrified, rose in a cry of desperate protest.

No, he did not want, could not, should not die, and die just like that, split by a thunderbolt. He was still young, and hardly had he enjoyed the divine sweetness of April. Why for black fetid death's sake tear him away from his silvery nights that smell of flowers and dreams, from his golden days full of wings and rosy dawns?

Suddenly he kept silent, shuddered, shaken by a horrible death rattle, bending the ideal treetop that a thunderbolt now streaked with its blue, red, green, and yellow phosphorescence, like a long necklace of turquoises, rubies, emeralds, and sapphires hanging over its dead trunk. The poor pine tree was yet another dream which was falling, an immense dream of grandeur lost in the greatness of the universe!...

## III

Meanwhile the storm grew more violent, and the forest at every instant became inflamed with a very intense purple radiance.

And nothing could be heard except the horrifying voice of the thunder which rolled over all the places like a gigantic, diabolic cavalry of horses stamping with its hoofs of fire the celestial garments of heaven.

And suddenly the *kamagon* felt in turn, that a serpent of burning fire was consuming him completely, burning his forehead, his arms, his entrails.

Afterwards he felt nothing more. He was also mortally wounded to death. And then the sky began to clear and gradually the storm died down.

## IV

After a year, during another bright April morning, some woodcutters invaded the forest.

And among the trunks and fresh branches of the trees which they hacked down with bolos and axes, they brought with them the withered remains of the green pine tree and the black *kamagon*.

Y sucedió que mientras la gente del pueblo necesitaba leña, el cura del pueblo necesitaba una gran cruz para su culto. Y así fue que se quedara con el tronco del viejo *kamagón* para ponerlo en manos de un habil escultor.

Y en una misma noche, mientras deshecho en mil rajas se hacía ceniza el pino en los rústicos caseros *kalanes* de la comarca, el *kamagón* convertido en cruz divina y adorada se alzaba sobre el trino santo y humilde de los rezos.

Allá estaba humilde, negro, amoroso, sirviendo de sostén a un Dios que sobre él agonizaba y moría de amor. . .

En tanto el cura sobre el púlpito comenzaba a hablar y sus palabras se iban abriendo sobre el alma sencilla de la multitud como estrellas, como nardos. . .

— "Bienaventurados los humildes". . .

*Revista Filipina*. Manila (October 1940), pp. 447 448.

And it happened that while the people of the village needed firewood, the priest of the town needed a big cross for his church. And that was why he took the trunk of the old *kamagon* so he could entrust it to a skilled sculptor.

And in that same night, while shattered into a thousand pieces, the pine became ashes in the rustic home-made stoves of the village, the *kamagon*, converted into a divine cross and adored, was raised over the holy and humble trill of prayers.

There it was, humble, black, affectionate, serving as a support for a God who on top of him was dying and died of love...

Meanwhile the priest over the pulpit began to speak, and his words penetrated the simple souls of the multitude like stars, like spikenards...

"Blessed are the meek..."

# REDENCION

(1920)

Se llamaba María, dulce nombre a cuyo son tiemblan de amor cielos y tierras porque es más hermosa que todas las estrellas y todas las flores. Se llamaba María, y aunque era bonita la pobre pecadora, vendedora de sus sonrisas y su belleza, el nombre divino se maculaba en su ser, y ella misma se lo cambió por otro: Piedad.

Creció y vivió en un ambiente de vicio y de inmoralidad. Su madre había muerto al darla a luz. Su padre era un perdido, que acabó sus días en la cárcel. Ella rodó de casa en casa, de mano en mano y antes de tiempo todavía, se deshojó como una flor al brutal contento de un cualquiera.

Cuando otras mujeres abren los ojos a la vida y al amor como abren las sampagas sus estrellitas blancas al suspiro perfumado de mayo, Piedad, asqueada ya del amor y de la vida, bailaba en los más escandalosos cabarets o se citaba con alguno en un prostíbulo. . .

Allí la conoció, una noche de vino y sensualidad, el que Rufo de la Ventura, notabilísmo escultor, notabilísimo bebedor y notabilísimo mujeriego. . .

—Tú, ¿eres?. . .

Le atajó ella, sintiendo por primera vez el fuego del pudor inundarle la piel, tronchada bajo el cínico ademán y el tuteo del artista incomparable.

—No, señor, yo soy bailarina. . .

El otro continuó tratando de ceñirla entre sus brazos.

—¿Y qué haces aquí, pues?. . .

# REDEMPTION

## I

She was called Maria. At the sound of her sweet name, the skies and earth tremble with love because she was more beautiful than all the stars and the flowers. She was called Maria and although the poor sinner was beautiful, peddling her smiles and beauty, the divine name got stained in her being, and she herself changed it to Piedad.

She grew up and lived in a surrounding full of vice and immorality. Her mother died when she was born. Her father, a wastrel, spent his last days in jail. She lived in one house after another, passed from one hand to another, so that even before she matured, she was stripped of her maidenhood to satisfy the brutal lust of a nobody.

When other women open their eyes to life and love as the *sampagas* open its white star-like petals to the perfumed breeze of May, Piedad already nauseated of love and life, danced at the most notorious cabarets, or she had assignations in a brothel...

It was there during one night of wine and wild sensuality that Rufo de la Ventura, famous sculptor, well-known drunkard and womanizer came to know her.

"You, are you..?"

She interruped him, feeling for the first time the heat of shame scorch her skin, which felt like it was peeling off under the cynical look and the familiarity with which the incomparable artist addressed her.

"No sir, I am a dancer."...

The other kept on trying to encircle her with his arms.

"And what are you doing here, then?"

—Visitando a una amiga, enferma. — Rufo de la Ventura se echó a reír:

—¡Vamos, no mientas! Eres muy bonita, tan bonita que te tomo, ¿me oyes? Pero dime antes ¿cómo te llamas?

Tambaleaba él, alcoholizado, pugnando por atraerla hacia sí. Ella se resistía toda sofocada, toda arisca por primera vez, extendiendo sus brazos rodeados de tumbagas y piedras de colores entre su cuerpo y el cuerpo del orfebre, echándose hacia atrás, instintivamente, con la cara vuelta a un lado. . .

Las pupilas de la casa reían la escena tiradas por la sala en lo sumo de la oscuridad. Piedad, al fin, librándose del artista, se encerró en la primera habitación que encontró abierta, atrancando la puerta.

El quedó frente al cuarto, a la puerta cerrada balbuceando, hipando, ébrio de alcohol y de capricho. . .

—¡Cinco!. . .

Nada. Nada.

—¡Diez!

Nada.

—¡Quince!

Nada.

—¡Treinta!. . . ¡cuarenta!. . . ¡lo que quieras!. . .

— Nada.

Ni una voz, ni un rumor, nada.

## II

¿Cómo fue aquello, tan increíble, tan imposible, tan inaudito? Nadie lo sabía explicar. Pero el hecho estaba consumado. Y ante Dios y el mundo, Rufo de la Ventura, el notabilísimo escultor, se unía el legítimo matrimonio con Piedad de la Rosa en un templo de la capital.

Había convivido con ella dos o tres anos antes de casarse, y . . . ¡lo que es la vida a las veces!. . . Aquel artista bohemio y trasnochador de Rufo se había convertido en un honradísimo obrero ganando más fama y más dinero de día en día. . . Y aquella pobre margarita del sensual placer, trocádose había en dulce, sumisa y honrada compañera del hombre que del fango del arroyo la alzó, limpiando sus manchas con sus besos, a la altura y al calor de su propio corazón.

"I am visiting a sick friend."

Rufo de la Ventura laughed:

"Come, do not lie! You are very beautiful, so beautiful that I am taking you. Do you hear me? But first tell me what your name is."

Reeling and drunk, he struggled to draw her to him. Suffocated, she resisted him and for the first time, she was all evasive and extended her arms full of tombac rings and colored stones between her body and that of the sculptor instinctively pushing herself backwards with her face turned to one side.

The prostitutes of the brothel who were stretched out in the completely dark living room were laughing at the scene. Piedad finally escaped from the artist, enclosed herself in the first room which she found open and locked the door.

The artist stood infront of the closed door of the room, stuttering, hiccuping, drunk with alcohol and desire.

— Five!. . .

Nothing.

— Ten!

Nothing.

— Fifteen!

Nothing.

—Thirty!. . . Forty!. . . whatever you want!. . .

And still nothing.

Not a sound, not a murmur, nothing.

## II

How was that, so incredible, so impossible, so unheard of? Nobody could explain it. But the deed was done. And before God and the world, Rufo de la Ventura, the famous sculptor, married Piedad de la Rosa at a church in the capital.

He had lived with her two or three years before he married her, and — what life can be at times!... That bohemian artist and night reveler Rufo, was transformed into an honest working man and gained more fame and money day by day... And that poor woman of sensual pleasure changed into a sweet, humble, and upright wife of the man who raised her from the gutter of infamy, and with his kisses wiped away her disgrace and held her to the

Y él se había casado con ella al fin, loco por ella de ilusión y de pasión, temeroso acaso de perderla, convencido hasta la saciedad, de su bondad, de su humildad, de su dulzura.

¿Qué había sido lo que había sido? . . . ¿Y qué?. . . Ella terminaba, abandonada y perdida, a su lado, lo que otras amparadas y agasajadas empezaban al lado de otros. Ella había pecado por ignorancia, por necesidad, porque los hombres mismos la empujaban nunca jamás por vicio ni por el cinismo de pecar.

Lo demostraba, se lo había demostrado a él, conviviendo con él las miles de horas de su amor, surgiendo siempre santa, pura, ideal. Y pues ideal era, y pura y santa, y él la amaba con toda el alma, abajo los necios convencionalismos sociales, abajo viles hipocresías, abajo la astrosa moral de los hombres eternamente fabricada a base de todo género de inmoralidades. . .

Abrió las puertas de su casa a la sociedad, y rico, afamado y considerado, presentó a su mujer a todo el mundo.

## III

Y la felicidad fue con ellos hasta que un día, alguien, quizás algún antiguo amigo de la bailarina, propaló a los cuatro vientos lo que había sido aquella mujer, tan recatada ahora, tan virtuosa, tan hipócrita. . .

La noticia cundió como un relámpago, se averiguó la verdad, y en la casa del magnífico escultor no volvió a poner los pies ninguna mujer que se conceptuara a sí misma decente y honrada.

Ella, Piedad, ante el marido que se encogía de hombros despreciando a la sociedad en un recíproco y mutuo cambio de desprecios infinitos, sentía en torno de sí el desvío, la humillación y la crueldad de aquel mundo al que ella faltara un día sin conocerlo, sin comprenderlo. . .

Y lloraba, a su pesar lloraba lágrimas amargas, lágrimas inmensas, lágrimas ardientes, por ella, por su vida, por su amor. . .

height and warmth of his own heart.

Mad with passion for her and fearful that he might lose her, completely convinced of her goodness, her humility, and her sweetness, he finally married her.

What had been had been! And so what? She, abandoned and lost, ended up at his side, what others who were protected and showered with attentions began at the side of others. She had sinned because of ignorance and out of necessity, and because men themselves pushed her into it. She had never sinned because of vice, not because of brazen sinfulness.

She proved this, she had proved this to him by living with him in the thousands of hours of love, emerging always saintly, pure, ideal. And so ideal was she, and pure, and saintly. And he loved her with all his soul. And to hell with the silly social conventionalities, to hell with man's vile morals endlessly invented on the basis of all kinds of immoralities.

Rich, famous, and respected, he opened the doors of his house to society, and presented his wife to everyone.

## III

And they were happy until one day, somebody, perhaps an old friend of the dancer, divulged to all and sundry what Piedad had been, who now was so very modest, so virtuous, and so hypocritical . . .

The news spread like lightning, the truth was ascertained; and no woman who regarded herself decent and honorable ever again set foot in the house of the artist.

Before her husband who despisingly shrugged his shoulders at the society in a mutual exchange of infinite contempt, Piedad felt in herself the indifference, the humiliation, and the cruelty of that world which she once wronged without knowing it, without realizing it.

