**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.

They get to meet her while she prepares kids for the “hugos” (Easter tradition of meeting of resurrected Christ and the Blessed Mother). Since Carmela belongs to a higher social strata, Juanito resolves to go to college in Manila.

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 over the radio, and flashed in newspapers. The Second World War is declared. Carmela announces in tears to her pupils that all schools are closed. 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 (May 17, 1942), 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.

An American officer meets with Philippine Constabulary and USAFFE guerillas and warns that the people in towns occupied by the Japanese must evacuate, noting that there are some who have remained or have returned to their houses, or they will be considered allies of the occupying forces, and subject to aerial bombing or strafing as well.

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 who stays in the town center. They still carry their upper class habits to the village despite the situation, like full tableware at meals, even with just camote, dried fish and some veggie dish. Sikwate A had to be served in tiny cups like a little ceremony. They are amazed at the labor intensive process of making tableya (chocolate potties).

One day, the mayor informs Juanito’s father, leader of the village, that a Japanese reconnaissance team is on its way to the village the next day 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.

Juanito gets closer to Carmela whom they invite in their nature escapades, fetching water from a spring, and the village dance where he gets to dance with her. He brings live chicken, eggs, ubi and other fruits to the cottage they are staying, which Carmela’s sisters find funny. They think Juanito is too provincial, but Carmela defends him as a young man with a goal in life.

Juanito confides in his friend Valentin that he is serious about Carmela. The others tell him she is too flirty and assertive. But Juanito says that she is a modern woman, and had to be strong as she is a teacher. He proposes to Carmela while bamboo rafting inside a mangrove forest.

One day, Kamihara, the Japanese commanding 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 is devastated, and in a rage, he gets near the mansion and calls for Carmela but is shot at by a Japanese guard who chases him. His friends who followed him, managed to get him to ride with them in a banca, and calmed him down as they escape. He vows to rescue Carmela from the Japanese. Along with his best friend Valentin, and 3 others, he enlisted as part of the resistance guerillas. They train in arnis/eskrima.

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, a German nun whose community has been allowed by the Japanese to stay in the town center. 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.

Desperate, Juanito sees Carmela’s father and tells him he is ready to do whatever is to be done to get Carmela from the Japanese. He tells him both he and Carmela have committed to marry. Surprised, Ambo Pineda tells him not to do any rash move that would endanger Carmela’s life, and suggested that Juanito be part of the Japanese local constabulary so that he can monitor what has happened to Carmela. Juanito at first hesitates But when Pineda says he will endorse him to the Japanese, he agrees. Besides, he has two years of college and could speak English, while he will be trained to speak Nippongo, Pineda assures him.

The Japanese occupants campaign for alliance with the Asia co-prosperity sphere, and attacks the Americans as unlikely allies of Filipinos, as they enforce the practice of bowing and teach Nippongo.

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.

One time, Juanito and Valentin volunteer to accompany Aniceto, a guerilla leader, to the convent and sneaked out to the garden of the mansion where Carmela was gathering some flowers for ikebana. They hide in a stockroom nearby and embrace passionately. Carmela cries and tells Juanito that she is no longer worthy of him, but Juanito just tells her to calm down.

Valentin warns them that someone was approaching. And they have to leave. Juanito promises to get back for Carmela, and they escape through a tunnel near the garden.

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.

Juanito tells his group that he is planning to become part of the local Japanese constabulary to gather information, and also to get close and monitor Carmela’s condition in the mansion. Valentin objects and tells him that is really foolhardy since that would mean working with the enemy, or even betraying the guerillas. Juanito assures them that it was only a tactical move. He asks two others to join him.

Juanito reports to Second Commander Serisaba, who is English-speaking, along with two others. Their first duty was to train both in martial arts and how to handle a gun, and learn Nippongo. They are then to make a round of the town streets, and secure the mansion. At one time, Juanito was made to demonstrate arnis/eskrima, but had to cut it short as Kamihara asked them to go up and join him in drinking sake. In the middle of the drinking session, Kamihara calls Carmela to get more wine. Carmela appears in a Japanese kimono, and made up as a geisha, and was asked by Kamihara to show the guests more dance steps. She is surprised at Juanito’s presence, but complies.

