

TRYST IN TIRAD

(A Play In One Act)

By CEFERINO S. JOVEN



SCENE 1

PLACE: Naguilian, La Union.

TIME: One evening late in November, 1899.

SCENE: The scene is the nave of the church at Naguilian, La Union. The walls are bare, but hanging here and there are tattered uniforms of loyal Katipuneros. Scattered around the place are church benches whereon tired soldiers lie at rest or asleep. The flag of Gen. del Pilar's brigade is leaning in the corner up at the right of the stage. Guns are stacked along vacant spaces between the benches. Down left center is a backless seat.

(At rise Cabo Eugenio Santos is seen untying his shoes on the backless seat. Then a sentinel appears from Right.)

CABO SANTOS: This is the first time we have had a good rest in many a day.

SENTINEL: Ah, yes. And that was a very good dinner, too. General Goyo is a real shot! Imagine hitting that bull at four hundred meters.. By the way, where is he?

CABO SANTOS: He went on inspection on the other side of the river. He must have gone to report to Don Emilio, but he may return any time this evening.

SENTINEL: I hope he brings good news. You know, I am really surprised at the Americans. They seem to scent every move we make.

CABO SANTOS: You should not wonder. The Americans are rich, and

there are not a few of our countrymen who will sell information for a few pesetas.

SENTINEL: In that case, why does not Don Emilio give up?

CABO SANTOS: Be careful, my friend! Don't ever let General Goyo hear you talk like that. Besides, we shall not surrender just because some Filipinos have turned traitors. I tell you, they will never succeed. Gen. Tinio's army is already at Abra. They will soon join us.

(He yawns and stretches, then lies down.)

SENTINEL: I do hope it is so.

(Noise of approaching horses is heard.)

The sentinel turns around and peers toward the sound.

He stands at attention and salutes as General del Pilar and Vicente Enriquez, his aide, enter. The sentinel continues across the stage and goes out Left).

GEN. DEL PILAR: I could not sleep well last night. That noise which kept us awake seemed to come from nowhere. I was just wondering...

ENRIQUEZ: Goyo, I did not know you are very superstitious.

GEN. DEL PILAR: Oh, well, it just occurred to me, that's all... Vicente, want you to take care of this. (He hands him a pocket book). You know what to do just in case.

ENRIQUEZ: Oh, Goyo, you are at it again. You are very young and you still have many years to live.

GEN. DEL PILAR: That may be so, but there's something much more important. We shall have to fight a great battle to resist the advance of the Americans. That battle is inevitable. I must fulfill my duty to my country; and since the enemy is strong and numerous, I will fight to the end.

(The sentinel enters and salutes.)

SENTINEL: Sir, there is a messenger who has just arrived. He desires to see you.

GEN. DEL PILAR: Bid him come in.

(The sentinel exits and then re-enters with the messenger.)

MESSENGER: Gen. Goyo, the Americanos are nearing Aringay. Gen. Tinio will not be able to join you because they are intercepted on the way.

GEN. DEL PILAR: (to messenger). Good work, my lad. (To sentinel). Give him food and let him rest. Tell the bugler to sound assembly.

(The sentinel and the messenger exit. Soon the sound of assembly is heard. Soldiers awaken and others appear from right and left of the stage.)

GEN. DEL PILAR: (to Enriquez). Well, Vicente, the time has come. (To the soldiers). My men, the enemy has pursued us doggedly. Don Emilio, with implicit confidence, entrusted in us the task of checking the advance of the Americans. Comrades, which would you rather do—die fighting or die retreating like cowards?

SOLDIERS: (in chorus with raised rifles). We shall all fight, and die fighting if need be.

CURTAINS

SCENE 2

PLACE: A position at Tirad Pass.

TIME: Late morning of December 2, 1899.

SCENE: The scene is a hillside

where there are several big rocks. The place is covered with low cogon grass. Up center is an unfinished trench.

(At rise there is an intermittent cracking of rifles. Two Katipuneros are seen digging the trench cautiously.)

SOLDIER 1. As I was telling you, our position here is impregnable. Did you see how we repulsed the two cavalry charges of the enemy?

SOLDIER 2. Yes, and on the third charge they had to abandon their horses. Those horses cannot climb these hills.

SOLDIER 1. This trench is deep enough. I will go and report to Capitan Juanchito. (Exits).

SOLDIER 2. Go ahead! I shall dig several spadefuls more and then I'll be through.

(Enter Capitan Juanchito and Soldier 1. The captain inspects the trench.)

CAPITAN JUANCHITO: Good work, men. This one will strengthen our position.

(Enter Gen. del Pilar and Enriquez, his aide. The captain and the two soldiers salute. The soldiers go down the trench.)

GEN. DEL PILAR: Juanchito, how is our position?

CAPITAN JUANCHITO: Excellent! I believe we can still win the battle.

ENRIQUEZ: We have a limited supply of munitions. Do our men know that?

CAPITAN JUANCHITO: Yes, they do. Some even suggested rolling down big boulders, if need be.

GEN. DEL PILAR: Return to your men, Juanchito. Tell them to give no quarters.

(The captain exits. More rapid firing is heard. General del Pilar looks over the place with his field glasses.)

The Americans will never pass

through this place. If they do, it will only be over my dead body.

ENRIQUEZ: Don Emilio was right, Goyo. As you can see, our officers and men are doing well. You should have taken his advice and stayed with him.

GEN. DEL PILAR: He may be right, but I cannot let my men down. We have always been together in all the battles we have fought. I must share with them whatever dangers they may face... Remember the cowlick on my horse? Don Emilio said it is a sign of bad luck.

ENRIQUEZ: Superstitious again! You are fated to serve your country. The Philippines still needs you. Surely no amount of ill luck can cross your path. No, not this time.

GEN. DEL PILAR: I bow to the destiny that awaits me and my valiant men. I shall die gladly fighting for my country. Vicente, let me have my pocket book for a while. (Enriquez hands him the wallet. Gen. del Pilar writes something while Enriquez views the enemy's position with field glasses.)

ENRIQUEZ: (pointing). That hill must be a good place to observe the movements of the enemy.

GEN. DEL PILAR: (puts the wallet in his inside coat pocket). Where

is that? Let us proceed there. Have my horse ready.

(Enriquez exits hurriedly. Gen. del Pilar follows. Soldier 1 steps out of the trench and stops the general.)

SOLDIER 1. Gen. Goyo, the enemy lie just ahead in ambushade!

GEN. DEL PILAR: (Peering with his field glasses). I do not see anything ahead. It must be only the breeze fanning the grass. (Exits.)

(Soldier 2 steps out of the trench hurriedly and joins Soldier 1.)

SOLDIER 2. I am sure those are Americanos.

SOLDIER 1: We are helpless. He is gone.

(Sound as if someone mounting a horse is heard. Then follows the sharp report of a rifle and the sound of a body falling. Enter Enriquez breathing heavily.)

SOLDIER 1: Why, what happened?

ENRIQUEZ: Gen. Goyo is dead! We are lost! The Americans will soon be here.

(Sounds of rapid firing getting louder and louder. Men fight grimly on. They fall one by one. Smoke gradually engulfs the scene as THE CURTAIN FALLS.)

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