And she cried. Against her will she shed bitter tears, terrible, scalding tears for herself, for her life, for her love.

## IV

Y enfermó.

Fue su enfermedad rápida y breve hasta morir como un pájaro sobre el pecho del artista que lloró al ángel como un loco, que la lloró desesperado, crispado, anonadado de dolor.

Luego cerró el taller y volvió con más furor que nunca a encenagarse en la bohemia y en el vicio.

Era su bofetada a la sociedad, a la sociedad cruel, hipócrita, malvada, a quien juraba vengar con creces la muerte de su ídolo, de sù Venus, de su amor de los amores. . . ¡Hala, y que se hicieran ellos sus santos y sus estatuas a golpes de su lengua viperina, de su hipocresía y su maldad!. . . ¡Él no volvía a coger un cincel por todo el oro del mundo! ¡Él no volvía a modelar una imagen así si lo pidiera toda la raza puesta de rodillas!. . .

## V

Pero el tiempo pasó y un día la puerta de su taller se abrió a dos ilustres sacerdotes que venían a que les hiciera una imagen, la imagen de María Dolorosa. . .

Y convenido con ellos, se encerró dos, tres meses con su trabajo y con su arte.

Era una ideal imagen, un busto divino de María Llorosa, de María Dolorosa con el pecho traspasado por las aceradas dagas del mayor dolor y los ojos henchidos de gotas temblorosas de llanto. Pero era de ver el rostro angélico y puro, bajo la contracción leve de la cruentísima aflicción en la toda amargura desolada. . . ¡Sus ojos, sus labios, su frente inmaculada! ¡Y aquellas manos y aquellos pies más suaves y más blancos que pétalos de flor, suaves como azucenas, blancos como rayos de luna!. . .

Y el artista sonreía satisfecho frente a su inmortal obra, su obra divina con la que mísero, realizaba su soñada, guardada y reservada venganza. . .

Porque en breve, a los pies de la divina imagen que desde lo alto de un altar, entre flores y cirios extendería su yerta mirada

## IV

And she fell ill.

Her illness was swift and brief until she died like a bird on the breast of the artist who cried like a madman over his good wife. He cried over her desperately, twitching in anguish, overwhelmed by pain.

Then he closed his shop and wallowed again with more fury than ever before in his bohemian life and vice.

It was his challenge to a society that was cruel, hypocritical, and malevolent on whom he swore to avenge a hundredfold the death of his idol, of his Venus, of his most beloved... "So let them make their own saints and statues with the sting of their waspish tongues, of their hypocrisy, and their wickedness!..." He would never again hold a chisel for all the gold in the world! He would never shape another image even if the whole world went on their knees to beg him for it!

## V

But time passed, and one day the doors of his shop opened to two illustrious priests who had come to ask him to make them a statue of the Sorrowful Madonna.

And agreeing with them, he shut himself for two, three months with his work and with his art.

It was an ideal image, a divine bust of Mary weeping, of the Madonna with her heart pierced by the steel daggers of the greatest pain and her eyes filled with quivering tears. But it was something to see the pure, angelic face under the slight contraction of all her bitterness and desolate grief. . . Her eyes, her immaculate forehead! And those hands and feet smoother and whiter than the petals of a flower, smooth like *azucenas*, white like the rays of the moon!...

And the artist smiled with satisfaction infront of his immortal masterpiece, his divine work, with which he, a miserable wretch, realized the secret and personal vengeance of his dreams.

Because shortly, all of that society, every one of them that had done him so much evil and that he hated so terribly, would

sobre ella, toda aquella sociedad, todo aquel mundo que a él hizo tanto mal y que él odiaba tanto, se postraría de rodillas admirando su arte, adorando su obra, orando a su Santa. . .

Y aquella santa fue modelada ante una imagen de Piedad. . .

Eran sus ojos, su boca, sus pies, sus manos, su frente, sus cabellos, era toda Piedad la Virgen Dolorosa. . .

¡Que se postraran de hinojos ante ella, que admiraran su hermosura, que adoraran su sombra, que oraran a su alma hecha de nardos de la tierra y purezas de cielos y de amor!

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Revista Filipina, Nov. de 1920, pp. 736-740.

prostrate themselves at the feet of his divine image, that from her pedestal on the altar between flowers and candles would extend her rigid looks over them. On their knees they would admire his art, adore his masterpiece, pray to his saint...

And that saint had been modeled on an image of Piedad.

It was her eyes, her lips, her feet, her hands, her brow, her hair, she was all Piedad the Virgin of Sorrows.

They would kneel before her, they would admire her beauty, they would worship her image, and they would pray to her soul made of the nards of the earth and purity of the heavens and of love!

# EL CASTIGO

(1920)

## I

Susana y Andrés se casaron muy jóvenes, muy enamorados, muy pobres. Ella hermosa y pura como una mata fragante de sampaga. Él, honrado y trabajador, soñando para la dulce desposada un cielo de felicidad y de ventura.

La casita de nipa que ocuparon era un templo de amor. La santa de este templo era Susana, y las rústicas gumamelas del solar las flores de su ara, las luciérnagas perdidas en la noche lámparas votivas, el sacerdote Andrés, que postrado ante la imagen palpitante y amorosa, le alzaba, orando su profana salve, el incensario ardiente de su corazón.

Dios bendecía la casita humilde y la felicidad le besoteaba en la brisa que rizaba las nipas de su techo, cúpula amparadora del amor.

## II

Andrés obrero. Trabajaba como cajista en la imprenta de un periódico y ganaba lo suficiente para su humilde vivir. Ella, Susana, tampoco era ambiciosa, tampoco pedía ni exigía de él sino su amor. De cuna aún más pobre que la del marido, estaba hecha a toda clase de privaciones y miserias. Su nuevo estado y su nueva vida, todavía la resultaban un bienestar. . . .

El primer canto del gallo despertaba a los dos esposos; y antes de que la aurora sonrosara los cielos, ya el humo del único *kalán* humeaba sobre la olla de barro donde el *salabat* hervía cantando. . . Luego se hacía la morisqueta, se asaban los secos pescaditos, y el

# THE PUNISHMENT

## I

Susana and Andres got married very young, very much in love, and very poor. She was beautiful and pure like a fragrant bush of *sampaga*. He, honest and hardworking, dreaming of a heaven of happiness and good fortune for the sweet wife.

The house of nipa they occupied was a temple of love. The saint of this temple was Susana, and the rustic gumamelas of the yard were the flowers of her altar; the fireflies lost in the night, votive lamps; the priest, Andres, who, kneeling before the loving and palpitating image, raised her, praying his profane tribute, the burning censer of his heart.

God blessed the poor little house, and happiness covered it with kisses, with the breezes that rippled through the nipa of their house, the dome that protects love.

## II

Andres was a laborer. He worked as a compositor at the printing press of a newspaper and earned enough for his humble way of life. She, Susana, was not ambitious nor did she ask nor did she demand anything from him except his love. Of humbler birth than that of her husband, she was used to all kinds of privations and miseries. Her new condition and her new life were already a blessing for her.

The first crowing of the cock awakened the couple, and before dawn coloured the skies, already the smoke from the only clay stove was already blackening the clay pot where the ginger tea boiled merrily. Later rice was cooked, dried little

matrimonio se desayunaba tan feliz, que no se cambiara por los más altos príncipes de la tierra. . .

Andrés se iba después a su trabajo, para no volver ya sino a la hora vespertina. . . Y esta era la única tristeza diaria de los dos, tan dolorosa, que le hacía a ella contar los días con los dedos y suspirar porque llegara el domingo. . . Veinticuatro horas de alegría y de amor!. . .

## III

Y bien. Después de un año el amor floreció santamente en las entrañas de la esposa y el primer hijo con su primer vagido vino a aumentar la felicidad y la ventura de Susana y de Andrés.

Ella fue desde entonces más del pequeño que del marido y dudo que mujer alguna llevara a sus senos con más ternura la tierna cabecita de su infante.

Más que mujer, dijérase Susana la blanca paloma arrulladora del pichoncito, ¡siempre bajo el calor tembloroso de sus alas!. . . ¡O la rosa que aduerme dulcemente en el fondo de su cáliz y da sus perfumes a la gota divina de rocío!. . . Y Andrés la amó más; porque empezó a amarla como madre de su hijo. . . El jardinero, feliz, moría de ternura al ver brotar la primera rosa del amado rosal abonado y besado y venerado a tanto cuido.

## IV

Otro año más.

Y otro hijo más. Esta vez una niña, bonita, hermosa. . .

El dijo a su mujer tendida aún en postración sobre el inmenso *pápag:*

— Se parece a ti, Susana. . . Tus ojos bonitos, tus labios bonitos, tus pies, tus manos bonitas. . .

Ella no contestó al pronto. Pensaba. . . .

Con la cabeza hundida en las almohadas, parecía meditar, meditar, meditar. . . De pronto habló: -- Andrés, perdóname; no hago más que darte hijos; tú tendrás después que matarte en trabajar para poder sostenernos a todos. . .

fishes were broiled, and the couple breakfasted so happily, that they would not exchange places with the most noble princes on earth.

Andres went to his job, and did not return until the evening... And this was the only sadness the two felt daily. It was painful, that it made Susana count the days with her fingers and sigh so that Sunday would come. Twenty-four hours of happiness and love!

## III

Now then, after a year love blossomed luckily in the wife's womb and the first son with his first cry came to add to the bliss and happiness of Susana and Andres.

She became from then on more attached to the baby than to her husband, and I doubt that any woman carried on her bosom the delicate tiny head of her infant with such tenderness.

More than a woman, one would say that Susana was the white pigeon cooing to her little young pigeon, who was always under her warm tremulous wings!... Or the rose that sleeps sweetly at the bottom of its calyx and gives its perfumes to the divine drop of dew!... And Andres loved her more, because he began loving her as the mother of his son... The gardener, happy, died of tenderness at seeing the first rose of the beloved rose-bush, nourished, kissed, and adored with so much care.

## IV

Another year.

And another child. This time it was a baby girl pretty, lovely...

He told his wife still lying down on the large bamboo bed: "She looks like you, Susana... Your beautiful eyes, your beautiful lips, your feet, your beautiful hands...

She did not reply at first. She was thinking...

With her head buried in the pillows, she seemed to be meditating, meditating, meditating... Suddenly she spoke: "Andres, forgive me; all I do is give you children: you will later have to kill yourself working to be able to support all of us..."

Él la cerró los labios con las manos. . . ¡Oh!. . . ¡que callara la grandísima loca el enorme disparate que acababa de proferir!. . . ¿Qué angel malo se lo había dictado? . . . No dos, doscientos hijos que ella le diera y si le faltaran a él las fuerzas para trabajar por todos ellos, por ellos iría pidiendo limosna de puerta en puerta. . . Oh, Susana, qué, ideas, qué locuras. No sabía ella, el vino divino de gloria y alegría que sorbía su alma en aquel instante por la nueva hija, el daño que le hacía con las gotas de amargura que de sus labios habían caído al fondo de la copa. . .

## V

Y si, con la última hija las entrañas de Susana parecieron marchitarse, el rosal pareció cansarse de dar rosas, el azul de dar estrellas, y ya no hubo mas hijos.

La vida entonces, con los hijos, empezó a cambiar para Susana, y su alma a metamorfosearse en ella misma no supiera, ni pudiera explicarse que desinterés o desamor hacía el hombre que cada día la adoraba más. . .

Era una nostalgia, era a modo de un cansancio, de un aburrimiento de todo lo que le rodeaba, hasta los mismos hijos, pedazos de su carne y su alma, a las veces. . . Hasta que un día. . .

Un día una vieja vecina, dolida de su eterna melancolía, le invitó a distraerse. Le enseñaría a jugar el *panguingue* la gran cosa para ahogar todo aburrimiento. . . Y Susana se dejó arrastrar, y se fue enviciando poco a poco. . .

