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## **Pictures of the Floating World Liham Mula sa Pasong Tirad**

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The bride is alone, her slender body quivers like a lyre  
 Amidst the laces that cover the rotting faces,  
 For it is whispered among the fierce glitter or jewels  
 Of a choice for the groom between two lives, two deaths. She sees  
 History marching under her bridal window, the duel  
 Of fire and sword, the dying, falling, and uprising, on the brink.  
 Horses wrestle with men—and now, on this eve of love,  
 Her handsome groom has gone out for a moment sadly murmuring  
 Of dangerous things, things of the future, things to be avenged.  
 The mournful bride leans upon a wall, between gladness and terror,  
 As though she has been given a gift of an oil lamp  
 That might contain either a secret poem or nitroglycerin.

Something in the house will slowly bloom or quickly explode,  
 For the groom has gone out to get the oil lamp for the feast—  
 No, she will not faint in the sala, though deep inside she staggers,  
 She touches her hair, smiles to each illustrious and honored guest.  
 Welcome the guests, the manang, the beatas and señoras,  
 With a swish of scented fans, with a swirl and slither of silk—  
 A toast to the Governor-General and his queridas—  
 A touch on the scapular, a wishing of honey and milk.

The moonlight is on the stairs, the moon above the rooftop,  
 The orchestra plays a valse to sinister shadows,  
 Time passes by and sees, stops, desolate on a precipice.  
 The door is shut. The groom is late. Who will bring the oil lamp?  
 The door is shut. The curtain shakes. Who will let the groom in?  
 But soft- What is that? A rustle of silk, or bolos sharply  
 Gnashing behind the leaves and vines in the lattice—  
 'Tis I, señorita, dying upon your balcony. . . .

RUEL S. DE VERA

### **Pictures of the Floating World**

In waterfalls  
 of unbroken color,  
 we gather up  
 pale rivers, red volcanoes  
 and the blue  
 kimono of sky.

While the walking sun  
is a paper fan  
unfolding there,  
where the flowing sash  
of Honshu's brown mountains  
meets end to end.

In Edo, I'scan the narrow streets  
from the mirror of morning,  
mimicking the mist  
as it unfurls and combs  
its infinite tresses  
this way and that.

By the window,  
by sister Takao,  
kneeling in robes  
the shades of sudden snow,  
quietly regards  
her favorite Utamaro print.

In her slender hand she holds  
a scene with two courtesans  
trapped in the pleasurable  
poses of memory by the edicts  
of a heart  
unknown to shadow:

a world where our simple lives  
bleed into simple lines,  
which knows  
neither sadness nor joy,  
neither denial nor fulfillment,  
but knows beauty—  
knows only beauty.

### **Liham Mula sa Pasong Tirad**

Heneral,

Dumating na ang mga Amerikano  
sa Concepcion, ang mga bayoneta  
nila'y di-mabilang na karayom,  
tinuturok ang kalangitang naghihimulmol.

Kasama ng animnapung piling kawal,  
pumuwesto ako sa isang gulod  
na napapaligiran nitong hiwa  
ng makitid na daan.

Hindi pala madaling pumili  
ng mga siguradong  
mamamatay.

Ngunit alam naming lahat  
na, mabuhay man kami,  
hindi na namin maaabutan  
ang mga tumatakas  
naming sarili.

Wala naman kaming  
kinatatakutan,  
maliban sa pagdating  
ng di-inaasahang buwang-liwayway.

Kaya, pagdating ng karimlan,  
nakahanda na kami.

Hindi kami nagsiga.  
Walang nagsalita.  
Inukit lamang namin  
ang mga sarili  
sa mga pisngi ng burol,

at hinintay  
ang isang umagang  
hindi inaasam,  
hinintay na ipangitlog  
ang araw ng matutulin na ulap

nang mapuksa nito  
ang lahat na nagtatago  
sa panandaliang dilim.

Nilagdaan ngayong unang araw  
ng Disyembre 1899.

Ang iyong lingkod,  
Gregorio del Pilar