

In a Latin American neighborhood lives a girl who is ^{adored} ~~the~~ adoration ~~of~~ men and ^{envied by} ~~the~~ envy ~~of~~ women - Her name is MANUELA. Three of her neighbors, Vavá Quiñones, Foncho Linares, and Franklyn, "Crime Face", González, sing in the street in front of a place popularly known as the "alley of the bored people": a place used as a playground and a meeting area to play dominoes, argue about politics, drink beer, and in general, "fix the world". The trio introduces a tailor who is the son of a ^{Caribbean} ~~Caribbean~~ and a South American, and who has a formidable reputation in the streets as "the prince of the hustlers". His name is CARMELO, and he, like the rest of the men who hang out in the "alley of the bored people", dreams of the conquest of the elusive MANUELA. (COMO TU).

December 17, 1920

The neighborhood "Venus" and "the prince of the hustlers" fatefully meet in the street, but this time, CARMELO - full of passion - announces to MANUELA his desire to possess her. She answers him coolly, stating that although she wouldn't mind having a formal relationship, the one she chooses will first have to understand that she is no one's fool ("YO SOY UNA MUJER"), otherwise such a relationship could not be established. Although CARMELO doesn't welcome such words, he goes along with MANUELA's conditions because he is stirred by his desire to have her, and by his belief that in the future he will make her change her mind. They accept each other, at least for the moment, and pledge to love one another until the day they die.

January 1, 1921

The neighborhood, still doubtful of the developing relationship between CARMELO AND MANUELA, join "en masa" ^(together) at the party ("LA FIESTA"). This opportunity for merriment cannot be wasted. Everyone is attracted both by their curiosity to witness the unlikely union of the barrio's most popular figures, and by the chance to have a good time, all for free. All of the patrons of the "alley of the bored people" are present for the celebration at the apartment of the Quiñones family. It ends up in a monumental brawl.

May 17, 1921

CARMELO continues to work in the tailor shop called "The Hope" ("La Esperanza"), and MANUELA keeps herself busy with the house work. She has discovered that she is pregnant, and her happiness is matched only by her satisfaction ^{with} CARMELO's new attitude. Although he still maintains his slick reputation in the barrio, CARMELO has reduced his wanderings and street life because of the true love he has developed for MANUELA. He does not wish to displease her or endanger their union.

November 10, 1921

It is Saturday afternoon. As CARMELO plays dominoes in the "alley of the bored people", he is told that, at last, MANUELA has given birth. He runs with his friends to the hospital, overcome by ~~his~~ ^{with} emotion ~~and~~ the birth ("EL NACIMIENTO") of his first son - whom he promptly names RAMIRO.

February 14, 1935

For the DaSilvas, and other residents of the neighborhood, the economic situation is becoming increasingly difficult. CARMELO, frustrated by his inability to change such hard times, turns his bitterness and desperation into a song. It criticizes the local politicians, the president, the military and the whole establishment. He cynically sings, "let me laugh ~~in order~~ ^{so as} not to cry". ("DEJENME REIR PARA NO LLORAR")

End of Part One - MAESTRA VIDA

Courtesy of Paula C and maestravida.com

January 7, 1970

It is Sunday, at dawn. MANUELA, amongst the shadows, painfully walks towards the church. With a premonition of ~~an~~ impending doom in her heart, she prays everyday for the salvation of her beloved CARMELO, and of RAMIRO, the son who has been jailed. With resigned fatalism, she clutches her rosary beads. A prayer clings ^{to} ~~from~~ her lips. ~~Surrounded~~ Surrounded by ghosts reminiscent of her yesterdays, the old one, ("LA DOÑA"), passes by.

February 14, 1970

MANUELA dies.

May 15, 1970

In the midst of his ~~solitude~~ solitude, old CARMELO ("EL VIEJO DaSILVA") complains of the "hypocritical respect" being bestowed upon him. Not even the son, in whom he has placed so ^{much} ~~many~~ hope, visits him. Alone in his room, CARMELO reminisces ^{about the} ~~his~~ days when he was known as "the prince of the hustlers", of the enormous love he shared with MANUELA, and of the life they managed to have together, against all forecasts. The next day he is found dead sitting in his chair, clutching the ring he had given MANUELA at the party on the day of their union, and, that she had returned to him before her death as a keepsake of her undying love.