Cuando Andrés se enteró de que jugaba, por algunas deudas de dinero que tuvo que abonar, se la quejó dulcemente: — ¿Por qué juegas, Susana? . . . ¿No sabes que eso es únicamente de mujeres viciosas, de mujeres perdidas?. . . Una esposa buena no abandona su hogar, ni sus hijos, a malversar el tiempo y el dinero que el marido esta ganándose, en tanto, apesadumbrado de trabajo, y muchas veces de hambre y sed. . . Vuelve en ti, mujercita mía, sé buena y júrame que no volverás, por mí, por ti, por nuestros hijos, al antro de esas mujerzuelas que nada tienen que perder, ni dinero ni vergüenza . . .

He silenced her lips with his hands... Oh!..; The great fool should keep to herself the big nonsense she had just uttered! What wicked angel had suggested it to her? Not two but two hundred children that she would give him, and if he should lack the strength to work for all of them, for them he would go begging from door to door... Oh, Susana, what ideas, what nonsense. She did not know that she was spoiling the divine wine of glory and happiness with drops of bitterness which from her lips had fallen to the bottom of the goblet that his soul was sipping in that instant because of the new daughter.

## V

And if with the last daughter the womb of Susana seemed to wither, the rosebush seemed to tire of producing roses, the skies of yielding stars, and there were no children anymore.

Life then with the children began to change for Susana, and her soul began to change without she herself knowing it, nor could she understand her lack of interest or lack of affection for the man who adored her more each day.

It was a nostalgia, it was a kind of tiredness, of boredom with everything that surrounded her, even her own children, who were part of her flesh and soul, at times... Until one day...

One day an old neighbor, feeling sorry for Susana's eternal melancholy, invited Susana to spend some time with her. She would teach her to play *panguigue*, a card game, the big thing to end all boredom... And Susana allowed herself to be dragged, and became addicted little by little...

When Andres learned that she gambled, because of some debts that he had to pay for, he gently complained to her: "Why do you gamble, Susana?... Don't you know that that is only for dissolute and loose women?... A good wife does not leave her home nor her children to squander the time and the money the husbands earns in the meantime burdened with work and very often by hunger and thirst. . . Come to yourself, my dear wife, be good and swear to me that for my sake, for your sake, and for the sake of our children, you will not return to the den of those loose women who have nothing to lose, neither money nor shame."

## VI

Pero, ¡qué! . . Ya estaba enviciada, ya el monstruo horrible del vicio la tenía cogida entre sus garras. . . Susana volvió a jugar.

Y siguió jugando, sin hacer caso ya a las prédicas, a las lamentaciones, ni aún a las mismas amenazas del marido.

En tanto el hogar yacía en abandono, los hijos correteaban sucios y andrajosos por todo el solar, haciendo mil diabluras, sobre todo el mayor, que era muy travieso y arrastraba a la pequeña a toda suerte de arriesgados juegos. . .

Hasta que todo acabó así. . .

## VII

Una tarde, en la que como siempre la madre se encontraba en el *panguingue,* el niño propuso a su hermanita jugar a los cohetes.

Se proveyeron de unos fósforos, y con un gran número de periódicos viejos que conservaba el padre, prendieron una hoguera, inmensa.

Un fuerte viento, de cuaresma, desparramó las altas llamas en todas direcciones. Y empezaron a arder las ropas de los niños, los trastos de la casita, la casita entera. . .

Aquella casita de la felicidad un día, templo de amor que Dios bendijera, templo de luz y rosas del amor. . .

Alguien dio el grito de alarma al ver el incendio y Susana seguida de todas las demás *panguingueras* corrió desolada hacia su hogar. . .

Pero cuando llegó no vio más que una columna de fuego chisporroteante que calcinaba los huesos de sus hijos. . . Y en vano aulló como una fiera y por morir con ellos quiso arrojarse loca entre las llamas. . .

Dos brazos fuertes, musculosos, temblorosos, se lo impidieron; los brazos del marido. . .

— ¿Qué ibas a hacer, infeliz?

Ella se arrojó a la tierra, a los pies de él, rugiendo como una loca. . .

— Morir, morir con ellos, antes que me mate el remordimiento o me mates tú!. . .

## VI

Why, now look! . . . She was already addicted. Already the horrible monster of vice had her in its clutches. . . Susana returned to gambling.

And she continued gambling and did not mind the protestations, the lamentations, not even the threats of the husband.

Meanwhile the home was neglected, the children ran about the yard dirty in rags and tatters, getting up to a hundred mischiefs, especially, the elder boy, who was very naughty and led the small sister to all kinds of risky games.

Until everything ended like this...

## VII

One afternoon, in which like always the mother was gambling, the boy invited his sister to play with matches.

They got some matches, and with a great pile of old newspapers which the father had stored away, started a huge bonfire.

A strong lenten wind scattered the tall flames in all directions. And the clothes of the children began to burn, the furniture of the small house, all of the little house.

That little house that was once filled with happiness, a temple of love that God had blessed, a temple of light and roses of love...

Someone gave a cry of alarm after seeing the fire, and Susana followed by other women gamblers ran desolutely to her home.

But when she arrived there, she saw nothing but a column of crackling fire that turned the bones of her children into ashes... And in vain did she howl like a wild animal, and wanting to die with them, madly she tried to throw herself into the flames...

Two strong arms, muscular and trembling, prevented it; the arms of her husband...

"What were you going to do, wretch?"

She threw herself on the ground at his feet, shouting like a madwoman.

"I want to die, to die with them before I am killed by remorse or by you!. . ."

El hombre, estoico, loco a su vez de dolor y desesperación la alzó del suelo. . .

Y mientras casi a rastras se la llevaba lejos del lugar de la catástrofe, la clamó a su vez terriblemente. . .

– No, ni te matará el remordimiento, ni yo te mataré. ¡Vivirás!. . . ¡Es necesario que vivas para servir de ejemplo a toda una raza! . . . ¡Ea, enderézate, mujer, seca esas lágrimas tardías y alza esa frente coronada por el vicio y por el crimen, amante de las barajas, asesina de tus hijos!. . . .

The man, stoic, who in turn was almost out of his mind with pain and despair raised her from the ground...

And while he dragged her far away from the place of the disaster, he in turn snarled at her...

"No, neither will your conscience kill you, nor will I kill you. You shall live!... It is necessary that you live to serve as an example to everyone of your kind. Come on, stand up woman, dry your belated tears and raise your forehead crowned by vice and crime, lover of cards, assassin of your children!..."

# LA HIDRA

(1920)

## I

No era hermosa. . .

Pero tenía un cuerpo tan bonito y una cara tan dulce, que cautivaba y enamoraba sin ella misma quererlo ni pensarlo.

Se llamaba Marta, era de una provincia cualquiera, y estaba desde hacía poco trabajando como mecanógrafa en aquella oficina comercial donde se ganaba un mezquino sueldo para sostenerse con su madre en una vida de perpetuos apuros y miserias.

Sin embargo, era feliz. Se sentía, se creía feliz.

Con su vestidito de *sinamay* azul, o rosa, o de champaka, y sus corchos de negro aterciopelado que hacían resaltar la mate blancura de sus pies desnudos, su vieja sombrilla de seda japonesa y su envoltorio diario de hojas de plátano y papel con el frío y frugal condumio del mediodía, antes que nadie, cada mañana, era la primera en aparecer en el trabajo y era su maquinilla la primera que irrumpía en el teclear monótono y sonoro.

Y eso que no era ella la única mujercita en la oficina. Había otras dos más, como ella jóvenes, agraciadas, de su mismo oficio . . . . . ¿Como ella he dicho?. . . . No. Porque las otras resultaban más bonitas, por lo bien arregladas, por lo siempre alhajadas, por lo elegantemente vestidas y olorosas. . . . . Y es claro que eran "las señoritas", rodeadas de perpetuos agasajos y amoríos, sobre todo una de ellas, la más fácil, a quien hacía días, D. Luis, el cajero viejo verde y sesentón, había regalado un brazalete de esmeraldas y rubíes. . . .

¡Oh, la pulsera!. . .

# THE HYDRA

## I

She was not beautiful.

But she had such a beautiful body and so sweet a face that charmed and won hearts without she herself wanting it or thinking about it.

She was called Marta. She was from some province, and it was just a short time since she began working as a typist in that business office where she earned a paltry wage to support herself and her mother in a life of never-ending necessity and suffering.

Nevertheless, she was happy. She felt, she believed she was happy.

With her fine dress of blue or pink or champaca-colored *sinamay* (abaca fiber) and her black velvety cork slippers that brought out the dull whiteness of her bare feet, her old umbrella of Japanese silk, and her daily cold, frugal lunch wrapped in banana leaves and paper, before anyone, every morning, she was the first to arrive at work, and it was her typewriter that burst into a monotonous and resounding clatter.

And this despite the fact that she was not the only woman in the office. There were two others, young like her, attractive, with the same job like hers. . . Like her, did I say? . . . No, because the others were prettier, because they were well groomed, always bejewelled, because they were smartly dressed and fragrant. . . And it was clear that they were the "señoritas", surrounded by parties, receptions, and love affairs, especially one of them, the most wanton with whom some days before, Don Luis, the cashier, the dirty old man who was in his sixties, had gifted with a bracelet of emeralds and rubies. . .

Oh, the bracelet!...

Cuántas veces ella, Marta, se había detenido minutos y minutos para contemplarla con sus pueblerinos ojos de par en par abiertos, al través del cristal de escaparate donde dormía su sueño de luz entre otras luces, como algo para ella muy querido y muy soñado, pero muy distante. . . .

Ahora la veía allí, la tenía allí, muy cerca, tal que una sierpe de verdes y purpúreos fulgores, enroscada al brazo saltarín de su orgullosa compañera, sobre el negro fondo de la maquinilla de escribir.

Era una tentación. . . .

Como las sobrefaldas de azabaches y abalorios, los diáfanos rengues y las pomposas sedalinas, los blancos zapatitos de delicada piel y las blancas medias de seda transparente como pétalos de cebolla. . . .

Y aquellos polvos olorosos a gloria que embellecían el rostro. . . . . Y aquellas esencias con que se perfumaban sus amigas el corpiño, el pañuelito, los labios, las manos, los pies. . . . .

Marta cerraba sus dulces ojos deslumbrados.

## II

Un día riñó el cajero con su favorita.

Y riñó por ella, por Marta, muerta de celos la otra, al ver que el pródigo y enamorado vejestorio se dirigía ostensiblemente a la provinciana, acosándola con miradas, con palabras, con rosarios de flores. . .

Y riñeron tan definitivamente que una tarde Marta escuchó turbada y temblorosa las ardientes y amorosas proposiciones del taimado que la juró, por todo cuanto supo y pudo, quererla por sobre todas las cosas, quererla a ella sola por sobre todas las demás mujeres.

Y la pobre provinciana creyó, soñó, amó a su vez, y en un rincón de la oficina lloró de felicidad y gratitud.

## III

Aquella noche, en su casita de nipa perdida entre la perfumada espesura de Singalong, no cenó. Fingiendo un no sentido malestar, se tendió en su petate, se arropó hasta los ojos con la

How many times she, Marta, had lingered minutes and minutes to contemplate it with her rustic eyes wide open, through the glass of a shop window where her dream of light, slept amongst other lights, which for her was like something so much liked and dreamed of, but was very distant. . .

Now she was seeing it, there it was, very near, like a serpent of green and purple glitter, coiled around the restless arm of her proud companion, over the black background of the typewriter.

It was a temptation.

Like the overskirts of jet and glass beads, the diaphanous border laces, and the splendid mercerized cotton, the white shoes of exquisite leather, the white stockings of transparent silk like petals of onion...

And those heavenly fragrant powder that beautify the face... And those scents with which her friends perfumed their bodies, handkerchief, lips, hands, and feet...

Marta shut her sweet dazzled eyes.

## II

One day the cashier quarrelled with his favorite.

And he quarrelled on Marta's account. The other one was jealous to death at seeing that the lavish and amorous old rake was ostensibly turning to the provincial lass, pursuing her with looks, with words, with strings of flowers.

