**Film Storyline**

# **Pagsubang sa Adlaw**

(At Daybreak)

by Procopio Resabal Jr.

Batch 25, Group 5

**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 World War II. Carmela, Juanito’s love interest, finds a higher purpose in life as she is rescued from being a comfort woman.**

At first, Juanito 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 and 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. Kamihara, a Japanese officer, occupies a mansion in town as center of operation.

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. Besides, there are benefits when one 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 Pineda family evacuates to Juanito’s village, except the father, but the mother and 2 daughters occasionally appear at the Poblacion to play and entertain 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.

Fighting the Japanese was out of the question because they had no arms, so the village leaders thought of delaying the team by entertaining them and holding a feast. 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.

One day, Kamihara, 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 music, 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 this time, 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 Kamihara.

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 nearby nun’s school and convent, the head of which, is Sister Ferdinandina, German nun whose community has been allowed by the Japanese to stay in the city. But those in the convent premises cannot leave unless they told town authorities.

While the nearby convent could be a “safehouse,” there are times when officer Kamihara visits the Mother Superior whom he has befriended (being German and war ally), sometimes while some guerillas are hiding behind the closets.

Carmela is taught some Japanese theater dance movements while in the house, and made to perform the tea ceremony like a geisha, and learn to speak Nihongo by Japanese girls who came to entertain Japanese soldiers.

There are occasions when Carmela meets with Sister Ferdinandina when the Japanese officer invites her to the mansion or when she goes to the garden near the convent and shares her pain as a comfort woman, which has driven her to the verge of suicide. The nun comforts her.

Just as Juanito and his friends are about to take action to rescue Carmela, and ask resistance guerillas for support, a leader stops them, and says he is giving Carmela a mission—that of a deep penetration agent who gives the resistance movement information of the map of the center of operation, location of ammunition and provisions, plans, etc.

Juanito at first objects because the mission is very dangerous. But the leader tries to convince him and tells him that Carmela is the one to make the decision. The leader then talked with Carmela about her mission: that she is to keep close relations with the officer and the other Japanese. She first refuses and asked to be given time. But later after a demeaning incident, agreed to do it, which somehow gives her a sense of value and direction amid the darkness.

There will be a dinner with the nuns when Carmela would pass a handkerchief with a location map, etc. Or a wrapped gift from the Japanese officer for the nuns with enclosed coded information and instructions about a planned operation, etc. At one time she would almost be discovered, but would resort to “love acting” to stop the suspicion.

But there will be a point that she would be discovered, and she will be placed in the mansion’s dungeon. The Japanese would slap her and strip her, and is almost hacked to death with a Samurai sword—but Carmela tells him, go ahead do it, and that she had been waiting for this moment since the day he chose her. He knows very well that he was the one who brought her to the mansion. Kamihara stops in tears, hinting at some development of the heart.

He turns around, then faces Carmela and commits hara-kiri with the sword in front of her.

Japanese resistance guerillas abduct 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 who replaced Kamihara whom she befriended/seduced to rescue her father. An operation is conducted but the father of Carmela is killed in a firefight that took place, and the young officer is wounded. Carmela is made to take care of the officer.

Through a message from Sister Ferdinandina now imprisoned in the convent, Carmela is made to believe that Juanito was involved in his father’s abduction and his killing. Generally, Sister Ferdinandina now mistrusts reistance guerillas.

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, and at that time he cannot tell them about her mission.

By donning nuns’ habits, they succeed in going to the garden and going to Carmela through a tunnel to the dungeon. Carmela 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.

Sister Ferdinandina 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. She said she has an important role or mission that she cannot divulge until the right time because of the danger.

In a village near the jungle, some of the women spat at Carmela for being a Japanese comfort woman and daughter of a collaborator, some laughing at her and pulling her hair as Juanito and Valentin try to stop them. At the camp, a guerilla style wedding, which would have the newlywed couple passing under guns forming like an arc, is being practiced.

The resistance leader says he has an important announcement to be made. In a speech, he narrates how difficult it was in the war to penetrate a formidable enemy, but with the help of someone who had been a victim herself, the resistance was able to get valuable information at the risk of her life. She bestows on Carmela the honor of being a full guerillera under his company. Applause follows.

As Juanito hugs Carmela, she tells him she has decided to face the world by herself for both their peace of mind. Juanito understands, but sheds tears.

At dawn, American and Filipino 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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