

● SHORT STORIES

IT IS December again, Yolanda. I shall always remember and cherish December because it was December that brought you to me.

Memories have kept coming back like haunting refrains from some magic lyre, too painful to be treasured, yet too sweet to be altogether cast aside. In my moments of solitude, I often fall victim to day-dreaming and find myself living the past once more,

danced my heart away with you in a wildly applauded number that earned our delegation an award. In a most bewildering fashion, I suddenly found you very dear to me.

There were songs we sang, I distinctly recall, which wrapped me up in the rare magic of the occasion. I felt the tender touch of "Carmelita", a nostalgia for some "Summer Love" and pledged "My Heart

Into each life . . . Some

picking up the stray strands of what was once a beautiful reality.

.1.

It was a stormy midnight when we left for the City of the Pines to fulfill a rendezvous with three hundred or so strangers on the issue of student leadership. No, I do not claim to be a student leader, Yolanda. Honestly, I can not consider myself one. But the rest of our group thought I was and I had to go if only to give them satisfaction. I was apathetic to the whole thing and I could but care less for whatever it had in store for me. It was like going through a dull chapter of a book which had to be gone through. Life was for me one monotonous passing of moments after another, wherein every hour was an eternity of loneliness. Even as I hoped for romantic Baguio to effect a change in me, I was cynical about the materialization of my dreams to solid realities. Too many frustrations had made me indifferent; the world was a shadow for me.

.2.

You were a vision of loveliness on the night of our first social. I remember you as a misplaced goddess, sitting on a roughly-made wooden bench against a backdrop of the darkness of the night with only the glow from the barbecue bonfire giving illumination to the surroundings, hardly encompassing the circled group. Somehow, I found it impossible to take my eyes away from you. You exuded a magnetism which I found difficult to repel. It was strange that you and I should come from the same institution, yet hardly knew each other.

You never realized, Yolanda, that that night you



Belongs To Only You". But you never knew, Yolanda. How could you? Even now, I don't think you are aware that I am still singing these songs for you.

3.

The sight-seeing tour was one event that I looked forward to with much expectation. I had decided to let you know how I felt about you. I was determined

it was a free day. To my utter surprise, the friend that you promised to be turned out to be a hostile stranger to me. You made me understand I could not tread even on your doorsteps. The world seemed to crumble; I had lost the life that I found only recently. I wanted to hate you just so the wound in my heart would not give me so much pain. But I found it impossible. I walked home lonely and unwanted, lamenting over the fact that I never had a hand in my

Rain Must Fall

by EDUARDO PONCE

not to let my feelings remain unspoken, not to leave my intentions unfulfilled.

The chance came when we made a stop atop a hill that provided a view of the reputed gold mines. You were visibly flattered by my attentions. But the beauty of Mother Nature's breast laid bare mocked me when you just laughed... a laughter that thrust a thousand needles into my insides. For it hid a million meanings designed to define emphatically the gap between you and me. I wanted to refuse to believe that our situation could be different from that of the sand and the sea. But everytime your laughter rang in my ear, it seemed you were as far as the moon could be. We proceeded to other destinations and I had to content myself without a categorical reply.

You told me, Yolanda, when I talked to you again on the eve of our departure for home, that you just wanted to be my friend, and I, yours; you could feel no more than that. And you would rather that I did not spoil our friendship. You liked me, you said, as a friend that is, and you did not want to put me in a false proposition.

Never realizing how much of a fool I was, I filled myself with hope that someday maybe, at the proper time and place, I could convince you of the sincerity of my intentions.

4.

So, back in school one day, I waited for you to come down from your classes to inquire if I may have the privilege of your audience the following day, for

creation.

You later explained (I don't know what made you do it) that you were not feeling well that day. You were sorry, so you said, and asked for my understanding. You claimed to be a nervous wreck, a troublemaker who says and does things without weighing them first, without thinking them over. I wanted to believe it, as I wanted to believe you could learn to love me someday. But there are times when by the way you acknowledge my greetings, you make me feel I have no right even to claim mere acquaintance with you, and I couldn't help wondering if that nervous-wreck affair of yours is nothing but a convenient subterfuge to provide you immunity from those whom you want to, and do, hurt.

5.

Yet, in spite of all, I will always hold you dear, Yolanda. I shall be a friend to you as you have asked me to be. It couldn't be otherwise anyway; a friend is all I'm good for, so it seems. I can neither hate you. It's just impossible. I'm sure living will be a torture for me: Your nearness will be as that of the wind among the trees, but I shall claim proximity to you only as a tree does to the blue. My only consolation is that true love is one that can suffer truly.

I have tried forgetting you, Yolanda, but without success. You are a chapter that is part and parcel of the unfinished book of my life. Time can never have dominion over my memory of you anymore. You, my dear, and those blissful December days, shall always remain treasured in my heart, even as I suffer dwelling in the memory of you.