And they did break off for good that one afternoon Marta listened confused and tremulous to the ardent and amorous proposals of the sly man who swore by all that he knew and could do, to love her above everything, to love only her...

And the poor rustic believed, dreamed, loved in her turn, and in a corner of the office she cried with happiness and gratitude.

## III

That night in her nipa hut lost among the fragrant thicket of Singalong, she did not take supper... Feigning an illness she did not feel, she lay down, covered herself with a blanket up to

sábana y con los ojos muy abiertos, muy abiertos en la sombra, aguardó que el ensueño tendiera sobre sus párpados su manto de colores. . . .

Y el ensueño se hizo carne en la imaginación de la mujer. . . .

Era ella misma, retratada en su ensueño, con la cara blanca de polvos olorosos, con los cabellos recogidos por peinetas de carey y oro, con las orejas iluminadas por dos rosas de brillantes, deslumbrando al mover sus leves manos con el relámpago verde, rojo, rosa, violeta y amaranto de anillos y pulseras, sintiendo sobre su pecho virginal el beso suave y luminoso de un oloroso hilo de perlas. . . .

Era ella, ella misma, Marta, viviendo en otro ambiente, en otro mundo, en otra vida, regalada y amada por un hombre poderoso, amante, derrochador, muy lejos, lejos ya para siempre de apuros y trabajos y miserias. . . .

Porque él se lo había jurado. Tendría una casita azul, rodeada de rosales. Tendría criados, coches, muebles preciosos, los más hermosos espejos para copiarla entera en su hermosura. . . . Y música, mucha luz, mucha alegría, y sobre todo, amor. . .

Cuando los gallos clarinearon batiendo sus alas salpicadas de rocío bajo el primer fulgor del día. Marta seguía soñando desvelada, con los ojos ardientes, moteados aún por la divina quimera que inundaba sus carnes y su espíritu de una fiebre intensa, ideal. . . .

## IV

Fue un escándalo la fuga, ya que de la caja de la casa habían desaparecido con D. Luis sesenta y tantos mil pesos.

Pero al fin dieron con los profugos, a los pocos días en el refugio de una lejana provincia donde él fue arrestado con cuanto dinero y cuantas joyas le encontraron, no perdonando ni un sencillo anillo de oro que poseía Marta desde niña. . . . . .

Fue despojada brutalmente de las rosas de brillantes que encendían sus mejillas; del suave hilo de perlas que como una serpiente de luz se enroscaba dormida a su garganta; y sus manos bonitas se quedaron desnudas de ópalos y esmeraldas y rubíes. . . Todo se lo llevaron aquellos representantes de la ley, con el aman-

her eyes, and with her very wide open eyes, very wide open in the dark, she awaited that her dream spread over her eyelids its colored mantle.

And the dream materialized in the woman's imagination.

She was the same one, pictured in her dream, with the face white with fragrant powder, with her hair put up by fine-tooth combs of tortoise shell and gold, with two diamond roses, dazzling as she moved her light hands with the green, red, pink, violet, and amaranth-colored flash of rings and bracelets, feeling on her virginal breast the soft and luminous kiss of a scented string of pearls...

It was she, she herself, Marta, living in another environment, in another world, in another life, gifted and loved by a powerful, loving, and spendthrift man, very far, already very far from need, work, and misery...

Because he had promised it to her. She would have a small blue house surrounded by rose bushes. She would have servants, cars, precious furniture, the most beautiful mirrors to reflect her entire beauty... And music, much light, much happiness, and above all, love...

When the cocks crowed, flapping their wings sprinkled with dew under the first flash of day, Marta continued dreaming awake with burning eyes, still flecked by the divine reverie which engulfed her flesh and spirit with an intense and imaginary fever.

## IV

The flight was a scandal because Don Luis had disappeared with over sixty thousand pesos from the cashbox of the firm.

But a few days later, the fugitives were found in the refuge of a distant province where he was arrested with all the money and jewels he had with him. Not even the simple gold ring that Marta possessed since childhood was spared.

She was brutally stripped off the diamond roses of brilliants that lighted up her cheeks: the smooth thread of pearls which like a serpent of light coiled dormant on her throat; and her beautiful hands became bare of opals, emeralds, and rubies... Everything was taken away by those officers of the law, together

te mísero y ladrón, no dejándola más gemas que las gotas trémulas y amargas de su llanto infinito. . . .

## V

Volvió a Manila.

No podía, no sabía renunciar ya a la vida de fausto y de riqueza, una vez iniciada, por la que había sucumbido, por la que había sacrificado sin titubear lo más hermoso, lo más sagrado, lo único que hace de la mujer ángel y estrella y flor de nuestra vida: el honor.

El lujo, como la espantosa Hidra mitológica la tenía sujeta entre sus garras, despedazando la vida y el alma, para no soltarla ya jamás. Quería ser hermosa. Vivir a lo princesa. Rivalizar con todas las bellezas de la sociedad que se encontraba al paso en un duelo a muerte de lujos y esplendores. . . La idea de volver al trabajo ahora la espantaba, la horrorizaba casi . . . . ¡No, no! . . . Cualquier cosa antes que el retorno al mísero vivir recién pasado . . . Se enfermaría. Se moriría . . . ¡No!

Y en la ciudad, inmoral, pese a tanta proclamada moral, a tanto tartufismo y a tanta acomodaticia hipocresía, deslumbrando por el arroyo con el fulgor de sus oros y sus gasas, Marta, al igual que cientos y cientos de Martas más, empujadas al abismo del pecado la mayoría de las veces por esos mismos graves y campanudos señorones reguladores de la ley y la moral, fue cayendo de vil en vil amor, hasta rodar el último peldaño de la escala de la infamia. . . . . .

## VI

Iba a morir.

Al final de seis años de su loca vida, pobre, mísera y abandonada por todos, iba a morir en el estrecho y blanco camastro de un hospital de caridad.

Únicamente la pobre y vieja madre velaba, acurrucada en un borde de la misma cama, su espantoso delirio, su última visión de humanidad. . . . .

Marta se enarcaba, se crispaba, hipando, transfigurada en sus últimos momentos. La inmunda enfermedad de que moría y la

with the miserable lover and thief, not leaving her any jewels except the tremulous and bitter drops of her infinite tears.

## V

She returned to Manila.

She could not, she did not know how to give up the life of pomp and wealth, to which she was once initiated, to which she had succumbed, for what she had sacrificed without any hesitancy the most beautiful, the most sacred, the only thing that makes a woman angel, star, and prime of our life: honor.

Luxury, like the frightening Hydra of mythology, had her under her clutches, tearing her life and soul, never to let her go. She wanted to be beautiful. Live like a princess. Rival all the beauties of the society that she encountered on the way in a duel to death for luxuries and splendor. The idea of returning back to work now frightened her, horrified her almost... No, no... Anything but return to the miserly living of the recent past... She would get sick. She would die... No!...

And in the city, immoral, inspite of so much acclaimed morality, of so much adaptable hypocrisy, dazzling throughout the gutter with the brilliance of its gold and chiffon, Marta, like hundreds and hundreds more of Martas, oftentimes pushed to the abyss of sin by those very same grave, pompous, and distinguished men, guardians of the law and morals, began falling from one vile love to another, until she fell down the last step of the ladder of infamy...

## VI

She was going to die.

At the end of six years of her crazy life, poor, miserly, and abandoned by all, she was dying in the narrow and white rough old bed of a charity hospital.

Only the poor and old mother huddled on an edge of the same bed watched over her frightening delirium, her last vision of humanity...

Marta raised herself, twitched, gasping, transfigured in her last moments. The repulsive sickness she was dying of and the

quemante fiebre que la abrasaba hacían de ella astrosa piltrafa de carne amarillenta y flácida, de carne purulenta, miserable, hedionda. . . .

La visión macabra que presidía su agonía le hacía tiritar de frío y de pavor, tan intensamente que rechinaban los hierros del camastro. . . .

Era la Hidra, aquel monstruoso pólipo hijo de Tifón y Equidna, de las ocho cabezas rodeando a la del centro, la inmortal.

Los ojos de Marta la veían en su pantanosa guarida del Peleponeso en pleno triunfo procaz de sus estragos, distendida por todo el pueblo, hasta que Hércules llegaba sirviéndose de sus flechas incendiadas para arrojarla de su madriguera aplastando sus cabezas con su maza de hierro, separándolas del tronco su inmensa hoz de oro.

Era la Hidra, fatal y horrible, con las garras teñidas por la sangre que manaban los corazones rotos a sus zarpazos, las entrañas de las vírgenes heridas por sus uñas, y las aves y las flores despetaladas a su hálito gigante. . . . . .

¡Ni Hercules podía con ella!. . . Que a cada golpe triunfal y certero de su divina hoz por cada cabeza que caía a tierra, el monstruo se coronaba de tres cabezas más. . . . Era la Hidra, la que arropada de oro y piedras preciosas la fascinó en su vida y ahora, al final de ella, venía por su alma, mostrándose infernal en su cruda desnudez, en su bárbaro realismo. . . .

Y Marta moría, moría entregándola su alma como viviendo la entregara su vida, en la última mueca que acabó por desfigurarla la antes dulce carita de humilde, honrada y laboriosa provinciana.

## VII

La madre mendigó de puerta en puerta para poderla enterrar.

Y se la llevaron al cementerio amortajada con su vestidito azul de *sinamay* y sus corchos de negro tercio pelo que la pobre vieja encontró revueltos en el fondo de su arca, abandonada en su primera fuga. . . . . .

burning fever that scorched her, made her a contemptible scrap of flabby yellowing flesh, of purulent, miserable, stinking flesh...

The macabre vision that dominated her agony made her shake with cold and with terror so intensely that the bars of the old rough bed creaked.

She was the Hydra, the monstrous polyp, son of Typhon and Echidna, with the eight heads surrounding the one on the center, the immortal one.

The eyes of Marta saw her in her marshy lair in Peloponnese in the middle of the insolent triumph of her havoc, stretched all over the country, until Hercules came using his burning arrows to throw her out of her lair, crushing her heads with the steel mace, separating them from the trunk with his enormous golden sickle...

She was the Hydra, fatal and horrible, with claws stained with blood that flowed from the hearts torn by the lashes of her claws, the hearts of virgins wounded by her claws, and the birds and the flowers stripped of their petals by her gigantic breath.

Not even Hercules could cope with her. . . Who with each triumphant and accurate blow from his divine sycthe, for each head that fell to the ground, the monster crowned herself with three heads more. . . She was the Hydra, the one who clothed with gold and precious stones fascinated her in life, and now, at her end, was coming for her soul, appearing infernal in her raw nakedness, in her cruel realism. . .

And Martha died, she died giving up her soul to the Hydra as she would have surrendered her life to her if she had been alive, in a last grimace which ended in disfiguring the once sweet face of the humble, honest, and industrious provincial lass.

## VII

The mother begged from door to door to be able to bury her.

And she was brought to the cemetery shrouded with her fine blue *sinamay* dress and her black velvety slippers which the poor mother found wrapped up at the bottom of the chest that Marta had left in her first elopement.

Pero esto no es nada, caballeros.

Tenemos cientos y cientos de Martas por ahí, entregándose cada día y cada vez con más ilusión y más pasión a la Hidra seductora y monstruosa. . . . .

Y seguiremos teniéndolas, sobre tanta moral, tanta religión y tanta hipocresía, mientras canallas, parapetados en sus riquezas o en su no importa que honorabilidades, sigan deshojando sobre el fango, absolutamente a mansalva, estas pobres flores de la sementera, toda fe, todo ensueño, todo corazón.

But this is nothing, gentlemen.

We have hundreds and hundreds of Martas everywhere, with more illusion and more passion giving themselves every passing day to the seductive and monstrous Hydra.

And we shall continue having them on top of so much morality, so much religion, and so much hypocrisy while scoundrels, sheltered in their wealth or in their doubtful honor will continue degrading them, without themselves taking any risk at all, these poor flowers of the field, all faith, all dreams, all heart.