May 17, 1970

In the house of Quique Quiñones, son of the late Vavá Quiñones, the surviving members of the old gang of the "alley of the bored people", their descendants, and other residents of the ~~barrio~~ arrive to pay ^{their} respects to the deceased CARMELO at his wake ("EL VELORIO"). They offer their assistance and sympathy to his son RAMIRO, who after a long hiatus, has returned to the ~~barrio~~ ^{as a result of} the death of his father. During the reunion, they drink, exchange stories, and play a song that the late CARMELO liked to whistle. Later, the wake (which has evolved into a party-like atmosphere) adjourns, and they all go home.

May 19, 1970

RAMIRO, who had been hopelessly drunk at CARMELO's wake the night before, arrives late and still hungover ~~at~~ the real estate offices where he works as a messenger. When he asks for permission to leave early to witness his father's burial, his boss, smelling the alcohol in his breath, doesn't believe him, and refuses to grant his request. Thus, RAMIRO arrives late to ~~the funeral~~ ^{his father's funeral.} Later, facing his father's grave, RAMIRO is suddenly confronted by his own mortality, and by the excessive selfishness he has displayed towards his family, friends, and everyone around him. Troubled by past memories, RAMIRO's guilt engulfs him, and the terrible reality of the moment finally makes him breakdown and cry. For the first time he admits to himself the pain he feels ~~at~~ ^{losing} ~~his~~ his parents, MANUELA AND CARMELO.

May 20, 1970

Late at night, RAMIRO DaSILVA returns to his old neighborhood and walks ~~his~~^{its} streets, visiting his past. The "alley of the bored people" no longer exists. In ~~the~~^{its} place, on one side is a housing project, on the other side, a circus-like tent used by local politicians and religious preachers to spread their convictions.

RAMIRO, depressed by the recent events, finds the only untouched corner of the original "alley of the bored people" where his father celebrated his first birthday, 48 years earlier. As though ~~he~~ reborn, RAMIRO sings of his life experiences to the sleeping ~~barrio~~ ("MAESTRA VIDA"). As he finally returns to the motorcycle that will take him back to the squatter-filled area called "The Progress" ("El Progreso"), where he currently lives, RAMIRO listens to a chorus of drunk, off-key voices coming from a christening party, singing "hay que vivir" ("in spite of all, life must go on"). RAMIRO looks around once more, puts his helmet on, climbs onto his motorcycle, and leaves - never to return.

End of MAESTRA VIDA

Final Note: RAMIRO DaSILVA and his common-law wife, VIRGINIA OCASIO, lost their lives on Tuesday, July 4th, 1973. They were shot to death by police who were evicting squatters in the area known as "El Progreso", on ~~the~~ property of Mr. ~~So~~ and ~~So~~, ~~a~~ lawyer, ~~a~~ senator, ~~a~~ millionaire, and ~~a~~ member of the political party "steal as much as you can", currently in control of the country.

They are survived by their sons Rafael, Naima, and Pablo, and ~~a~~^{by} hunger, misery, and hope.

MANUELA (A woman's name)

Manuela, what a woman, my friends!

Big eyes, long black hair, and a figure like a guitar,

One cannot help but to admire her in amazement.

Manuela, oh the world's prettiest ~~girl~~ ^{woman}!

Flirtatious laughter, a small waist, and legs that are
almost criminal.

What a sensuous creature!

Her name is repeated everywhere,

Men ~~lose~~ ^{lose} their concentration when confronted by such perfection.

Other women look at her with envy, and ask themselves "What does
she have that I don't?"

Yet, despite their jealousy, Manuela keeps moving, like a panther,
leaving the neighborhood littered with the bits and pieces of
illusions of men who have loved her.

Because, you see, Manuela has no worries.

