

A BET WITH MY UNCLE LUIS (A TRANSLATION OF “UNA APUESTA CON MI TIO LUIS”)

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About the Short Story

“Una Apuesta con Mi Tio Luis” was originally published in Spanish in the *Sabatino de la Vanguardia* on June 20, 1936. It won second place in the Short Story Contest of the Saturday supplement of the newspaper *La Vanguardia* for the same year.

About the Translator

Ma. Luisa P. Young is a teacher of Spanish and French at the Department of Modern Languages at Ateneo de Manila University. She collaborated in the edition of Antonio M. Abad's *El Campeón*, published in 2013 by the Instituto Cervantes de Manila, the Embassy of Spain in the Philippines, the Colegio de San Luis Potosí in Mexico, and the Ateneo de Manila University.

About the Author

Antonio M. Abad (Barili, Cebu, 1894 – Manila, 1970) was a novelist, poet, essayist, short story writer and playwright. He also became the editor of several newspapers. He was awarded the Premio Zobel in 1929 for his novel *La oveja de Nathán*. He also received the Commonwealth Prize for Literature in 1940 for his novel *El Campeón*. As a professor of Spanish at the University of the Philippines and the Far Eastern University, he likewise authored several textbooks on the Spanish language.

Translating Antonio M. Abad's *Una Apuesta con mi Tío Luis*

Originally published in Spanish in the *Sabatino de la Vanguardia* on June 20, 1936, Antonio M. Abad's "Una apuesta con mi Tío Luis" (A Bet with My Uncle Luis) won second place in the short story contest of the Saturday supplement of the Philippine newspaper *La Vanguardia* for the same year.

Abad (1894 – 1970) is considered to be one of the most prolific writers of the period known as the "Golden Age of Phil-Hispanic Literature,"¹ during the first half of the 20th century. He was a journalist, editor, essayist, playwright, short story writer, and novelist. He has been referred to as "the greatest novelist of Phil-Hispanic literature after Rizal."² He garnered numerous awards for his works, but the most notable are the 1929 Premio Zóbel, which he won for his novel *La oveja de Nathán* (Nathan's Sheep), and the 1939 Commonwealth Literary Prize for another novel, *El Campeón* (The Champion). A great defender of the Spanish language in the Philippines, he was also a professor of Spanish who authored several textbooks for the study of the language. He became part of the *Academia Filipina* in 1939.

As the title suggests, the story, told in the first person by the protagonist Alberto, is about an outrageous bet he makes with his uncle. Mainly using the streets and landmarks of the Manila of Abad's time as a backdrop, the story depicts human nature, a recurrent theme in the writer's works, through the opposition between the wisdom of experience, cynical and infallible, versus the idealism and innocence of youth.

In translating any work, the translator makes strategic decisions and decisions of detail (Hervey and Higgins 14) in order to remain faithful to the original text and to minimize translation loss. Such decisions, at the same time, ensure that the source text does not sound like a translation. As with any text in Spanish, the original is filled with long and winding sentences, which if translated closely, are unacceptable in English, the target language. It was necessary, therefore, to split the long sentences to suit English syntax.

Given the numerous dialogues in the story, the use of direct address in the source text was also a minor problem. In one instance, the character calls his nephew "sobrino" (nephew): while such a practice is normal in Spanish, the use of this particular kinship term as a direct address may sound awkward in English. The solution was to include an adjective; hence, "dear nephew."

A few footnotes are included to explain references specific to the culture of the author and discrepancies in the original text.

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UNCLE LUIS WAS THEN THIRTY YEARS OLD; I was eighteen. I had just received my degree of *bachiller*³; he was already a distinguished lawyer who, being filthy rich, didn't practice the profession. He had already toured the world thrice; until I came to Manila, I had never been out of my province.

One afternoon, he entered the messy students' quarters where I was staying, in a house on Cabildo Street in Intramuros. There were four of us in that room, and, for both board and lodging, we were paying twenty pesos. I refuse, therefore, to describe that hole-in-the-wall where we slept and studied our lessons with much enthusiasm. That room, which on the last eight or ten days of the month, was converted into a sort of athenaeum where we discussed everything, only because our poverty kept us from going out into the streets and admiring the girls coming out of the Colegio de Santa Isabel, visiting the billiard hall along Real Street, and eating in some *pansitería*⁴.