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# LA PESCA

(1925)

## I

Aquella noche el viento ululaba furioso, sacudiendo las hojas de los plátanos que caían tronchadas en revuelto desorden sobre el centenar de metros de solar que rodeaba la rústica casucha. Y en la noche densa, negra, invadida de inmensos nubarrones, ni una sola estrella fulguraba con sus pétalos de luz.

Decididamente habría tempestad, y acaso todavía, un baguio. . . . . No caía aún, en verdad, una gota de agua del espacio poblado de tinieblas, pero el mar, allí cerca, rugía violento, hirviente, y sus olas, altas y sonoras, restallaban coronadas de cascadas de espuma, abatiendo con su estruendo los gritos del vendabal. . . .

Era bien entrada la noche. En la casucha del viejo Tomás, el pescador, la macilenta llama de un misero *tinboy* esparcía su indeciso claror en torno a los pobres enseres y los pobres seres moradores del nido aquel de cañas fragiles y deshechas nipas estremecidas y voltijeadas por el viento. . . . Y en la semiclaridad de la ambigua estancia brilloteaba la aterrada cabeza de Tomás, los ojos rojos, moteados de sangre, como los de un *bacoco* putrefacto; los labios rojos llenos de *buyo* y de mascada y la frente alta, noble, hermosamente coronada de plateados rizos como las crestas de las olas. . . Frente de bravo, de luchador, de héroe del mar. . . .

También dejaba entrever la difusa luz de las marchitas facciones inexpresivas de la vieja Juana, esposa de Tomás. Y la dulzura juvenil y floreal de los ojos y los labios y todo el busto encantador de Remedios, la hija de los viejos, la dalaga soñadora del tugurio, flor de la playa, zurcidora gentil de sonrisas y de redes. . . .

# FISHING

## I

That night the wind howled furiously, shaking the smash leaves of the banana plants that were falling in disturbing disord over the hundreds of meters of ground which surrounded t rustic hut. And in the dark and black night invaded by immer storm clouds, not one single star sparkled with its petals of ligl

There would definitely be a storm, and maybe even typhoon. In truth not a drop of water was falling yet from the s covered by darkness. But the sea nearby roared violently, frothi and its waves, tall and resounding, was breaking forth, crown with cascades of foam, drowning the screetching of the gale wi its roar.

It was quite late in the night. In the hut of old Tomas, t fisherman, the pale flame of one miserable *tinboy* spread flickering light towards the poor equipment and the poor dwell of that home made of fragile bamboo and dishevelled nipa shak and tossed by the wind... And in the dim light of the dark ro glimmered the terrified face of Tomas; the eyes red, speckl with blood, like those of a rotten *bacoco;* the lips red, full betthenut and quid, and the brow high, noble, beautifully crown with silver curls like a crest of the waves. . . The brow of brave, the fighter, the hero of the sea. . .

Also through the diffused light one could make out wrinkled, expressionless face of old Juana, the wife of Toma And the youthful and dreamy sweetness of the eyes and li and fascinating bosom of Remedios, the daughter of the couple; the dreamy young lady of the hovel, the flower of shore, the charming weaver of smiles and nets.

De pronto el viejo Tomás se alzó, encendió el farol rojo de su banca pescadora y asió la gran red de intrincadas y fuertes mallas, dispuesto a partir. . . . La esposa y la hija protestaron unánimes. . .

– ¡Tomás, por la Virgen de Guía, no salgas esta noche!. . .

– Padre, por el Sagrado Corazón, irse a pescar con este tiempo es ir a buscar la muerte. . . .

Pero el viejo Tomás sonreía. . . . ¡Bah!. . . ¡miedos, sensiblerías, nervosismos de mujeres!. . . Si sabría él, pescador hacía treinta años, a que atenerse en esto del buen o mal tiempo y del mal o buen mar. . . Que se callaran la boca las miedosas. Él necesitaba pescar, y pescaría. . .¡Ya lo creo que pescaría!. . . Y por todo lo alto, con todo el vendabal aquel y el mar aquel picado y tan revuelto. . . Pues no faltaba más. . . ¡A mar revuelto, ganancia de pescadores!. .

Y traspuso lentamente la puerta de la casucha, mientras las dos mujeres caían la una en brazos de la otra, desoladas. . .

## II

Dentro de aquel mes, dos semanas después de aquella noche, Remedios se casaría con Tínoy, el más joven pescador de la Ermita, un hermoso y fuerte mozalbete arriesgado y bravo hasta la temeridad si luchaba con las olas, pero tímido y lírico como un niño si el combate se lo presentaban los dulces ojos o la dulce sonrisa de cualquier mujer. . .

¡Buen muchacho, excelente muchacho el tal Tínoy!. . . Y el viejo Tomás, que lo trataba y lo quería como a un verdadero hijo, pensaba en su felicidad y la de su hija para cuando dentro de pocos días se unieran para toda la vida, a los divinos pies de la morena Reinecita del pueblo, María de Guía, María del Pandán. . .

Y el viejo Tomás que había sufrido en esta vida toda suerte de miserias, toda clase de penalidades, y que no comprendía la felicidad sino era con un saco repleto de brillantes pesos, tenía su idea. . .

Por eso salía, exponiendo su vida a la pesca aquella noche. . . ¡Si el cielo le ayudaba y llenaba el mar sus redes y sus redes la banca, se hacía de ciento o más de pesos que, unidos a una docena

Suddenly old Tomas stood up, lighted the red lamp of his fishing boat, took hold of the great net of intricate and strong mesh, and prepared to leave... The wife and the daughter protested unanimously...

—Tomas, in the name of the Virgin of Guia, do not leave tonight!....

— Father, for the Sacred Heart's sake, to go to fish in this weather is to look for death...

But old Tomas was smiling... Bah!... fears, mawkishness, nervousness of women!... He should know, a fisherman for almost thirty years, how matters stand in this case of good or bad weather and of calm or rough sea... The fearful ones should shut up. He needed to fish, and would fish... Of course he would go fishing... And for all the height, with all the gale, and the sea choppy and turbulent... Well, that's all that's needed!... A turbulent sea means profit for the fishermen!

And he slowly disappeared behind the door of the hut, while the two fell in each other's arms, desolate...

## II

Within that month, two weeks after that night, Remedios would be married to Tinoy, the youngest fisherman in Ermita. A handsome and strong lad, daring and brave, even reckless when he struggled with the waves, but timid and dreamy like a child if the fight were for the sweet glances or sweet smile of any woman...

Good youth, excellent youth this Tinoy!... And old Tomas, who treated him and loved him like a real son, thought of his happiness and that of his daughter when in a few days they would be united for their whole life, at the divine feet of the brown little Queen of the village, Maria de Guia, Maria del Pandan...

And old Tomas who had suffered all kinds of ill fortune in this life, all kinds of hardships, and who could not understand happiness if it did not come with a bag replete with shining pesos, had his plan...

That is why he left, risking his life to fish that night. If the heavens would help and the sea would fill his nets and his nets the banca, he would make one hundred pesos or more which,

de cientos de pesos más que la vieja guardaba avaramente, servirían para comprar la dicha de sus hijos, el bienestar, la salud, la alegría y la ventura de los hijos!. . .

Ellos ya eran viejos, ya no necesitaban nada, nada sino un pedazo de tierra, más tarde o más temprano, en el que reposar eternamente en el rincón de algún vetusto cementerio. . . La vida y el amor y la felicidad eran para aquellos, los otros, los jóvenes. . . ¡Para eso se habían sacrificado y seguirían sacrificándose todavía él y su pobre vieja!. . .

Se lanzó mar adentro, en la banca que crugía a los golpes furiosos de las olas. El viento, arremolinador le cortaba la piel, frío y agudo, como la hoja de acero de una espada. . . Y en el negro y profundo abismo sobre el que avanzaba alzándose o despeñándose entre las crestas hirvientes y restallantes de las olas, el farolillo rojo de la banca era el único fulgor entre tantas tinieblas, titilante, parpadeante, goteante, como una lágrima de sangre!. . .

## III

Mar adentro, mar adentro, el viejo Tomás columbró con su vieja mirada de *limbás* otro farol rojo, semejante al suyo, fieramente sacudido como una rosa de escarlata sobre el temblor del mar. . . .

Fue uno o dos instantes nada más. Luego desapareció, como apagada por el viento, como tragado por las olas. . . .

Y al viejo Tomás le dio un vuelco el corazón. ¿Quién pudiera ser el atrevido o el avaro de no importara que género de felicidades como él, que así como él se jugaba la vida en la noche tormentosa, en la mar tenebrosa, bajo los cielos y los elementos despiadados?. . .

¡Bah!. . . ¡Cualquiera iba a adivinar quién!. . . ¡Algún infeliz, o algún héroe, como él mismo, Tomás!. . .

Siguió avanzando, penosamente, expuesto a cada instante a estrellarse con la banca, a zozobrar. . . . Y en el lugar de más furia y de mayor peligro, al fin saltó la red, que cayó pesadamente bordando en el agua alborotada un círculo de orlas y de encajes.

Cuando al cabo de cierto tiempo recogió la red, la red no encerraba entre sus mallas sino el cadáver de un hombre. . .

combined with a dozen of hundreds of pesos that the old woman avariciously kept, would be used for buying the joy of his children, their welfare, their health, the happiness, and the fortune of their children.

They were already old, no longer did they need anything, nothing except a piece of land, sooner or later, in which to rest eternally in a corner of an ancient cemetry... Life, love, and happiness are for them, their children, for others, for the young... For that, they had been sacrificing and would still continue to sacrifice, he and his old wife!...

He rushed out to sea, in the boat that creaked at the furious lashing of the waves. The strong and whirling wind slashed his skin, cold and sharp, like the leaf of steel of a sword... And in the black and deep abyss over which advanced rising up or falling down between the frothing and whipping crests of the waves, the small red lantern of the banca was the only glow in the midst of much darkness, quivering, blinking, dripping like a tear of blood!...

## III

Far towards the open sea, old Tomas made out with his old eyes of a hawk another red lamp similar to his, fiercely shaken like a scarlet rose in the turbulence of the sea. . .

It was one or two seconds only. Then it disappeared, like it were extinguished by the wind, and swallowed by the waves...

And old Tomas felt his heart leap. Who could be the bold one, the miserly one who, like him, did not worry about the kind of happiness, and that like him thus gambled with his life in the stormy night, in the gloomy sea, under the merciless skies and elements?...

Bah!... Anybody would guess who... Some unhappy soul or some hero like himself, Tomas!...

He continued advancing laboriously, exposed at every instant to smash against the banca, to sink. . . And in a most furious and dangerous place finally, he threw the nets which fell heavily floating on the rough sea in a circle of fringes and laces.

When after some time he gathered the net, the net contained in its meshes only the corpse of a man...

El viejo Tomás se santiguó; tendió al muerto en el fondo de la banca y arrancando el rojo farolillo de la borda fue a reconocer al desgraciado compañero. . . .

Y sus ojos, entonces, se dilataron en un estrabismo bárbaro; y su alma crugió como el maderamen de la banca golpeada por el viento y las aguas; y a su vez él quedó postrado, parecía desfallecer, morir. . . . .

El muerto pescador era Tínoy. . . .

## IV

Un sol opaco, pobre, ilumínico, como de cobre, lucía en la mañana gris, cuando el viejo Tomás saltó a la playa cargado con el cadáver del amado de su hija, envuelto entre las redes. . . .

Ella, la hija, le aguardaba loca de contento en la playa, viéndole tornar sano y salvo, con el enorme y pesado lío entre los brazos. . . .

Y gritaba, fuera de sí, tremante de alegría.

¡Madre!. . . ¡Madre!. . . ¡salga Vd., venga Vd.!. . . Aquí está padre!. . .

Y fue entonces cuando el viejo Tomás, con el rostro salpicado por las amargas gotas de las olas y las lágrimas, depositó en la arena su pesca. . .

¡Y fue entonces cuando, por sobre los rugidos del huracán, se alzaron como una bandada de aves heridas los inmensos sollozos y los ayes dolorosos de una pobre dalaga a quien el mar le arrebató un amor mucho más adorado y preciado que su misma vida!. . . .

