**Film Storyline**

# **USAHAY (Pagsubang sa Adlaw)**

A coming of age film, it follows the journey (adventures and misadventures) of Juanito and his buddies in the “comparza” as they try to find meaning in a world shattered by a war (in the 1940s) and changing values.

At first, he and his group, like the young of that era, get involved in nature tripping, building bamboo bridges, bathing in the river, playing or practicing for the “comparza,” making tagay and tupada, etc. At one time, while playing music for a procession in the Poblacion,, Juanito sees a young, innocent woman whose name he and his group later learns to be Carmela, daughter of a prominent musical family in the Poblacion.

Just as he and 2 other friends are about to leave to study in Manila, news of the bombing of Pearl Harbor and other parts of the Philippines by the Japanese are heard and flashed in newspapers. The Second World War is declared. All schools are closed, and everything is changed, including Juanito and his group’s plans to pursue a college education.

Juanito and the community prepare for the expected crisis by planting root-crops, like ubi, camote, pau, raising native chicken, making fish traps, etc.

As Japanese Imperial forces occupy the island, people from the Poblacion evacuate to the village and make do with whatever the village offered. Some exchange jewelries with rice, ubi, camote, etc.

Amid war conditions, folks continue their traditional rituals and religious practices. But the young (kulijits) have turned to the decadent culture—dancing the foxtrot and Charleston, even in evacuation areas.

Ambrosio Pineda, father of Carmela, is made puppet mayor of the occupying force even as the family objects to the idea. But the father told them, the Japanese will enforce the “juez de cuchillo” (martial law) if he does not accept. But he has access to Japanese provisions.

Resistance leaders send emissaries to the puppet mayor urging him to give provisions to the guerillas which they say are badly needed at that point in time. He promises to do so, but his attempts fail.

The family of Juanito’s love interest evacuates to his village, except the father, but they occasionally appear at the Poblacion to play for guests.

One day, the mayor informs Juanito’s father, leader of the village, that a Japanese reconnaissance team is on its way to the village looking for guerillas whom they believe are operating near the area.

In a chicken dish and fiesta/music/dance preparation, part of a strategy to delay or distract the Japanese, Juanito and the comparza team meet Carmela before she joins the women to hide in a cave. With all the distraction, no firefight takes place, and the guerillas are able to escape.

At one time, the Japanese officer (in his 40s) orders the governor of Bohol to invite all single women of the town to the mansion he occupies for a party so that he can choose a “companion to comfort him.” The family of Carmela, being musicians, were obliged to go.

In what has been termed a “party of terror,” there was a lot of food, dancing and great décor, but no one among the women smiled. At first, the Japanese officer chose a mature woman in the party. The family then perform (mother, father and another sister) as guests, and Carmela sings “Usahay.” After this, he says he has changed his mind, and picks Carmela.

Despite her objections, her father’s rage, and pleas of her mother, Carmela is picked up by a Japanese jeep from their house and brought to the mansion occupied by the Japanese Officer.

Juanito vows to rescue Carmela from the Japanese, and along with his best friend Valentin, and 3 others, become part of the resistance guerillas. He and his team find ways to get close to where Carmela is housed, particularly the nun’s school and convent, the head of which, is a German (nun) who has been allowed by the Japanese to stay in the city.

While the nearby convent could be a “safehouse,” there are times when the Japanese officer visits the Mother Superior whom he has befriended, while some guerillas are hiding behing the cabinets.

Carmela is taught some Japanese theater dance movements while in the house, and made to perform the tea ceremony like a geisha.

Japanese resistance guerillas abduct the Mayor Pineda, the “puppet mayor,” and bring him to their camp for “reneging” on his promise of help. Carmela learns of this and urges the Japanese officer to rescue her father. An operation is conducted but the father of Carmela is killed in a firefight that took place, and the Japanese officer is wounded. Carmela is made to take care of the wounded officer.

Through a message from the German Mother Superior, Carmela is made to believe that Juanito was involved in his father’s abduction and his killing.

Juanito and his team tries to rescue Carmela by talking to the nuns, but they refuse to be a channel for the guerillas this time.

Even his friends were quite biased against Carmela, a woman whom they said is considered to be a “used item” by the community, but Juanito tells them that it was not her choice to be in such a situation.

By donning nuns’ habits, they succeed in going to the garden and seeing Carmela, who refuses to go with them, but is forced to do so because they gag her, and take her to escape with them to the forest in a banca through a river.

Carmela confronts Juanito about his responsibility over the abduction and killing of her father, which the latter denies. But Valentin tells him to tell Carmela the truth that he was the one who shot her father. This enrages Juanito and fights him hand to hand in the river.

Carmela escapes and is pursued by Juanito while his friends follow behind. He catches up with the exhausted woman and explains that it was an accident. Her father ran out of the camp when the Japanese arrived, and while he was firing at the Japanese.

Juanito once more declares that he wants to be with Carmela for the rest of his life. Carmela tells him that she had been made to serve the Japanese officer, and is considered a shame by the community because of her experience. He says he knows it was not her fault to be placed in that situation.

Upon learning of the relationship from the nuns, Juanito’s parents get mad, saying that Carmela is the daughter of a collaborator, and that she has been a comfort woman of the Japanese, and is considered a shame in the community.

The mother superior tells them that Carmela’s father had no choice when the Japanese wanted him to be their mayor, adding that while the Japanese officer treated Carmela like a geisha, it was not in her power to refuse as her life was at stake. She said many times, the woman contemplated suicide, but her constant counsel and prayers stopped her from doing so.

In the jungle, a guerilla style wedding takes place with the newlywed couple passing under guns forming like an arc.

At dawn, planes fly over the town as Japanese forces hastily move out signaling the end of the war. The nuns join Carmela and Juanito and other people celebrating at the entrance of the building.

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