

LOST: THE MAGIC OF A DAY

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Miss Ruiz tried (with what she thought a Herculean effort) to open wide her sleepy eyes and look at the alarm clock by her bedside which had just stopped ringing. There was only a good half hour to get dressed and have her breakfast. By all the standards of her morning ablutions, thirty minutes to prepare herself, eat her breakfast and still catch her bus would indeed be a feat. That means she could not take her time fixing her hair and for her who was absolutely vain about it, it was a sort of sacrifice. Unless she skipped breakfast, she mused. But she decided against it. There were pleasant and savory smells drifting from the kitchen. Yesterday was payday and this was one of Mother's way of showing her appreciation for her turning over three-fourths of what her pay envelop contained.

It felt nice to have her mother fuss over her. Mother would insist on her drinking her full glass of milk and eating her hard-boiled egg. Sometimes she would almost choke with feeling on seeing that the best food is laid before her. Her kid brothers and sisters would eye her food curiously but with no trace of envy. They were silent about it (which made her more uncomfortable) and accepted the fact that she has to have better food. Only Deo had the nerve to be biting and sarcastic. He would say: "Don't look now but here comes the family's pet and darling. How does it feel to be one of the family's star breadwinner, Ate? Tsk, tsk, Rob, do I see a hungry

gleam in your eye? After all, quote: 'You do not teach forty naughty brats that will drain your blood away,' unquote.

Mother would flash him an angry but helpless look. This happened almost every mealtime and it took away the relish from Mother's sweet concern over her health.

Her bus, she found out, after rushing out pell mell from the house, was five minutes late. She welcomed the short respite. It gave her a breathing spell after the hurry and scurry of the morning. She hoped she would not have to leave in such frantic haste again. Anyway, supervisors' visits do not happen everyday. She held tighter the things that kept her awake at the wee hours of the morning — a dozen flash cards, some charts and neatly mounted pictures. She won't be caught napping at her job. It was sheer luck that the "grapevine" telegraph reached her on time. Will he be surprised, she thought, to find her as ready and well-equipped as a demonstration teacher!

Miss Ruiz, replete with dignity and poise now, flagged her bus with her kerchief, got in sedately and took a seat near the window. Familiar faces greeted her and today it was as if they knew. The kind-looking elderly man at the opposite row of seats looked at her almost tenderly, with a timid smile. He looked like a file clerk to her, employed perhaps in the next town. There was a warmth and cozy friendliness in his smile today or was it only her imagination playing tricks on her,

because she felt the need even of strangers' smiles to bolster her strength and confidence in order to make the most important day of her career a howling success? She smiled back and looked out of the window. She took in a deep breath. Yes, it felt good to be riding on such a morning as this. The wind was fresh with the smell of newly plowed earth. The leaves wore a green freshness that made her foolish heart beat to its beauty. She had often suspected that she was too sentimental and romantic, to gush and feel exhilarated at the simple beauty of her surroundings. That was why, her friends at the central school could not understand why she was contented to "deteriorate" in her secluded nook in the barrio. They had resorted to several conjectures, foremost among which was that a barrio swain has captured her heart or that she was looking for one. She laughed almost audibly when she came to this part of her reflections. They were silly to think that the barrio is a good "fishing ground." Guiltily, she flashed a look at the opposite row. She was thankful that her co-passengers were busy with their own thoughts. Mentally, she went over her lesson plan for the day, picking out the parts where she knew she had to exert more efforts to give her supervisor a good impression of her teaching ability.

The bus suddenly pulled to a stop and jerked her from her thoughts.

"Miss, it is your stop. May I help you with your things?" the conductor said.

"Thank you," Miss Ruiz beamed.

The bus left Miss Ruiz in a cloud of dust. She shook herself free of it and looked at her watch. Twenty minutes past seven. Juanito, her pupil who will ferry her over the pond, was not in sight.