Old Tomas crossed himself; laid the dead in the bottom of the banca, and snatching the small red lamp of the gunwale, he went to examine the unfortunate companion on the side of the banca...

And then his eyes dilated in a terrible squint; and his soul shrivelled like the framework of the banca struck by the wind and the waters, and in turn, he became exhausted, he seemed to faint, to die...

The dead fishermean was Tinoy.

## IV

A dim and dull sun subdued, like copper, shone in the gray morning, when old Tomas jumped on the shore with the corpse of his daughter's sweetheart, wrapped in the nets.

She, his daughter, crazy with gladness, waited for him at the shore, seeing him return sound and safe, with an enormous and heavy bundle in his arms.

And she was shouting beside herself, trembling with joy.

"Mother!... Mother!... come out. Come!... Father is here!..."

And it was then when old Tomas, with his face all splashed by the bitter drops of the waves and tears placed on the sand his catch.

And it was then when, over the rumble of the hurricane, was raised like a flock of wounded birds the terrible sobs and pitiable moans of an unfortunate maiden from whom the sea had snatched a love much more adored and precious than her own life.

# UN PAR DE VIEJOS

(1928)

## I

Frente a frente, en la dorada galería de cañas y nipas de la casa, semihundidos los dos en dos sillones de bejuco, el viejo y la vieja parecían dormitar.

En torno a ellos y sobre sus frentes abatidas, los capullos se hacían flores y las nubes estrellas. Pero a pesar de la hermosura de la noche, la noche sin luna parecía una mujer sin amor.

– ¡Que noche más triste! – Suspiró la vieja.

– ¡Y. . . sin embargo, esta noche! – Continuó el viejo en otro suspiro. . .

– ¡Cumplimos treinta años de casados!. . .

Callaron, distraída ella en la telaraña de luz que iban tejiendo los luceros en lo alto, distraído él en las ramas florecidas que allá en el jardín hacían temblar los insectos noctámbulos. . . De pronto se estremeció

– ¿Te acuerdas, vieja mía?

– ¿De qué, Rafael?

– De una noche como ésta, hace treinta años. . . ¡Pues no se iba a acordar!

– ¡Tú eras la mujer más bonita del mundo, y vestida de novia parecías un hada!

– ¿De veras te parecí yo eso?. . .

– ¡Un hada, una princesa cuya carne fuera de luz o de esencia de jazmines! Yo no me atrevía a estrecharte por temor a que te rompieras, a que te desvanecieras como una onda de incienso, como un sueño ! Enarcando mi brazo derecho aprisionaba tu cintura, con el índice y el pulgar de mi mano extendida medía tus pies, cuando me mirabas amorosa, parpadeaban mis ojos cobardes

# AN OLD COUPLE

## I

Face to face in the golden veranda of bamboo and nipa of the house, the old man and the old woman half-sunken in two arm-chairs of rattan, seemed to be napping.

Around them and over their dejected foreheads, the buds were becoming flowers and the clouds stars. But inspite of the beauty of the night, the night without a moon seemed like a woman without love.

"What a very sad night!" Sighed the old woman.

"And... nevertheless this night!" continued the old man with another sigh. . . "We complete thirty years of marriage!"

They kept quiet, she was amused by the web of light that the bright stars were weaving in the sky; the old man was amused by the flowering branches that over there in the garden made the nocturnal insects tremble... Suddenly he shuddered: "Do you remember, my old woman?"

"About what, Rafael?"

"Of a night like this, thirty years ago. . . How could one forget it? You were the most beautiful woman in the world, and, dressed in a wedding gown, you looked like a fairy."

"Really, did I appear to you like that?"

"A fairy, a princess whose flesh was of light or of the jasmine essence; I did not dare to embrace you for fear that you would break; that you would dissipate like a wave of incense, like a dream...! Arching my right arm I imprisoned your waist, with my index finger and the thumb of my outstretched arm I measured your feet. When you lovingly looked at me, my cowardly eyes

al fulgor de tu mirada. ¡Qué bonita eras, Magdalena! ¡Ni tú misma sabías lo bonita que eras!

– Pues, y tú. . .

– Como era yo, ¿te acuerdas?

La vieja sonrió: – Tú eras el galán más apuesto y gentil del mundo. Verte y escucharte era a un mismo tiempo enamorarse de ti. ¡Nunca hombre alguno pudo superarte en elegancia y donosura! Además, ¡eras tan bueno, tan cariñoso, tan rendido!. . .

– ¿Como nos amamos, verdad?

– ¡Verdad!. . .

Hubo una pausa, breve, ilógica, en la que se veía reír a las estrellas, en la que se sentía murmurar a las ramas. – El viejo después: – ¿Te acuerdas del primer beso que te di? ¿Por qué lloraste?

– Porque eras malo, ¡Rafael! ¡Porque pusiste fuego en tus labios, llamas en tus besos!. . .

Él musitó: – ¡Y pensar que de aquellos besos, nada!

Y la vieja respondió como un eco: – ¡Nada!. . .

Y tenían razón. ¡Nada! Porque a pesar del gran amor de sus vidas y sus almas, el amor les había burlado sin hacer que las entrañas de ella germinaran a los golpes de las alas del amor, y se formara una nueva vida, flor de sus vidas y fruto de sus besos, en la carne de seda y de rosa de un chiquillo de esos que llenan de gloria la casa como el sol en la fiesta de brisas y de besos de las rosas. . .

– ¡Nada!

De todo el feliz y espléndido pasado, de toda la hermosura de ella y toda la bizarría de él, ¡Nada! Hoy, ya, perdido el divino tesoro de la juventud, apagadas las lámparas de oro de la ilusión, deshojadas las flores a los pies del ara, no había sino llorar por lo que no quiso, o no pudo, o no debió ser!. . .

– ¡Si hubiéramos tenido un niño!. . .

– O una niña, siquiera, se lamentó el mísero.

– Ahora sería ingeniero, o médico, estaría casado con una mujer maravillosa de bondad y belleza y tendría por lo menos, lo menos, un niño que viviría con nosotros, que yo bañaría y vestiría como a una muñeca. . .

blinked at the brilliance of your looks. How beautiful you were, Magdalena! Not even you yourself knew how beautiful you were!"

"Well, and you...!

"How was I, do you remember?"

The old woman smiled: "You were the most smart and charming handsome young man in the world. Seeing you and listening to you was at the same time to fall in love with you. Never could any man outshine you in elegance and wit. Moreover you were so good, so affectionate, so obsequious!..."

"How we loved each other, didn't we?"

"We did..."

There was a pause, brief, illogical, where the stars were seen smiling, where one heard the branches murmur. The old man said afterwards: "Do you remember the first kiss that I gave you? Why did you cry?"

"Because you were bad, Rafael! Because you put fire in your lips, flames in your kisses."

He mumbled: "And to think that from those kisses, nothing!"

And the old woman answered with an echo: "Nothing!. . ."

And they were right. Nothing! Because inspite of the great love of their lives and souls, love had deceived them by not making her womb germinate at the stroke of the wings of love, and form a new life, a flower of their lives and fruit of their kisses, in the silken and rosy flesh of a little child like those that fill the house with glory like the sun in the roses' feast of breezes and of kisses.

"Nothing!"

Of all the happy and splendid past, of all that beauty of hers, and all of that gallantry of his, Nothing! Now, already lost the divine treasure of youth, the dream's golden lamps extinguished, the flowers at the feet of the altar stripped of petals, there was nothing to do but to cry for what he did not want or what he could not or what should not have been!...

"If we had had a little boy!..."

"Or even a little girl," lamented the miserable man.

"Now he would be an engineer or doctor. He would have been married with a marvelous woman of kindness and beauty and they would have at least a boy that would live with us, that

— ¿Y yo, qué haría en tanto?

— Tú le harías pájaros y barquichuelos de papel y fusiles de caña y caballos de palo y sombreros de soldado con hojas de periódicos. . .

— Yo sería el Bazaar. . .

— Y yo la yaya. . .

— ¿Y su madre?

— ¿Su madre? Su madre no podría cuidarlo como nosotros le cuidaremos. Además, que estaría encargando otros niños a París. . .

— ¡Eso es!

— ¿Qué lástima de niño, eh?

— ¡Qué lástima!

— ¿Por dónde andará ahora?

— ¡Vaya usted a saber! En el cielo, entre los angelitos!

Hubo otra pausa, esta vez más larga, sin que las ramas cuchichearan ni se rieran las estrellas. Y de pronto el viejo se alzó para caer de hinojos ante la vieja, que se doblaba tremulando sobre sí misma, bajo un hipo de sollozos y suspiros. . .

— ¡Vieja! ¡Vieja mía! ¡Magdalena!. . .

Quedaron abrazados, largamente, santamente. La noche se hacía más clara. Sobre la pompa del jardín pululaban como perlas temblorosas de luz las luciérnagas, y en el alma de los viejos plegaba sus alas aquel ángel que les hacía llorar por lo único que puede y debe llorarse en la vida: El Amor.

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I would bathe and dress like a doll..."

"And I, what would I do in the meantime?"

"You would make him paper birds and little boats, and bamboo guns and horses made of sticks and soldier hats made of pages of newspapers..."

"I would be the Bazar..."

"And I the babysitter..."

"And his mother?"

"His mother? His mother would not be able to take care of him like we would. Besides, she would be giving Paris other children..."

"That is it!"

"What a pity of a boy, eh?"

"What a pity!"

"Where would he be now?"

"Who knows? In heaven among the little angels!"

There was another pause, this time longer, without the branches whispering nor the stars sparkling. And suddenly the old man stood up to fall on his knees before the old woman who tremulously stooped, under a breath of sobs and sighs...

"Old woman! My old woman! Magdalena!..."

They embraced each other lengthily, saintly. The night was becoming clearer. Over the spread of the garden, the fireflies swarmed like trembling pearls of light, and in the souls of the old couple the angel folded his wings, the one who made them cry for the only thing they can and must be sorry for in this life: Love.

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*Excelsior.* Manila (December 1928), pp. 19-21.

# EL "CASO" DEL DR. LAREDO

(1931)

## I

Pilar, Pacita, Carmen, Ángela y Rosario, cerrando sus sombrillas de colores como enormes flores de oro, de azul y de heliotropo, ascendieron las blancas escaleras del balneario, hacia la galería, oculta casi bajo el temblor de las flores blancas y las flores de rosa de una inmensa enredadera de cadenas de amor.

Llegaban de las faldas del monte, este que se veía enfrente, tan cerca que se dijera que con tender las manos se daba con él, tan cerca, que su cúpula gigante parecía gravitar sobre la casa, tan cerca que anoche mismo, al encenderse sobre él la luna, se oían de su claustro salvaje, onda a onda, los silbidos de amor de pájaros y sierpes, y de sus espesuras olorosas llegaba envolviéndolo todo, el acre perfume de follajes y flores.

En la amplia galería del balneario tan de gente siempre rebosante, no había a esta hora un alma. . . Solamente allá al final, semioculto en un rincón, cabeceando de sueño, tendido sobre una mecedora, a sus pies tres o cuatro revistas extranjeras, surgía la figura menuda y encorvada del Dr. Laredo, el celebérrimo Dr. Laredo de los fantásticos cuentos, aunque algunos, más que maravillosas ficciones, fueran casos reales, hechos sucedidos, párrafos de su vida solitaria y misteriosa.

Al Dr. Laredo le rodeaban siempre las mujeres. Y él, que despotricaba contra ellas y que había probado con hechos sus teorías metafísicas en contra la mujer, permaneciendo solterón hasta los muy cerquita de sesenta años que le coronaban de plata la cabeza y de desilusiones el corazón, a pesar de este antagonismo

# DR. LAREDO'S CAS

## I

Pilar, Pacita, Carmen, Angela, and Rosario shuttin colored parasols which were like enormous flowers of gol and heliothrope, ascended the white stairs of the fountai ing toward the gallery, almost hidden under the shaking and pink flowers of an immense vine of *cadena de amor.*

They came from the mountainside, this could be s front of the house, so near that it seemed one could ho one's hand and touch it. It was so near that its gigantic top s to rest on the house, so close that just last night when the shone over it, the amorous whistling of birds and snakes be heard, wave by wave, from its wild enclosure, and the aroma of the foliage and flowers from its fragrant thicke drawing up and enveloping everything.