Uncle Luis didn't seem surprised by the general state of disorder in our room – books and notebooks were on the chairs, robes and coats were hung here and there.

- “Uncle Luis!” - I cried out as I saw him enter. I immediately managed to rid a half-dilapidated chair of the substantial weight that it was carrying on its broken wicker seat.
- “Don't bother, dear nephew.” – He sat on the cot where I was lazily lying down. He then added – “Go get dressed.”
- “Where are we going?”
- “I'm treating you to dinner.”

He certainly used to treat me from time to time at one of the restaurants in Sta. Cruz. However, as that day was the twenty-fifth of the month, and I didn't have a single cent in my pocket, I was already dreaming of a filling sirloin steak or a good meal of greasy stir-fried noodles to ease my misery. He was such a great guy, my Uncle Luis!

In no time at all, I slipped into the least wrinkled suit that I had. And in twenty minutes, I was comfortably settled across him at a table at Tom's, which was back then an august temple of gastronomy. A server was waiting as my Uncle Luis perused the menu.

- “What do you want to have for dinner?”

- “Me?” – pretending to be indifferent – “whatever you decide” – I modestly said, as if I had all of a sudden forgotten the gastronomic reveries I was having half an hour ago.

But my Uncle Luis was extremely skillful at ordering dinner, and in less than five minutes, he was watching me devour half of a roast chicken with a student’s gusto. Of course, neither did I pass up on the excellent asparagus soup. As we were being served coffee, Uncle Luis opened his wallet and took out a letter which he handed me to read. I must have turned all the colors of the rainbow, and if I had not been very hungry, I would’ve suffered indigestion. When he believed that I had already read everything, with a slightly teasing tone, he asked:

- “So it’s true then?”

My silence was for him a clear yes. He calmly folded the reproachful letter and put it back into his wallet. He then looked at me with such a fatherly tenderness that I almost burst into tears. He sipped a bit of coffee and asked me again, a bit jokingly:

- “So have you really made up your mind?”

I still kept quiet. Uncle Luis sighed and remained silent for a long time. Afterwards, without looking at me, but with an indefinable air of tenderness mixed with a hint of sarcasm, he said:

- “Alberto, I do not advise you to give it up. Your father, as you’ve just found out from the letter, is asking me to tell you not to commit this stupidity. Your father cannot imagine that at your age, you would seriously think of getting married. He wants you to finish your studies first. Then, you can marry any woman you want. To do so now would be a mistake, and I think your father is right. How will you two live?”

I staunchly defended myself, and my first argument was the one that I believed to be most effective.

- “But Uncle Luis, I love that girl, and she loves me too. What will happen to her if I leave her?”
- “I’m not telling you to leave her. We’re only asking you to postpone the wedding until you finish your studies.”
- “She’s so good to me! She’s suffered a lot for me! And of course, she’s so

pretty!”

- “Well, if only that girl had some dowry...”

Feeling outraged, I interrupted him.

- “No, Uncle Luis! If she were rich, I wouldn’t marry her. I will not marry for money!”

Uncle Luis looked at me with pity. Then, considering my age, he smiled kindly.

- “Poor Alberto!” – muttering more to himself rather than speaking out loud. – “But perhaps you’re happy that way. When I was your age, I was almost like you. But then later... No, no, I won’t continue. I don’t want to influence you with my ideas. But I will tell you one thing, and try not to forget it. Nowadays, very few marry for love. Most get married... to find a favorable change in circumstances. Marrying because a woman is good or pretty is going out of fashion. Soon, the trend will be to marry the one who has the most assets, even if she is frighteningly ugly. This is hard for you, brutally hard, I know, because you still read novels by Invernizio and Perez Escrich. But it’s true...”
- “No! No it’s not true!” - I strongly protested.
- “No?”
- “No!”
- “Alright, let’s make a bet.”
- “What kind of bet?”

Uncle Luis hesitated for a moment. In fact, it had not yet occurred to him what the bet should be about.

- “Let us first finish our coffee. We shall see.”