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 asks to be given time. But later after a demeaning incident, when she is made to dance in front of drunk Japanese men who molest her, 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.

Carmela would release some goods and ammo through connivance with the kitchen help, who has links with Juanito and the guerillas.

Japanese resistance guerillas plan to abduct Mayor Pineda, the “puppet mayor,” and bring him to their camp for “reneging” on his promise of help, Carmela learns from Sister Ferdinandina. Carmela urges Kamihara to prevent her father’s abduction. An operation is conducted, which surprises the guerillas, and the Japanese officer prevents the father of Carmela from being abducted. In fact, the guerilla operation is so clumsy, Kamihara just laughs it off.

Carmela and Kamihara get “closer” as their relation gets cooler after the Japanese officer’s troops prevent the abduction of Carmela’s father. Juanito sees this as he confers with Commander Serisaba and the other Filipino spies for the Japanese.

Meantime guerillas suspect Juanito as a “double spy” accusing him of relaying information about the abduction of Carmela’s father to the Japanese, but Juanito denies this, and to prove it, he volunteers to get the spies of the Japanese. He tells them of a planned “meeting of spies” in Tubigon town, (to be attended by 3 puppet mayors).

With Juanito as lead, and with support of the civilians of 4 towns, they conduct an operation abducting spies and the puppet mayors, but in the process, the spies and the mayors get killed, including some Japanese soldiers. Some of Juanito’s companions are wounded.

Kamihara gets mad at the killing of spies and Japanese soldiers, and vows to burn Calape, Tubigon, Clarin and Inabanga when he learns that the operation had the support of civilians in the area. Moreover, Juanito’s companions in the Japanese constabulary tells the Japanese officer that Juanito was involved.

Carmela passes the information that the Japanese are planning to burn Calape, Tubigon, Clarin and Inabanga towns on a particular day with two truckloads of Japanese soldiers, and that Kamihara already knows about Juanito and his other companions.

Through a message from Sister Ferdinandina now imprisoned in the convent, Carmela is made to believe that Juanito was involved in his father’s attempted abduction and the latest ambush/abduction of spies and three puppet mayors. 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 of her father, which the latter denies. But Valentin tells him to tell Carmela the truth that they were involved. 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.

In a conference held in a forested area presided by Capt. Francisco Salazar with 7 other officers, men are deployed and plans laid out to stage an ambush near Moalong Bridge (Loon) to prevent the burning of the towns of Calape, Tubigon, Clarin and Inabanga by the Japanese forces. He stressed in a speech that it was absolutely necessary and vital to stop the Japanese at all cost to save civilians and properties in those towns.

The resistance leader says he has an important announcement to make. 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.

After the conference, Carmela joins the preparation of materials and food needed by the resistance guerillas who were to leave and make a 60-km hike through short-cut trails, some in the jungle, to reach the ambush site the next morning. She expresses her willingness to go with the group.

After arriving early the next morning, the guerillas position themselves and execute the ambush as planned. Carmela is given a chance to fire at the Japanese soldiers at a vantage point.

“The Japanese lose about 60 men in this terrible 9-hour encounter, their two buses completely demolished, 27 guns captured, several thousands of munitions, steel helmets, etc., confiscated. Of the whole Japanese force only around eight soldiers, mostly wounded, managed to escape towards the mangroves. As night fell, these stragglers walked or limped their way to the Poblacion of Loon some 4 kilometers away where they were given first-aid treatment at the town church at about 10:00 P.M. This is one of the most successful ambuscades ever recorded in the history of guerrilla warfare in Bohol against Japanese invading forces.”

Scenes of celebration of people as they congratulate the men and women involved.

A few weeks after the war.

Scenes of destruction, shelled buildings, burned houses, and the dead. People are trying to pick up the pieces (literally) of their lives.

Juanito and his buddies meet to practice for a dance music, but somehow their lives have changed, they cannot focus on their pieces. One or two are missing. They are disturbed.

Juanito rides a bike and sees Carmela who is preoccupied in arranging cluttered books in a school. He asks without words how she is doing? She tells him it may take some time for school to reopen after what happened.

Before they part, Juanito reaffirms his intention to marry her despite everything. They hug lightly. She tells him she has decided to face the world by herself for both their peace of mind. Juanito understands, but sheds tears.

**Procopio Resabal Jr.**