In the spacious gallery of the watering place always flowing with people, there was not a soul at this time... there at the end, half hidden in a corner, almost drooping sleep on a rocking chair, at his feet three or four foreign papers, appeared the small and stooped figure of Dr. La the very famous Dr. Laredo of the fantastic stories, alt some stories, more than marvelous fiction, were real cases, e that happened, incidents of his solitary and mysterious

Dr. Laredo was always surrounded by women. An who used to run them down and who had proven with dee metaphysical theories against woman, remaining an old bac until very close to sixty years which crowned his head white hair and filled his heart with disappointments, could

sexual, no podía pasarse sin las charlas y las risas y los ojos de una mujer.

— Pero, Doctor, le decía alguna empingorotada señorona cliente suya, ¿cómo es que usted, tan bueno, tan noble, tan simpaticón, pudiendo haberse hecho de una familia para vivir rodeado de sus amores y sus cuidados, no lo ha hecho? ¿Qué es lo que le ha determinado a usted a vivir así, solo, como los hongos?...

— Pues, señora mía, respondía invariablemente Laredo, precisamente eso; que nunca quise dejar de ser bueno, noble y simpaticón, como usted dice...

— No comprendo, Doctor...

— Comprendería usted, señora, si le dijera que, juntando ángeles con demonios, cien mil probabilidades habría contra una sola de que, al cabo de cierto tiempo, todos, en vez de ángeles, serían diablos... Ahí tiene usted explicada mi fe de soltería...

Al ruido que alzaron al invadir la galería Pilar, Pacita, Carmen, Angela y Rosario, el Dr. Laredo abrió un ojo, luego abrió el otro, se incorporó y sonriendo trató de alzarse de la mecedora. Ellas avanzaron hacia él. Nada de ceremonias, Doctor. Quieto en su sitio. Ahora las pagaba todas por juntas, contándoles alguna de aquellas historietas de que tan llena tenía la cabeza.

Le rodearon, sentándose a su vera, inundándole con la ola de sus aromas, de sus palabras. Laredo, encendiendo un cigarillo, las miraba embobado. En sus tiempos, en aquellos lejanos tiempos del divino tesoro de su juventud perdida para siempre, las mujeres, las señoritas, no eran así, tan dulcemente sugestivas, provocadoras, ideales...

Y no era, no, que fueran otras. Era la misma mujer, hija de la mujer de ayer y nieta de la de otros siglos. Era la misma rosa del mismo viejo rosal que ya floreció otras rosas muchas veces. Sólo que, oh! este baño ideal, espiritual, de cultura y vida del presente, las hermoseaba y las gentilizaba hasta más alla de lo celeste.

Y Laredo, arrojando una bocanada de humo de sus labios a las nipas temblorosas del techo, ante la expectación de las cinco muchachas encantadoras, comenzó a contar lo que nunca había contado, aquello que, remordiéndole aún la conciencia, le desve-

despite this sexual antagonism, do without the conversation and the laughter and the attention of a woman.

"But, Doctor," a distinguished upper-class lady client of his would tell him, "how is it that you who are so good, so charming, so congenial, who could have had a family to surround you with their love and care, have not done so? What has made you decide to live like that, alone like the mushrooms?"

"Well, my lady," Laredo invariably responded, "precisely because of that; that never did I want to cease being good, noble, and charming, like you say."

"I do not understand, Doctor," she said.

"You would understand lady, if I were to tell you that mixing angels with devils... there would be one hundred thousand probabilities against only one that at the end of a certain time, everyone instead of being angels would be devils. There you have my explanation for my vow of celibacy."

Because of the noise that Pilar, Pacita, Carmen, Angela, and Rosario made when they burst into the gallery, Dr. Laredo opened one eye, then the other. He sat up and smiling, tried to raise himself from the rocking chair. They rushed to him. Not a fuss, doctor. Keep still in your place. Now he obliged all of them together by telling some of those stories that filled up his head.

They surrounded him sitting at his side flooding him with the wave of their scents and their words. Laredo, lighting a cigarette, looked at them in fascination. In his time, during those distant times of the divine treasure of his youth lost forever, the women, the young ladies, were not like this, so sweetly suggestive, provocative, gorgeous...

And it was not because they were of another kind, no. She was the same woman, daughter of the woman of yesterday and granddaughter of that of other centuries. She was the same rose of the same old rosebush that already blossomed many times with other roses. Only that, oh! this ideal, spiritual bath of culture and life of the present, beautified and made them graceful beyond what is celestial.

And Laredo, blowing a puff of smoke from his lips at the shaking nipa of the ceiling, began narrating to the excitement of the five charming girls, what he had never told, that which even now still filled his conscience with remorse that at times kept

laba a veces en obsesionante pesadilla al través de años y más años, algo tan macabro y sobrenatural que escalofriaba la piel, lo que él llamaba tristemente su "caso".

## II

— Verán ustedes, comenzó Laredo; de esto hacía muchos años, tantos, que yo tenía. . . ¿cuántos años tiene usted, Carmencita?

— Veintidos, Doctor.

— Tres años más que usted.

Se hizo una leve pausa. Laredo, como para recordar mejor, se pasó una mano por la frente. Las jóvenes, quietas, llenas de interés y de ansiedad, aguardaban impacientes el prodigioso relato.

— Pues, como decía, continuó Laredo, yo era entonces un mozalbete casi, me acababa de graduar casi, y, sin casi, debido a las influencias de mi familia y a grandes recomendaciones, fue nombrado médico auxiliar del Presidio de Manila.

Ustedes no saben lo que es un presidio. Yo, entonces, tampoco lo sabía. Basta decir que, entre el espacio inmenso de los cuatro inmensos muros que lo forman, la hez del crimen, la flor y nata de la crueldad y la maldad, palpita, vegeta y vive hacinada, amontonada, hedionda, como las sierpes venenosas en su nido.

Yo, por todos los motivos y bajo todos los conceptos, evitaba en lo posible todo contacto con aquellas gentes. Sin embargo, por el cargo que ocupaba, no tenía más remedio que estar continuamente entre ellos, aquejados siempre de mil dolencias y enfermedades, la mayor parte de las veces pretextadas para no salir al trabajo. . . En una de estas veces conocí a Tasio, un joven que hacía poco habían encarcelado por un tremendo asesinato del que se había ocupado toda la prensa y que, condenado a muerte por su crimen, estaba allí, encadenado de pies y manos, aguardando estoicamente el día de su ejecución. Su porte, sus ojos dulces impregnados de una recondita melancolía, su cara que en nada denotaba al criminal y que resaltaba entre las de los verdaderos criminales visiblemente, me arrastraron hacia él una tarde, en compasión y simpatía.

Y hablando, hablando, luego de haberle ofrecido mi caja de cigarillos, el infeliz me contó su historia.

him awake in obsessive nightmare over so many years; something so macabre and supernatural that made his skin shrivel, and which he sadly called his "case".

## II

"You will see," began Laredo; "from this point it was many years ago, a long time ago, that I was... How old are you, Carmencita?"

"Twenty-two, Doctor."

"Three years older than you."

He made a slight pause. Laredo, in order to remember better, ran a hand over his forehead. The young ladies, quiet, anxious and eager, awaited impatiently the marvelous tale.

"Well, like I was saying," continued Laredo, "I was then almost a young lad, I had just graduated, almost, and more than almost, due to my family's influence and to strong recommendations, I was appointed assistant doctor of Manila's praesidium.

"You do not know what is a praesidium. Neither did I know it then. Suffice it to say, that between the immense space of the four immense walls that form it, the dregs of crime, the worst of cruelty and evil throb , grow ., and live crowded, gathered, foul-smelling, like the poisonous snakes in their nest.

"I, for all the reasons and from my convictions, evaded as much as possible all contacts with those people. Nevertheless, because of my job, I had no recourse but to be continually among them, always suffering from a thousand ailments and sickness, most of the time feigned in order to escape from work. During one of these occasions, I met Tasio, a young man who had just been jailed for a terrible assassination that had been featured in all the newspapers and condemned to death for his crime. He was there with his feet and hands chained, waiting stoically the day of his execution. His bearing, his gentle eyes filled with a hidden melancholy, his face which did not at all reveal the criminal and which stood out among those of the visibly true criminals, drew me to him one afternoon in compassion and sympathy.

"As we were talking, after having offered him my pack of cigarettes, the poor soul told me his story.

Era la triste vulgar historia de todos los días. Tasio estaba casado, loco de amor, con una mujer que, de la noche a la mañana, le engañó con otro. La providencia o la casualidad hicieron que el infeliz descubriera el engaño. Y entonces él, que por no matar, me juraba que no había matado un pollo en su vida, ciego de pasión, de celos, de martirio, de locura, mató. . . . . Y mató solamente a la mujer, porque el otro, acobardado y listo, huyó, sin dejar prueba alguna que pudiera comprometerle en el crimen. . . .

Las jóvenes se miraban estremecidas. Después de breve pausa, Laredo continuó: — Con Tasio iba yo a hablar todas las tardes un ratito, a llevarle cigarros y a infundirle esperanzas, estas últimas vanas, pues él era el primero en reconocer que todas las pruebas estaban en su contra y la única que podía haber declarado la verdad para evitarle a él de la muerte, su mujer, estaba bien muerta y no hablaría. Además, me decía que, para él, la vida, luego de lo pasado, más que vida era un suplicio y que muy bien, pues que estaba sentenciado a ello, podían ejecutarle mañana mejor que pasado, cuanto antes mejor. . . .

Y el dia llegó. La tarde de la víspera yo no fui a ver a Tasio, no podía verle sin sufrir más que él, sabiéndole a fondo bueno, inocente y víctima. . . Dejé que en la capilla, a donde le habían trasladado, dos sacerdotes le consolaran y prepararan su alma para el gran tránsito; comprendía que en esos momentos de la vida de un hombre, más que con los hombres, el alma se debía comunicar con Dios. . .

Y al día siguiente, cinco minutos antes de la hora fijada para la ejecución del pobre Tasio, uno de sus guardianes vino corriendo en busca mía. A Tasio le había dado un ataque cardíaco, tan fuerte, que le pensaban todos muerto.

Inclinado sobre él, medité un segundo. Y aquí empieza mi "caso". Yo podía salvar a aquel hombre, volverle a la vida inmediatamente, pero ¿para qué?. . . . . ¿para que le ahorcaran inmediatamente después?

Hubiera sido una crueldad horrible por mi parte. Mientras que, si me cruzaba de brazos y no ponía remedio alguno al mal,

"It was the common old sad story of everyday. Tasio was married with a woman with whom he was madly in love but who overnight deceived him for another man. Providence or chance made it happen that the wretch discovered the deception. And then he, that in order not to kill, he swore to me that he never killed a chicken in his life, blinded by passion, by jealousy, by martyrdom, by madness, killed... And he killed only the woman, be[illegible] the man, frightened and alert, fled without leaving any proof that could implicate him in the crime."

The young ladies looked at each other shuddering. After a short pause, Laredo continued:

"Every afternoon I talked with Tasio for a short while, brought him cigarettes, and infused hope in him which was all futile because he was the first to admit that all the proofs were against him, and the only one who could have declared the truth to save him from death, his wife, was dead and could not speak. Also, he would say to me that after what happened, for him life was more of a torture and since he was sentenced to die, they could execute him tomorrow rather than the day after tomorrow, the sooner the better.

"And the day arrived. The afternoon of the day before the execution, I did not visit Tasio. I could not see him without suffering more than him, knowing very well that he was good, innocent, and a victim... In the chapel where they had transferred him, I let the two priests console him and prepare his soul for the last journey. I understood that in the last moments of a man's life, the soul should communicate with God more than with man.