The subject was dropped. Since I didn't smoke cigars, Uncle Luis gave me a pack of cigarettes, the kind that he knew I liked. After paying the waiter and giving him his tip, he took me to the movies. It was already eleven at night when the film ended. At the exit, a small scrawny hand reached out to us asking for alms. I saw a ragged girl, dirty and disheveled, asking for a few centavos using her eyes more than her mouth. Uncle Luis gave her, I believe, five centavos. Suddenly, he took me by the arm and led me aside.

- "Let's go back to Tom's. We will talk about the bet."

The bet consisted of the following: that he, a rich unmarried man, on his way to becoming a confirmed bachelor, would adopt the young beggar. He would make her study at the best convent schools, and would make her heir to his fortune. He would say from then on that she was his niece, the daughter of a sister who died early; that, upon finishing her education, he would launch her into society.

- "You will then see, dear nephew, that the most genteel of our men will be blown away by her."
- "Until they find out that she's the daughter of a beggar and no one knows who her father is."
- "Even if they find out, as long as she remains the heir to my fortune, they will stay enamored of her."
- "No."
- "Yes."

I was so sure that it wouldn't turn out that way, so I didn't hesitate to take the bet. I would pay for the wedding breakfast on the day that Marcela – the young beggar's name – wed a young man "from high society."

When my father died, I had to go back to my town. I was one of the inheritors of twenty-five or thirty hectares of land and I had to take charge of it. I was now head of the family, as coincidentally, I was the only male and my mother didn't know anything about managing the farm. Deep down, I was happy to return to the countryside as staying in Manila was already becoming unbearable.

Ignoring the advice of my uncle, one afternoon, my girlfriend and I appeared before a justice of the peace and in a quarter of an hour, we were already man

and wife. The truth is that I had to ratify the union in the presence of a Catholic priest because my parents were scandalized, but in my situation, that was the most practical option. My budget was only good enough to pay for the court fees and rent the car that would take us to San Juan del Monte. That left around five pesos more for temporary accommodations in a third or fourth class hotel.

The first days were indeed difficult. My father cut my allowance, and I didn't dare ask my Uncle Luis for help. Finally, I found a job as a clerk in a law office, receiving a salary of forty pesos a month. But sooner than expected, my first son arrived, and with him, the first complications. My forty pesos weren't even enough for us to go to a second or third class movie house.

Lovingly working the land, I quickly forgot the sorrows of life in Manila. I soon expanded the farm and, with a bit of ingenuity and the economy of a frugal, almost stingy wife, in a few years, I managed to amass a small amount of money. Given the Franciscan poverty of my town, that amount was already considered quite substantial. Moreover, ever since I became administrator, my mother and sisters began to enjoy certain comforts which they had never before experienced. One by one, my sisters got married, and their husbands, encouraged by my example, continued to prosper.

Together with a letter from my eldest son informing me that I would receive that month, the certificate stating that he had finished his secondary education at the capital, the mailman delivered an envelope almost square in shape, of thick paper, with a totally unknown penmanship. It was an invitation to the upcoming wedding of Marcela Pañares, the niece of my uncle⁵ Luis Pañares, and Dr. Pedro Agana Villacorta, the son of Dr. Rosendo Agana Villacorta.

In an instant, certain almost forgotten episodes of my life as a student were revived in my memory. I say this because I had already completely forgotten what I considered a whim on the part of my Uncle Luis. I was now recalling the smallest details of that extravagant bet, of that charged conversation that took place before my eyes in the foyer of a movie house, between my uncle and the mother of a young beggar.

- "What's your daughter's name?"
- "Marcela, sir."
- "Where do you live?"
- "We don't have a house, sir. At night, we stay at the ground floor of a small house in Tondo."
- "Come see me at my house tomorrow." And he gave her the address.

That same day an outrageous agreement was made. Marcela would become his niece, and, aside from that, he would adopt her. A week later, she was enrolled in one of the best convent schools.

With the invitation, elegantly printed, came a most gracious letter from my Uncle Luis. – “If you still love me,” - he was saying – “and I don’t have any reason to doubt your affection, leave your farming tools behind for a few days, and give me a hug on the day of my dear daughter’s wedding. Oh, Alberto! I’m now getting old and I really need to feel the warmth of affection from my own family.”

The wedding was a sumptuous affair. On the eve of the wedding, the day of my arrival in Manila, the newspapers published the pictures of the engaged couple. She was the niece and adopted daughter of the rich landowner Don Luis Pañares. He was the only son of the distinguished businessman, the millionaire Don Rosendo Agana Villacorta, the owner of some five or six-story buildings in the best business district of the city.