Youth pulsates within her.

She responds only to life;

she follows no schedules, has no obligations; no sorrows.

Every man that crosses her path sighs with admiration,

"What I wouldn't give to possess that Manuela!"

CARMELO (A man's name)

Carmelo is the best of them all.

Respected, like some great doctor.

The man, with the key to open any alley;

owner of the cornerstones, the voice of the "barrio".

He is a hard working tailor in a shop owned by Mr. Garcia,

called "The Hope",

and, like everyone else he dreams of having Manuela one day;

Even on hot Saturdays, ~~amidst~~ ^{amidst} the noise of the dominoes and

drinking, the curses, OH GOD! -

It is Manuela who is always the subject after the arguments ~~over~~ ^{over} politics,

boxing and dice have been settled.

COMO TÚ (Like You)

No one can love like you, no one can laugh like you, no one can feel like you;

No one can live like you, no one knows about love like you;

No one knows how to laugh like you, no one can speak like you can;

No one can make me be alive like you, no one can kiss like (we think) you can.

CARMELO - continued

And finally, the day came ~~when~~ ^{when} Carmelo DaSilva faced Manuela;

and we held our breath when ~~he~~ ^{he} declared his love to her.

And the word spread that, after much pleading, Manuela finally accepted, but

made it very clear that as a condition of her acceptance, she demands

respect from him first -

otherwise, they may as well say goodbye to each other at this very moment.

YO SOY UNA MUJER (I am a woman)

I am a woman, and not just any woman, and I have feelings.

I am valuable, and although many men do not seem to understand it,

I am a person, not an inferior.

I am a woman, and I am proud to say that I have reason to exist.

If I give you the ~~best~~^{best} years of my life, my love and my efforts,
you will have to do the same for me.

Carmelo sings: "Manuela, you are my treasure";

Manuela sings: "Only thus will you get me pleasure".

Carmelo: "Here is my love",

Manuela: "And here is mine",

Both: "My dear one. One way, hand in hand, together,"

Carmelo: "always"....

Manuela: "till the end"....

Both: "Together. Not even in death will I stop loving you";

Carmelo: "Always like this".

Manuela: "Till the end",

Both: "My dear one".

Courtesy of Paula C and maestraivida.com

EL NACIMIENTO DE RAMIRO (The birth of Ramiro)

My kid is born, my baby, OUR baby! Who would have believed it?
After hanging out on street corners, after chasing so many women,
and after getting myself into a thousand troubles,
Who would have said I would turn out to be a father!?
My kid is born, my baby, OUR baby, can you believe this?
I'm afraid to touch him, I'm afraid I may hurt him,
I'm so excited I could end up dropping him and,
in this world, gentlemen, there isn't a prettier baby!

And you Manuela, how's my beautiful queen?
The doctor says you've lost alot of blood;
I came running from the alley and brought Vavá, Foncho, and Franklyn
in case you needed a transfusion;
Me, I can't give any blood right now 'cause I drank thirty beers
and a couple of bottles of rum - out of my emotion for this moment -
after so much waiting!

Oh, and when he grows up what will he be, what, WHAT?
Will he become a baseball player, like Aparicio, or Clemente, an
idol ~~for~~ his people, and a glory to the sport?
Or maybe he'll become a genius in mathematics, an inventor, a great
singer, or - who knows?, maybe even a doctor!

Just promise me one thing Lord; Promise me that he won't turn into
a sissy, or a thief.

I admit that I have some spots on my record, but I'll try my hardest
to give him all the chances that I never had.

My kid is born, my baby, OUR baby, GOOD GOD!!, who would have believed it!

My blood pressure is high? Oh, come off it doc!

It was nine months of anguish and waiting and finally it's over;

today is THE day! Today the show starts - AT LAST!

My baby is born! Open the balconies, drink all the rum you want,

break anything you feel like breaking; I'm paying today!

Courtesy of Paula C and maestraivida.com

DEJENME REIR, (PARA NO LLORAR) - (Let me laugh, ~~is~~^{so as} not to cry)

Ever since Ramiro was born, the situation gets worse every day.