"And the next day, five minutes before the hour of execution of poor Tasio, one of his guards came running looking for me. Tasio had suffered a heart attack, so strong that everyone thought him dead.

"Bending over him, I meditated for a second. And here begins my "case". I could save that man, bring him back to life immediately, but for what purpose?... So that the authorities could hang him immediately afterwards?

"It would have been horrible cruelty on my part. While if I just folded my arms and did not apply any remedy to the ail-

Tasio moriría al cabo de dos o tres minutos más, víctima de aquel ataque al corazón. . . . .

— Y ¿qué hizo usted, Doctor?. . . Preguntaron a coro Pilar, Pacita, Carmen, Angela y Rosario.

— ¿Qué hice?. . . Pues lo que hubiera hecho otro cualquiera en mi lugar. . . Dejar que, en vez de la ley, ya que era justo, le matara su propio corazón. . . Me crucé de brazos, diciendo que el mal no tenía remedio alguno y el pobre murió como un pájaro, con una agonía dulce y rápida, bendiciéndome acaso desde el fondo de todo su ser. . . .

— ¡Qué horror! — Clamaron las muchachas.

— ¿Hice bien o hice mal?, digan ustedes. . .

— Hizo usted bien, Doctor. . .

— Pues, no, señoras, clamó Laredo irguiéndose cuanto su desmedrada figurilla le permitía sobre la trémula silla de bejuco, no hice bien, no hice de ninguna manera bien, creyendo hacerlo inmenso, porque, dos minutos después de expirar Tasio entraba el jefe del Presidio con una orden de indulto para el reo. . . . para aquel pobre hombre que yo había dejado morir, que yo había asesinado, valido de mi sentimiento de humanidad y misericordia que venía a echar por tierra aquella orden que temblaba en las manos del jefe del penal. . .

Calló Laredo. Callaron las jóvenes. Fuera, aleteando contra la hojas de las cadenas de amor, alborotaban los gorriones, y el sol, traspasando su cerco, fulgía, bola de oro, bajo el vuelo diáfano de una nube blanca como una inmensa y loca mariposa. . . . .

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*Excelsior*, Manila (February 20, 1931), pp. 13-15.

ment, Tasio would die after two or three minutes more, a victim of that heart attack."

"And what did you do, Doctor?" Pilar, Pacita, Carmen, Angela, and Rosario asked all at the same time.

"What did I do? Well, what anyone would have done in my place... To let his own heart, instead of the law, kill him since it was the right thing to do. I folded my arms, saying that the ailment had no remedy at all, and the poor fellow died like a bird, with a sweet and swift death, blessing me perhaps from the bottom of his whole being."

"How horrible!" exclaimed the young ladies.

"Did I do right or wrong, you tell me."

"You did right, Doctor."

"Well, no young ladies," Laredo cried out, straightening up himself as much as his emaciated little form would allow him on his shaking rattan chair, "I did not do the right thing. I did not do anything good, thinking that I was doing a fabulous thing, because two minutes after Tasio expired, the prison warden entered with a reprieve for the criminal—for that poor man that I had let die because of my feelings of humanity and mercy. That order shaking in the hands of the jail warden destroyed and dashed to the ground all that feeling."

Laredo remained silent. The ladies became silent. Outside, fluttering against the leaves of the *cadena de amor*, the sparrows sang, and the sun, piercing its ring, glowed, like a golden ball, under the diaphanous flight of a white cloud like an immense and crazy butterfly.

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*Excelsior.* Manila (February 20, 1931), pp. 13-15.

# EL HIJO

(1936)

## I

Se casaron por amor. Ella, la dulce, pequeña mujercita, se llamaba Susana, y cantaba. Él, don Daniel Galindo, era un hombre de poder y prestigio que escribía en los periódicos.

Un año, dos, acaso más. Hasta que un día, la mujercita del amor empezó a palidecer, a desmayar, y consecuentemente fueron rompiéndose las líneas del ánfora de su carne que sufría, porque en lo alto del rosal de su vida y de su amor quería abrirse la primera rosa.

¡Cuanta ilusión, cuánto cuido, cuánto arrullo en los primeros días! Galindo sintió el orgullo del sembrador que va a gozar el fruto de su primera cosecha, en tanto la mujer suspiraba con suspiros de sus entrañas y de su alma, con los ojos llenos de lágrimas de felicidad y de ansiedad.

Ya no cantaba. Ya no reía. Ya no se colgaba por los brazos del cuello del esposo tal que una niña cariñosa y mimada. En un rincón de la nupcial alcoba, se pasaba los días y las noches confeccionando con encajes y linos pequeñas prendas infantiles. . .

Galindo comenzó a aburrirse, a bostezar, a inventar toda clase de pretextos para pasar las horas fuera de su casa. La mujercita deformada y triste que deambulaba silenciosa por el hogar dormido, no era aquella Susana de alegría y encanto que todas las veces le embriagara como un vino muy cálido y muy fuerte y perfumado.

Y el niño vino entonces a la vida.

Y Galindo acabó de perder el amor de la esposa porque en el pequeño corazón de la mujer al empezar a reinar el amor de la madre, no cabía más amor.

# THE SON

## I

They married because of love. She, the sweet, small woman, was called Susana, and she sang. He, Don Daniel Galindo, was a man of means and prestige who wrote in the newspapers.

One year, two, maybe more. Until one day, the beloved woman began to get pale, to faint; and consequently, the shape of her aching body was changing because on top of the rosebud of her life and her love, the first rose wanted to bloom.

What illusion, what care, what cooing during the first days! Galindo felt the pride of a planter who will enjoy the fruit of his first harvest. Meanwhile the woman sighed with sighs of her heart and soul, with her eyes full of tears of happiness and anxiety.

She no longer sang. She no longer laughed. She no longer hanged her arms around the neck of her husband like a loving and loved girl. In a corner of the nuptial bedroom, she spent days and nights sewing with lace and linen tiny babyclothes.

Galindo began to get bored, to yawn, to invent all kinds of reasons to spend the time away from home. The deformed and sad woman who silently paced the dormant home, was not that Susana of happiness and enchantment who all the time enraptured him like very warm, strong, and fragrant wine.

And then the baby was born.

And Galindo had just lost the love of his wife because in the small heart of the woman when the love of a mother began to reign, there was no more room for another love.

## II

Un año, dos, acaso más. Como el príncipe de un cuento de hadas, el niño, adorado por la madre, era el único señor y dueño del fatuoso hogar.

Alhajado y vestido con todas las galas que pudieran prenderse a un niño, rodeado por todos los cariños y todos los halagos, quizá, criatura alguna pudo jamás ser tan dichosa. Sólo que el padre al auparlo en sus brazos recogiendo de sus labios las primeras palabras y las primeras risas, queriendo sentir, no sentía; queriendo querer, no podía querer.

Era un ladrón. Había venido al mundo para robar la hermosura de la única mujer que adoró Galindo y el amor de la única mujer que temblorosa sollozara de amor dormida al abrigo de su corazón. Y esto no lo podía olvidar ni lo podía perdonar Galindo. Porque los hombres pueden perdonarlo todo menos el robo de su amor, así sea el ladrón sangre de su sangre, hueso de sus huesos...

## III

Rápidamente enfermó Susana. Y una tarde lluviosa y sin sol, en que todo parecía llorar, hasta el alma y la nube, se murió dulcemente, como mueren las flores.

Con el niño en los brazos, Galindo, por primera vez en su vida, lloró acerbamente ante la crueldad de su destino al igual que lloraban sus lágrimas de cera ardiente los enormes blandones que iluminaban el paso de la muerte y parecían llorar, semicerrados, los ojos de la muerta.

Y en tanto la madre dormía en Dios, el niño, sin darse cuenta de que había perdido lo más grande y más santo; toda fortuna, todo tesoro, todo amor en la vida, que pasaba a ser un desgraciado más en el inmenso montón de desgraciados hombres sin madre, se quedaba dormido sobre el pecho de su padre.

## IV

Galindo fue otro hombre. Confiado el hijo a manos mercenarias, se arrastraba por todos los rincones de la casa flácido, enclenque, sucio y haraposo. En tanto el gran hombre se daba a la

## II

One year, two, perhaps more. Like the prince of a fairytale, the child adored by the mother, was the only lord and master of the magnificent house.

Bejewelled and clothed with all the fine clothes that a child could be adorned with, surrounded with all the love and praises, perhaps no other child had ever been so lucky. But when the father lifted the baby in his arms, drawing out from his lips his first words and first laughter, he wanted to feel but felt nothing, and wanting to love, he could not love.

The baby was a thief. He had come to the world to steal the beauty of the only woman that Galindo adored, and the love of the woman who, tremblingly would sob with love while asleep sheltered by his heart. And this, Galindo could not forget nor forgive. Because men can forgive everything but the theft of their love, even if the thief is of his own blood and flesh.

## III

Suddenly Susana fell sick. And one rainy and sunless afternoon, in which everything, even the spirit and the cloud seemed to cry, she died sweetly, like flowers die.

With the child in his arms, Galindo, for the first time in his life cried bitterly against the cruelty of his fate as tears of burning wax were shed by the enormous candlesticks that illumined the path of death. And the eyes, half-closed, of the dead woman seemed to be crying.

And in the meantime that the mother was dead, the child, without realizing that he had lost the greatest and most holy; all fortune, all treasure, all love in life, that he would be one more unfortunate in the immense crowd of unfortunate men without a mother, was asleep on the breast of his father.

## IV

Galindo became another man. He left his son to hired help, dragged himself in all the corners of the house; flabby, weak, dirty, and ragged. Meanwhile, the great man made his life a misery,

mala vida, entregado en vida y alma a la mujer fácil y al alcohol.

Una noche, durmiendo una de sus grandes perturbaciones alcohólicas, tuvo un sueño desolado. Era Susana, inclinándose ante la camita de su hijo, estrechándolo y abrigándolo en su seno, y llevándoselo quietamente al través de las cerradas puertas. . .

El la detuvo — ¿Adónde vas? ¿Adónde te llevas el niño? ¿Qué es lo que estás haciendo, mujer?. . .

Ella le miró amargamente y sus crueles palabras cayeron como golpes de un martillo sobre las sienes del soñador:

— Has convertido el amor en odio y no eres digno de perpetuarte entre los hombres. Me llevo a nuestro hijo, porque todas las madres, al morir, debían hacer lo mismo. Quédate en la mentira de tus placeres y tus embriagueces. La verdad soy yo y el ángel que me llevo. . .

## V

Galindo despertó azorado. Saltó de la cama y corrió hacia la inmediata habitación donde dormía el niño.

Lo recogió en sus brazos; lo sacudió en lo alto; lo golpeó fuertemente contra su pecho. El niño estaba muerto.

Fuera, el sol iluminaba los cristales de colores del mal cerrado ventanal, piaban alborotadamente los gorriones en la húmeda pompa de las acacias y de un vecino piano llegaban las notas estridentes de una sonata en boga. . .

giving himself excessively to loose women and alcohol.

One night sleeping away one of his alcoholic perturbations, he had a desolate dream. It was Susana, bending over the crib of the baby, embracing him, and covering him on her bosom, and quietly taking him through the closed doors...

He stopped her – "Where are you going? Where are you taking the child? What are you doing, woman?" . . .

She looked at him bitterly and her cruel words fell like the blows of a hammer on the temple of the dreamer.

"You have converted love into hate and you are not worthy of perpetuating yourself among men. I am taking our son, because all mothers, at death, should do the same. Remain in the lies of your pleasures and intoxication. The truth is me and the angel I'm taking with me. . ."

## V

Galindo woke up aghast. He jumped from the bed and ran toward the next room where the child was sleeping.

He picked up the boy in his arms; shook the boy's head, pulling him strongly against his breast. The child was dead.

Outside the sun lighted up the colored crystals of the badly closed windows, the birds noisily chirped in the humid spread of the acacias, and from a neighbor's piano lingered the strindent notes of a popular sonata.