Moreover, the newspapers gave me some other interesting information. He finished his studies at Johns Hopkins University⁶ and then furthered his knowledge at the most renowned clinics and hospitals in Europe. He was the president of various social clubs, and she was the muse of one of those. As for her, two years ago, she received a degree in music, being one of the most brilliant pianists of the city. A year later, she was elected Queen of the Carnival, and became the most respected, admired and sought-after lady of Manila society.

Of course, my Uncle Luis was outraged at the cowardly letter sent to the groom by an anonymous sender a week before. In it, it was mentioned that Marcela Pañares was not in fact, a Pañares. She was not the niece of Don Luis but the daughter of an old beggar who died of tuberculosis in the Santol Sanitarium. My uncle had to confess to the groom and his parents the real story of Marcela. After that, they agreed among themselves to destroy the anonymous letter and proceed with the wedding as if nothing had happened.

The bride and groom boarded a ship that took them to Japan for their honeymoon. Incidentally, I thought Marcela, in her elegant wedding gown, was beautiful.

A day before my return, upon waking up, at the entrance hall of the Manila Hotel I met an employee who had the bill for the breakfast, which amounted to five hundred and fifty pesos. I reached for my wallet and paid for it. As he was walking away, my Uncle Luis arrived, still wrapped in an elegant robe. He knew of course, that the bill had already been settled.

- “What?” he exclaimed. “That cannot be. I should pay for that bill. Please...”
- “Don’t bother, Uncle.” – I replied. “I’m the one who has to pay for it.”

- “Why?”
- “Because I lost the bet.”

My Uncle Luis let out a dry laugh. That ironic, scornful, disdainful laugh of his heyday. Then, he gave me that sharp look of his and said:

- “You have paid dearly for your disbelief.”

EL TÍO LUIS TENÍA ENTONCES TREINTA AÑOS; yo, dieciocho. Acababa de recibir mi título de bachiller; él era ya un señor abogado que, por estar podrido de dinero, no ejercía la profesión. Tres veces había dado ya la vuelta al mundo; hasta que vine a Manila, yo no había salido de mi provincia.

Una tarde entró en mi enmarañado cuarto de estudiante en una casa en la calle Cabildo, en Intramuros. Éramos cuatro en aquel cuarto, y por la habitación y la comida pagábamos veinte pesos. Renuncio, por lo tanto, a describir aquel chiribitil donde dormíamos y estudiábamos nuestras lecciones con tanto mayor gusto cuanto que, durante los ocho o diez últimos días del mes, se convertía en una especie de ateneo donde se discutía todo, precisamente porque la penuria común nos impedía salir a la calle para admirar a las chicas que salían del colegio de Santa Isabel, visitar el salón de billar en la calle Real y cenar en alguna pansitería.

A mi tío Luis no pareció sorprender el desarreglo general de nuestra habitación – libros y cuadernos de apuntes sobre las sillas, batas y americanas colgadas acá y allá.

- ¡Tío Luis! – exclamé al verle entrar. Y en seguida procuré desalojar una silla medio desvencijada de la respetable carga que sostenía sobre su rota rejilla.
- No te molestes, sobrino. – Y a continuación se sentó sobre la cama de tijeras en que indolentemente estaba echado. Luego añadió: -- Vístete.
- ¿Dónde vamos?
- Te invito a cenar.

Verdad es que de cuando en cuando me invitaba a comer en alguno de los restaurantes de Santa Cruz: pero precisamente aquel día era el vigésimo-quinto del mes, y yo, sin una peseta en el bolsillo, soñaba en un sustancioso solomillo o en un buen plato de grasiento pansit para consolarme de mi miseria. ¡Qué gran tío era aquel mi tío Luis!

En un santiamén me endosé el traje menos arrugado que yo tenía, y en veinte minutos me ví acomodado frente a él en una mesita del Tom's, augusto templo de gastronomía en aquellos tiempos. Un mozo esperaba mientras mi tío Luis pasaba revista al menú.

- ¿Qué quieres cenar?
- ¿Yo?—hícame el indiferente. – Lo que tú pidas...—dije modestamente como si hubiera olvidado de pronto mis sueños gastronómicos de hacía media hora.