"Damn," she swore softly under her breath. She perfectly remembered she told him twice the other day to be ready with his boat. She dared not cross the one-piece bamboo bridge with a shaky support today — with the load she was carrying and the "special" dress she was wearing. She wasted three of her precious minutes waiting for Juanito to show up but when he didn't, she began to unstrap her shoes, tied them together tightly, slung them over the crook of her arm and began the "perilous journey." What a bridge to cross, she thought! Couldn't the P.T.A. make it a two-piece one? She clung tightly to the support (as for dear life) and thought again. Wouldn't it be just ducky to miss her footing and fall into the shallow but stinking depths below, today of all days? Wait till I get my hands on that boy. Stood me up, today

The proper and correct Miss Ruiz broke into a run the moment she set foot on "tierra firma" again. But this was for a short distance only. Next, she was perilously skirting and deftly wading her way through ankle-deep, thick, red and muddy soil of the rice furrows. Why did it have to rain last night?

She felt the wild relief and triumph that Columbus must have felt when he sighted America, when she saw her little schoolhouse. The children came out from all directions, shouted good morning and seized her things.

"Here, Rodolfo, quick, open the door and the windows," as she handed him the key. "No one will enter the room except Carolina, Esperanza and Felicidad. You three clean the room and put everything in order. All the others, pick up the pieces of paper, dried leaves and grass from our surroundings. Water the plants, too. Lutgardo, take charge."

By nine o'clock, Miss Ruiz and her school was completely ready, even for a visit from the gods, she thought irreligiously. Fervently, she hoped that Mr. Santos will arrive before her Reading lesson began. It was a beauty of a lesson, a masterpiece she had conceived as the crowning glory of her career. It would not do to put it off before he arrived. Being the finicky man that she heard him to be, he won't forget, but would, of course, ask for or consult her school program.

"Rodolfo, ring the bell for recess," Miss Ruiz wearily told her biggest boy.

It seemed silly now to keep up with the stiff rules and formalities that her profession enjoined her to do, at a place so remote that nobody but herself would ever find out whether they were kept or not. How easy it would be to shoo her pupils out of the room, without the formality of a bell. But life had its conventions and rules to make it more decent to live and be happy in, she reflected.

"Isn't he ever coming?" Miss Ruiz murmured when her watch showed five minutes past ten. She began her last lesson for the morning with a heavy heart.

"What an awful cheat he is to make me go through the trouble and pain of all these preparation and not show up."

She gave up all hope of his coming when she shooed her pupils out for physical education. It was only then that she felt the strain of being keyed

up to a high pitch of excitement and expectation. She slumped heavily in her chair, with the keen feeling of tiredness and disappointment.

Outside, the children were merrily shouting and playing under Rodolfo's leadership. She could hear their young voices singing the words of "Little Bo Peep", the new singing game she taught yesterday.

She was beginning to feel lost in a dreamlike trance, reviewing the responses and reactions of her pupils at her inspired teaching when she heard a chorus of good morning. She jumped out of her chair and rushed out of the room.

"Good morning, Mr. Santos," Miss Ruiz blurted out in a shaky voice.

"Good morning, Miss Ruiz. Are those children having their Physical Education? It is quite all right for them to have a leader but you should supervise them too. I wonder if you have a lesson plan for this subject. You have? Please let me see it. And will you please call them in? I wish to find out how many of them can read."

Miss Ruiz descended the shining stairs of her schoolhouse with heavy leaden feet. The bright rays of the sun struck her with a stunning force as she walked towards her children, but she did not feel it. She did not feel its friendly intensity and no longer did its warmth reassure her as it did, earlier in the morning. She knew with certainty, that for her, the magic of the day was completely lost.

A nation acquires respect, not by abetting and concealing abuses, but by rebuking and punishing them.

A difference does exist between brown skin and white skin, but it is of spirit and not of skin.

RESOLUTION

SUBJECT: THE SECRETARYSHIP OF EDUCATION.