I try, and I try, and I can't manage to make enough for a decent living.

Ever since Ramiro was born, I told Manuela "Things are really a mess".

I don't see a way, ~~is~~ a solution to fix the situation for the poor,

with all these crooked politicians hypnotizing us with their tall tales and statistics, saying "Inflation is the one to blame".

Ever since Ramiro was born, things have ~~been~~^{taken} a turn for the worse.

I struggle, and struggle, and nothing gets any better, and in the meantime, time keeps rolling on.

Every four years they show up, kissing ~~lips~~^{babies} in the neighborhood; promising, smiling, saying hellos

looking for the vote, (and stealing)

looking for the vote, (and cheating).

And when the elections are over, and the selections are announced, you always find the same faces, (ha, ha, ha) Surprise!

And those who voted in high hopes, will continue to hang from the rack of life;

And those who voted indifferently, (Jesus), that group thinks that miraculously all wrongs will be righted, (Amen); and, in the meantime folks, the poor wait, and wait, and wait.

And what about the politician? (I'm saying) WHAT ABOUT THE POLITICIAN?

He's looking for the vote, (and stealing);

He's looking for the vote, (and cheating).

And the new president, and the new cabinet, they all make a thousand statements;

the press then proceeds to give a thousand versions of events that create further confusion among the citizens;

and all of a sudden, rumors and gossip start to fly all over the place -

"So and so is going to be ousted; there's going to be a change in the government",

and then, Boom!, the pink balloon bursts, and the country is in shock

^{from} the news that there is a march through the ^{city's} ~~main~~ streets -

"We are the ones who will fix this sad state of affairs", A Coup D' Etat is decreed by the generals.

"Hurray for me; Hurray for me; not for you, but Hurray for me," they chant, -
and me, and me!" (A fight to see who sits on the chair and breaks it).

Ever since Ramiro was born, no one visits the tailor shop,
'cause people would rather save money than dress up.

Hey, I know you're better off ugly than starved, but still,
understanding this doesn't give me any work;

And so, the only thing for me to do is to go down, BUT TRYING!

And as time goes by, I sing so it won't hurt so much -

I laugh ^{so as} ~~in order~~ not to cry.

Let me laugh so as not to cry.

Let me sing so the pain doesn't hurt as much..

MANUELA, despues (La Doña) (Manuela, later - The Old Lady)

Over seventy years of age, hunched by time, the old lady walks.

She's headed towards the church.

Hung over her hands are her rosary beads, and from her lips comes the prayer that she repeats day in and day out: "Help me Virgin Mary in ~~this~~^{these}, our last years!"

Yesterday is behind her. The dream of eternal youth has disappeared from her skin, and tonight Manuela goes by, pain all around her!

And with the dawn, also comes her sorrow.

She hurries, dressed in black. I watch in silence, thinking of things I'm still hoping for.

And, as I hear her prayer, I feel something very strange happen inside me;

"Help me Virgin Mary, in ~~this~~^{these}, our last years".....

II
PART

Courtesy of Paula Candamastrova.com

CARMELO, despues (El Viejo DaSilva) (Carmelo, later - The Old DaSilva)

"How old the sun has become". - The Old Man DaSilva was thinking;
Leaning back in his armchair, half awake, half dreaming.

contemplating memories amid the tobacco smoke, in his humble room,
filled with cheap furnishings.

"I hear nothing from Ramiro, I haven't even received a letter,
and although ^{I understand} it is the destiny of all of our children to leave,^{us}
I don't know how they ^{totally} forget all the sacrifices we have made for them.

They go on looking in the streets for new ways, while the old
people have nothing.

There is no respect or rights for people when they get old.

They deal with us from a distance, with hypocritical respect!

They don't want to give me any work, and I don't want to beg for ^{my supper.}

And with only Social Security to live on - I just can't make it.

I'm supposed to take care of myself - and within these four walls,

I feel death coming."

"How old the afternoon is". - The Old Man DaSilva was thinking;

Looking at the pigeons from the bench in the park.

