

ANG LARAWAN

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# **A Portrait of the Artist as Filipino**

An Elegy in Three Scenes

by

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THE SECOND SCENE

*As in preceding Scene, the curtains open on the "Intramuros Curtain," BITOY CAMACHO is standing at far left, in light.*

BITOY: After my father died—he died when I was about fifteen—I stopped going to the Marasigan house. I had no more time for tertulias. I had to leave school and go to work. My childhood had been spent in the tranquil innocence of the 1920s: I grew up during the hard, hard 1930s, when everybody seemed to have become poor and shabby and disillusioned and ill-tempered. I drifted from one job to another—boot lack, newsboy, baker's apprentice, waiter, pier laborer. Sometimes I felt I had never been clean, never been happy; my childhood seemed incredible—something that had happened to somebody else. When I see the windows of the Marasigan house all lighted up, and I would hear them up there, talking and laughing—Don Lorenzo, Candida, Paula, and their little crowd of shabby old folk.

*(The girls go on the stage; through the curtain, the sala becomes visible.)*

I would stand out here in the street—tired and dirty and hungry and sleepy—and I would think of the days when father and I went there together—me, in my pretty sailor suit and my nice white shoes. But I never felt any desire to go up there again; I despised all those people—and anyway I was too dirty. I would walk on down the street, without looking back.

*(The "Intramuros Curtain" opens, revealing the Marasigan sala daylight.)*

I had said goodbye to that house, goodbye to that world—the world of Don Lorenzo, the world of my father. I was bitter against it; it had deceived me. I told myself that Don Lorenzo and my father had taught me nothing but lies. My childhood was a lie; the 1920s were a lie; beauty and faith and courtesy and honor and innocence were all just lies.

*(ENTER PEPANG MARASIGAN from the doorway at right. She goes to table at center where her bag is. She opens bag, takes out her*

*cigarettes and lights one.)*

The truth was fear—always fear—fear of the boss, of the landlord, of the police, of being late, of being sick, of losing one's job. The truth was no shoes, no money, no smoking, no loitering, no vacancy, no trespassing, and beware of the dog.

*(Pepang glances round the room, her eyes stopping at PORTRAIT. Looking at it, she comes forward and stands before it, with a half-wistful, half-mocking smile.)*

When the 1940s came along, I had become a finished product of my Age. I accepted it completely, and I believed in it. It was a hard world but it was the truth—and I wanted nothing but the truth.

*(ENTER MANOLO MARASIGAN from the doorway at right. He glances towards Pepang as he goes to table and helps himself to her cigarettes. Having lighted one, he comes forward too, and stands beside her, gazing up at PORTRAIT.)*

I had rejected the past and I believed in no future—only the present tense was practical. That was the way I thought—until that October afternoon—that afternoon I first went back to the Marasigan house, the afternoon I first saw that strange painting. I had gone there seeking nothing, remembering nothing, deaf to everything except the current catchwords and slogans. But when I left the house, the world outside seemed to be muffled—seemed to have receded far away enough for me to see it as a whole. I was no longer imprisoned within it; I had been released; I stood outside—and there was someone standing beside me. After all the years of bitter separation, I had found my father again.

*(The light dies out on Bitoy; he exits. Pepang and Manolo continue a moment longer to stare at PORTRAIT in silence. Pepang and Manolo have inherited their father's good looks; but in Pepang, those fine features have grown hard; in Manolo, they have gone flabby. She looks ambitious, he looks dissipated; she is cynical, he is shift-eyed. They are both very stylish, and becoming too stout.)*

PEPANG: The hero of our childhood, Manolo.

MANOLO: Oh, he was more than that to us.



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PEPANG: Only children are capable of such love.

MANOLO: He was our God the father.

PEPANG: And the earth, the sky, the moon, the sun, the stars, and the whole universe to us!

MANOLO: The most wonderful thing that can happen to any child is to have a genius for his father. Oh, the most wonderful thing really!

PEPANG: And the most cruel!

MANOLO: Yes.

PEPANG: Having to break one's childhood here—to spurn one's childhood god...

MANOLO: Oh Pepang, we all have to grow up!

PEPANG: Growing up is cruel. The young have no pity.

MANOLO: But look at Mr. Aeneas up there. He's carrying his old father on his back. He's carrying his father forward with him, along with all the family idols.

PEPANG: But you and I are not Aeneas...Manolo, is that what father meant?

MANOLO (*scowling*): He always did have a sardonic sense of humor!

PEPANG: And now he has only himself to carry himself...

MANOLO (*testily*): Oh, stop it, Pepang! We haven't abandoned him to die, have we? That's one of father's old tricks—getting everybody to feel sorry for him.

PEPANG (*smiling*): Yes. Poor father! (*She turns away.*)

MANOLO: Oh, he is still the same old hero up there—still the same old god!

PEPANG: And nobody to worship him anymore. (*She sits down on saofa.*)

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MANOLO: He still has got Paula and Candida, hasn't he? (*He turns away, too.*) And where can they be—those two? Haven't they shown up yet?

PEPANG: They've probably gone to market.

MANOLO: They got crazier every day.

PEPANG: We must talk to them, we must make them listen. Now, remember you promised to be firm. Where's the senator?

MANOLO: Still in father's room. And they're still talking away!

PEPANG (*glancing at her watch*): That makes two hours of the good old days.

MANOLO: Oh, it's regular reunion of the old boys in there.

PEPANG: With the senator around, we can make Candida and Paula listen to us. You know how they look up to him.

MANOLO: Because he's a senator?

PEPANG: Because he is a poet.

MANOLO: *Was*, Pepang—*was*! He stopped being a poet a long time ago.

PEPENG: Oh, but they still remember him the way he used to be—when he was still coming here to recite his verses—before he went into politics.

MANOLO: And forgot all about us—the old snob!

PEPANG: And besides, he is their godfather, you know.

MANOLO: Well, if the senator can persuade them to leave this house

PEPANG: If anybody can do it, *he* can. And I've made a bargain with him. He says the government is very anxious to acquire that painting. I promised to help him persuade Candida and Paula to sell it if he will help us persuade them to leave this house.

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MANOLO: I've got a buyer for the house.

PEPANG: I told you—I *already* have a buyer.

MANOLO: Now look—you leave all that business to me. After all, I'm the eldest son in this family.

PEPANG (*smoothly*): That's just it—you *are*. And I have no confidence at all in the business ability of the men in this family.

MANOLO: Poor father! He ought to hear you!

PEPANG: We all have to grow up, you know.

MANOLO (*looking around*): How about the furniture?

PEPANG (*rising*): Well, let me see...I'll take that chandelier; I need it for my front hall. And I'll take the marble table in the study. You can have all the furniture here in the sala, Manolo—except the piano. I take that. And I'll take the dining room set. We can divide the plate and the silver.

MANOLO (*sarcastic*): Oh, what for? Why not just take everything, Pepang?

PEPANG: Thank you. Maybe I will.

MANOLO (*raising his voice*): Sure! Take everything! Take the floors and the stairs and take the walls and take the roof—

PEPANG: Shh! The senator will hear you!

MANOLO (*lowering his voice*): ...and take the whole damned house! I'll cram it down your throat for you!

(*Through the ensuing scene, they speak savagely but in controlled voices.*)

PEPANG: Are we going to fight over a few old chairs?

MANOLO: Excuse me—but you have already given me the few old chairs. Do I still have to fight for them? You have taken everything else!