Pero mi tío Luis era extremadamente hábil en ordenar una cena, y en menos de cinco minutos me vió atacando con estudiantil entusiasmo medio pollo asado, sin perdonar desde luego una excelente sopa de espárragos. Mientras nos servían el café, mi tío Luis abrió su cartera y de ella extrajo una carta que me dio a leer. Creo que me puse de los colores del arcoíris, y si no hubiese tenido tanta hambre, la cena me hubiera indigestado. Cuando juzgó que ya había yo leído todo, me preguntó con un ligeramente zumbón:

- ¿Es verdad, pues?

Mi silencio fue para él contestación afirmativa elocuente. Dobló tranquilamente la carta acusadora y la metió en su cartera que se la guardó. Después me miró con una ternura tan paternal que casi me eché a llorar. Sorbió un poco de café y después volvió a preguntarme, con un tono un si es no es burlón:

- ¿Estás, pues, decidido?

Otro silencio mío. Mi tío Luis suspiró y calló largo rato. Luego, sin mirarme, pero con un aire indefinible de ternura mezclada de finísima ironía, habló así:

- Alberto, no te aconsejo que desistas. Tu padre, como acabas de enterarte por esa carta, me pide que te aconseje que no cometas esa barbaridad. Tu padre no puede concebir que a tu edad pienses seriamente en casarte. Él quiere que termines antes tu carrera. Después, puedes casarte con la mujer que quieras. Hoy sería un error y creo que tu padre tiene razón. ¿Cómo vais a vivir?

Yo me defendí briosamente, y mi primer argumento era el que yo juzgaba más eficaz.

- Pero tío Luis, es que yo amo a esa chica, y ella me corresponde. ¿Qué va a ser de ella si la abandono?
- Es que no te aconsejo que la abandones. Sólo te pedimos todos que aplaces la boda hasta que termines tu carrera.
- ¡Es tan buena conmigo! ¡Ha sufrido tanto por mí! Y luego, ¡es tan bonita!
- Si al menos esa chica tuviera un poco de dote...

Yo le interrumpí indignado.

- ¡No, tío Luis! Si fuera rica, no me casaría con ella. ¡No me caso por interés!

Mi tío Luis me miró con compasión. Luego, pensando seguramente en mi edad, sonrió bondadosamente.

- ¡Pobre Alberto! – musitó más que habló. – Pero acaso seas feliz así. A tu edad, yo también casi era como tú. Pero después... No, no prosigo. No te quiero inficionar con mis ideas. Pero te voy a decir una cosa, y procura no olvidarla. Hoy muy pocos se casan por amor. La mayoría se casa... para buscar un cambio favorable de posición. Eso de casarse porque una mujer es buena o es bonita va pasando ya de moda. La moda de dentro de muy poco es casarse con la que tiene las más sólidas rentas, aunque sea más fea que un susto. Esto es duro para ti, brutalmente duro, ya lo sé, porque todavía lees novelas de Invernizio y Pérez Escrich. Pero es verdad...
- ¡No, no es verdad! – protesté con energía.
- ¿Qué no?
- ¡No!
- Pues, vamos a hacer una apuesta.
- ¿Qué apuesta?

Mi tío Luis quedo perplejo. Realmente a él no se le había pasado aún por las mientes en que debía consistir la apuesta.

- Vamos a terminar antes nuestro café. Ya veremos.

No se habló más del asunto. Como yo no fumaba puros, mi tío Luis me regaló una cajetilla de cigarrillos, de aquellos que él sabía que me gustaban mucho. Luego de pagar al mozo y darle su propina, me llevó al cine. Eran ya las once de la noche cuando terminó la función. A la salida, una manita descarnada se tendió hacia nosotros pidiendo una limosna. Ví una niña harapienta, sucia y desgredada, que, con los ojos más que con la boca, pedía unos céntimos. Mi tío Luis le dio creo que cinco centavos. Repentinamente me cogió del brazo y me llevó a un lado.

- Vente al Tom's otra vez. Vamos a hablar de la apuesta.