"At times it is necessary for me to ask for help to stand up,
and although I'm ashamed, I thank them and walk away.

And every dog I meet in the street barks at me.

Manuela, if you were alive maybe there would be ~~a~~ hope,

I'm alone my love! and I'm so tired of waiting.

It's that I'm alone, and SO tired of waiting!"

"How old the night is!" - The Old Man DaSilva was thinking.

And he clutched the ring that Manuela had left ~~behind~~ him,

There they found him sitting in his armchair - Dead.

Among the dust and memories, and the butterflies of the past.

And although they tried very hard, his hand would not open.

God bless Carmelo, and Manuela, and all the old people.

Courtesy of Paula C and maestraivida.com

EL ENTIERRO (The Burial)

The boss refused his request, and the day seemed longer to Ramiro.

By the time he got there, earth already covered the coffin.

Old Carmelo DaSilva left the same absurd way in which he arrived;

asking a thousand questions, and finding no answers, and now,

today, as Ramiro stands in front of his father's grave,

he hears old, sad voices murmur - "We're sorry".

But he is unable to fully understand what they really meant;

his anger prevented him from fully grasping what it was that

they really wanted.

And the sky melted with the holy ground.

The afternoon skated through the cement graves.

He wasn't aware of how long he cried ~~there~~.

Before Ramiro's departure from the cemetery, the priest and a
gravedigger came over to him, smiling, and asked -

"Excuse me sir, but, who's paying for this funeral?"

Night arrived suddenly, as if fleeing, and in the old neighborhood, ^{they lit holes}
{everyone was lighting their shanties.} _{in it.}

Ramiro went to sleep dreaming of new cars, and of old ^{breasts.} (flames.)

Chorus: Oh father and mother!

If I ^{you were} ~~had~~ you alive,

how many things I would say to you;

how many things would change around here!

MAESTRA VIDA (Life The Teacher)

I went to your school, without even knowing why I went.
In your halls I found a thousand ways and paths to take;
And I understand alot, and then again, I understand nothing at all.
Life - the teacher, my friend - You give, you take, you take, you give!

I pass through days of sun, of light, and also of heavy rains;
I pass through cloudy nights, and clear nights of bright moons.
I pass by being positive, I pass by being negative,
and I have my doubts,
and between the laughter and the sorrows,
I look for the ~~rhymes~~ and reasons.

rhymes

Chorus

Life, the teacher of injustices and of justices,
of kindness, and of malice.

Yet, I don't reach an understanding of you!

Life, the teacher who sometimes forgives, and other times gives no pardons;
I'm searching between the hours for the mirror of time,
in order to see your sentiments, and thus understand you.

And I saw the thorns, and the roses,

I saw the death of loved ones, I saw beauty.

I was a witness to wickedness, and to war.

I saw the good of this land, and I saw the hunger, and the misery;

And between the drama and the comedy,

I ~~was~~ ^{continued} ~~between~~ between the water and the fire.

And I remember God first only in the moment when I feel death coming,
or at times when I am hopelessly sad,
and never if I am happy.

The gratitude doesn't last long for that which we have in our hands,
~~as soon as the pain ends~~

one forgets the suffering.

And I have friends, acquaintances, and enemies;

lovers that have wanted me, and others who refuse to see me.

I have stood in front of death, and in it's eyes I saw sincerity,

and with fear inside of me, I finally ~~understood what you want of me~~
^{learned to love you.}

And now ^{I know} nothing is certain,
(already) everything is ^{a passenger} ~~passing by~~ -

death is the messenger that comes in the last hour,
and ^{time does not stop} you have no time - not for love, not for money.

Life, the teacher, I ^{leave you I'm chasing time} ~~am going to follow the time closely,~~

to see if I ^{can} find answers before the hour of my death,
^{although for now,} ~~because~~ I am ^{to} ~~now~~ resigning myself ^{to} this fatal reality.

- Life - the teacher, my friend - You give, you take, you take, you give! -
or something like ^{this.} ~~this.~~