WHEREAS, His Excellency, President Elpidio Quirino, stated in his address to the delegates of the Philippine Public School Teachers Association (PPSTA) at a tea party which he gave in their honor at Malacañang Palace on June 3, 1948, that he wished to receive suggestions from the Association as to who should be appointed to the leadership of the educational system in this country;

WHEREAS, the delegates of the PPSTA Convention assembled interpret this statement of His Excellency to mean that there is an impending change in the Secretaryship of the Department of Education;

WHEREAS, the 1948 Convention of the PPSTA adopted the proposition that —

“The Philippine Public School Teachers Association should petition government authorities concerned to include in a teachers’ charter of rights a statement of the principle that, following the tenets of democracy, the teachers as a body should be encouraged to voice freely and unequivocally their views with respect to fundamental changes in educational policy or changes in the leadership of the educational system. Blind obedience to policy or leadership is not conducive to cordial, human, and intelligent relationship between leaders and followers and does not promote initiative and resourcefulness on the part of those entrusted with the details of administration and implementation of policies”;

“WHEREAS, the public school teachers are profoundly grateful that this

desire is soon to be realized, for His Excellency, the President has proclaimed the unprecedented plan and policy to welcome the teachers’ recommendation as to who will be their leader in education;

WHEREAS, the delegates of the PPSTA Convention, representing as they do all the public school teachers in the Philippines, have unanimously decided to take advantage of this magnanimous offer and have duly deliberated on who would best fill the position of Secretary of Education in case of vacancy;

WHEREAS, the delegates of the PPSTA in convention assembled are unanimous in their opinion that the incumbent Secretary, Honorable Manuel V. Gallego, capably fills the position not only because he is truly democratic in the administration of his high office but also because he is making a thorough study of the means of improving the Philippine school system as shown by the fact that even now he is visiting other countries for the purpose of studying their educational systems and is thus acquiring a broad vision that can anticipate adequate solutions to educational problems, and is untiring in his efforts to ameliorate the teachers’ welfare and to improve the school system itself;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, as it is hereby resolved, that the delegates of the PPSTA in convention assembled petition, as they hereby respectfully petition, His Excellency, the President of the Philippines to retain the incumbent Honorable Manuel V. Gallego as Secretary of Education;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, as it is hereby resolved, that if His Excellency should see no way of granting

this petition because he has other plans for the Honorable Manuel V. Gallego, the PPSTA Convention respectfully recommends the following eminent educators to be considered for appointment in the event the position of Secretary of Education becomes vacant:

Dr. Gabriel R. Mañalac, Chairman of the Commission on Educational, Cultural and Scientific Matters

Mr. Prudencio Langcauon, Under-Secretary of Education

Mr. Esteban R. Abada, Director of Public Schools

Hon. Claro M. Recto, well-known jurist and cultural leader

Dr. Francisco Benitez, Dean of the College of Education, University of the Philippines

Mr. Florentino Cayco, President of the Arellano University

It is the feeling of the PPSTA Convention that these educators can count with the unqualified support and cooperation of the personnel of the Bureau of Public Schools, not only because they either rose from the ranks of the teaching profession or are educators and cultural leaders of renown in this country and are therefore fully conversant with the intricacies and problems of the public school system, but also because their records of public service show that they are imbued with the democratic spirit and that their administration of the school sys-

tem would be characterized by the absence of imposition and dogmatism and of reliance on personal opinion untempered by expert advice;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, as it is hereby resolved, that the delegates of the PPSTA in convention assembled, pledge, as they hereby pledge, their unqualified support of and faith in the administration of His Excellency, President Elpidio Quirino, and express, as they hereby express, their eternal and boundless gratitude for the truly democratic and unprecedented policy enunciated by him of inviting the suggestions and securing the recommendations of the public school teachers with respect to the choice of their Department head; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED, that a copy of this resolution be forwarded to His Excellency, the President; the Honorable Manuel V. Gallego, Secretary of Education; and the Director of Public Schools.

UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED, June 4, 1948.

CERTIFIED CORRECT:

MARCELINO BAUTISTA
Executive Secretary-Treasurer

ATTESTED:

ANTONIO A. MACEDA
President

●
Light is the most beautiful thing in creation.

●
Grant liberties, so that no one may have the right to conspire.

●
The human conscience, the people's cry, must not be stifled.