La apuesta consistía en lo siguiente: Que él, soltero rico en camino de solterón, adoptaría a la pequeña mendiga; la haría educar en el mejor colegio de monjas y la haría heredera de su fortuna; que se dijera desde aquel día que se trataba de una sobrina suya, hija de una hermana muerta prematuramente; que, completada su educación, la lanzaría al gran mundo.

- Verás entonces, sobrino, que los chicos más apuestos de nuestra alta sociedad beberán los vientos por ella.
- Hasta que sepan que es hija de una mendiga y se ignora el nombre de su padre.
- Aunque lo sepan, con tal que siga siendo heredera de mi fortuna, seguirán enamorados de ella.
- A que no...
- A que sí...

Estaba tan seguro de que no sucedería así que no vacilé en aceptar la apuesta de que pagaría lo que importare un desayuno nupcial al día en que Marcela – el nombre de la pequeña mendiga – se case con un joven “de la alta sociedad.”

Muerto mi padre, hube de volver a mi pueblo para hacerme cargo de las veinticinco o treinta hectáreas de terreno de que me hizo uno de los herederos. Ya era yo ahora el jefe de la familia, gracias a la casualidad de ser yo único varón y no saber mi madre administrar una hacienda. En el fondo de mi alma me felicitaba de esta vuelta al campo, porque ya se me había hecho imposible mi estancia en Manila.

Desoyendo los consejos de mi tío, una tarde, mi novia y yo comparecimos ante un juez de paz, y al cuarto de hora ya éramos marido y mujer. Verdad es que hube de ratificar esta unión ante un cura católico, porque mis padres estaban escandalizados; pero en mis circunstancias, aquélla era la boda más práctica. Mi presupuesto se limitaba al pago de los derechos del juzgado de paz, al alquiler del automóvil que nos llevó a San Juan del Monte y unos cinco pesos más para acomodarnos provisionalmente en un hotel de tercera o cuarta clase.

Los primeros días fueron de verdadera prueba. Mi padre me cortó la pensión, y yo no me atrevía a pedir el auxilio de mi tío Luis. Por fin me coloqué como escribiente en el bufete de un abogado, con cuarenta pesos al mes. Pero más pronto de lo que esperaba vino el primer hijo y con él los primeros problemas. Mis cuarenta pesos no nos permitían ya ni siquiera ir a un cine de segunda o tercera clase.

Trabajando con cariño la tierra, olvidé pronto las amarguras de la vida manilana. Pronto ensanché la hacienda y, con un poco de ingenio y las economías de una

mujer tan ahorradora que casi llegaba a ser tacaña, logré en pocos años amasar un capitalito que, en la humildad franciscana de mi pueblo, ya era bastante respetable. Además, desde mi administración, mi madre y mis hermanas empezaron a gozar de comodidades que hasta entonces no conocían. Una por una fueron casándose, y sus maridos, estimulados con mi ejemplo, siguen prosperando.

Juntamente con una carta de mi hijo mayor participándome que aquel mes recibiría su certificado de que había terminado sus estudios secundarios en la cabecera, el cartero me entregó un sobre casi cuadrangular, de papel grueso, con unas letras para mi totalmente desconocidas. Era una invitación de la próxima boda de Marcela Pañares, sobrina de mi tío⁷ Luis Pañares, con el Dr. Pedro Agana Villacorta, hijo del Dr. Rosendo Agana Villacorta.

Instantáneamente resucitaron en mi memoria episodios casi olvidados de mi vida de estudiante. Lo digo porque ya había olvidado completamente lo que yo consideraba una humorada de mi tío Luis. Ahora recordaba los menores detalles de aquella extravagante apuesta, de aquella conversación eléctrica que, delante de mí, tuvo lugar frente al foyer de una sala de proyección entre mi tío y la madre de la pequeña mendiga.

- ¿Cómo se llama tu hija?
- Marcela, señor.
- ¿Dónde vivís?
- No tenemos casa, señor. Nos acomodamos de noche en los bajos de una casita en Tondo.
- Mañana venid a verme a mi casa. – Y le dio las señas.

Aquel mismo día quedó concertado algo inaudito. Marcela pasaría a ser sobrina suya y, además, la adoptaría. Una semana después ingresaba en uno de los mejores colegios de religiosas.

Con la invitación, elegantemente impresa, venía una atentísima carta de mi tío Luis. “Si me quieres aún, -- decía -- y yo no tengo motivos para dudar de tu cariño, deja unos cuantos días tus aperos de labranza y dame un abrazo en el día de la boda de mi querida hija. ¡Ay, Alberto! Ya voy para viejo y ahora es cuando siento verdadera necesidad de sentir el calor del cariño de los míos.”

La boda fue muy suntuosa. La víspera, que era el día de mi llegada a Manila, los periódicos publicaron las fotografías de los novios. Ella era la sobrina e hija adoptiva del rico propietario Don Luis Pañares; él era hijo único del distinguido comerciante

millonario Don Rosendo Agana Villacorta, propietario de unos cuantos edificios de cinco o seis pisos en la mejor sección comercial de la ciudad.

Además me dieron otras noticias interesantes. El terminó sus estudios en la Universidad de Johns Hopkins⁸ y luego amplió sus conocimientos en las más afamadas clínicas y hospitales de Europa. Era presidente de varios clubs sociales, de uno de los cuales ella era la musa. Ella, por su parte, hacía dos años que había recibido su título de maestra de música, siendo una de las más brillantes pianistas de la ciudad. Un año más tarde fue elegida Reina del Carnaval, y era la chica más apreciada, admirada y codiciada de la sociedad manilana.

Por cierto que mi tío Luis estaba indignado contra el cobarde anonimista que una semana antes había enviado al novio una carta en que se afirmaba que Marcela Pañares no se apellidaba Pañares; que no era sobrina de Don Luis sino hija de una antigua mendiga que murió tuberculosa en el Sanatorio de Santol. Mi tío tuvo que confesar al novio y a sus padres la verdadera historia de Marcela, después de lo cual acordaron entre todos romper el anónimo y seguir adelante con la boda como si no hubiera pasado nada.

Los novios tomaron un barco que los condujo al Japón para su luna de miel. Por cierto que Marcela, con su elegantísimo traje de boda, me parecía bonita.

Un día antes de mi regreso, al despertarme, me encontré en la antesala con un mandatorio del Manila Hotel. Llevaba la cuenta del desayuno, que llegaba a quinientos cincuenta pesos. Eché mano de mi cartera y pagué. Cuando el cobrador se marchaba, se presentó mi tío Luis, envuelto aún en una elegante bata. Supo desde luego que la cuenta estaba ya pagada.

- ¡Cómo! – exclamó – Eso no puede ser. Esa cuenta me pertenece. Haz el favor...
- No te esfuerces, tío – repliqué. – Esa cuenta debo pagarla yo.
- ¿Por qué?
- Porque he perdido la apuesta.

Mi tío Luis soltó una risa seca – aquella risa irónica, desdeñosa, despreciativa de sus mejores tiempos. Luego, al mirarme con aquella su mirada buída, dijo:

- Has pagado cara tu incredulidad.

Sabatino de la Vanguardia, 20 de junio 1936, páginas 5 y 13

Notes

1. As classified by Estanislao B. Alinea in his study *Historia analítica de la literatura filhispana, desde 1566 hasta mediados de 1964* (Manila: Imprenta los Filipinos, 1964), and Luis Mariñas in his work *La literatura filipina en castellano* (Madrid: Editora Nacional, 1974).
2. A copy of the newspaper clipping from the Cebu Sunstar Weekend from October 18, 1992 with this citation can be seen in the 2013 bilingual edition of Antonio M. Abad's *La oveja de Nathán*, from the Premio Zóbel Collection, with the English translation by Lourdes Castrillo Brillantes.
3. A *bachiller* would be equivalent to present-day secondary education.
4. A *pansiteria* is a restaurant which specializes in “pansit” or stir-fried noodles.
5. Translator's Note: In the original text, *primo* or cousin was the word used. This however is incorrect as Luis Pañares is the protagonist's uncle and not cousin. The correction is made in the translation.
6. Translator's Note: *John* Hopkins was used in the original text. The correction is made in the translation.
7. Un error tipográfico aparece en el original, donde se emplea la palabra *primo* (En inglés: cousin). Se ha hecho la corrección tanto en el original como en la traducción para mostrar la relación correcta entre Luis Pañares y el protagonista del cuento.
8. Aparece un error ortográfico en la versión impresa del original, donde se pone *John* Hopkins. Se ha hecho la corrección tanto en esta versión como en la traducción.