

"An incredible and thrilling story of a young woman in search of her family's legacy... reminded me of my own journey discovering my family's legacy from the war."

### - RETIRED MAJOR GENERAL ANTONIO TAGUBA

US Army and Chairman of The Filipino Veterans Recognition and Education Project

"Terrific! Does a fantastic job of making a great story out of a complicated history."

#### - DR. COLLEEN WOODS

Associate Professor of History, University of Maryland and author of Freedom Incorporated: Anticommunism and Philippine Independence in the Age of Decolonization

"Really informative and inspirational at the same time.

Awesome stuff!"

#### - DR. CHRISTOPHER CAPOZZOLA

Professor of History, Massachusetts Institute of Technology and author of Bound by War: How the United States and the Philippines Built America's First Pacific Century

"A very compelling story that reminded me of my own Filipino heritage, and how my parents raised and instilled upon me its strong culture, traditions, values, and to be a proud Filipina."

#### - MS. MARIE BLANCO

Former Chief of Staff to Senator Daniel Inouye and Vice Chairman of The Filipino
Veterans Recognition and Education Project

# SHADOW OF GIANTS

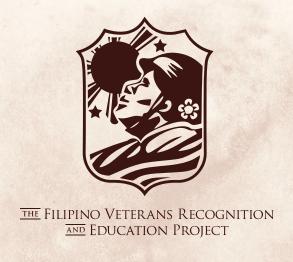
MATTHEW FISHER

MUSTBATED BY
ARIA VILLAFRANÇA

MATTHEW FISHER
AND ARIA VILLAFRANGA

COTOES BY
RICHARD MERCADO

JUNE DAO, NUR SCHUBA, AND KIMBERLY WANG



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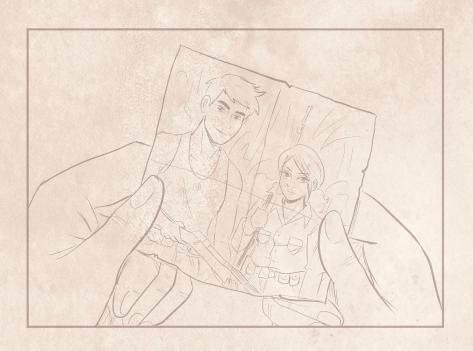
This book is a work of fiction. Several scenes were inspired by the experiences of Filipino veterans, but any resemblance to actual events or persons, living or dead, is entirely coincidental. The Japanese Occupation of the Philippines during WWII and Filipino Veterans' decades-long struggle for recognition and benefits, however, were very real.

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ISBN 979-8-9891878-0-5
First Edition, 2023
Cover Design by Aria Villafranca and Richard Mercado
Interior Book Design by Aria Villafranca and Richard Mercado
Book layout by Richard Mercado

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## CHAPTER 1

# LOLA'S LETTERS

















































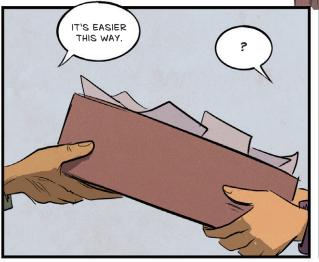






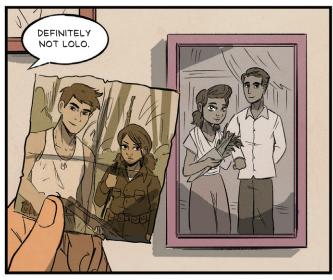


HERE. SEE FOR YOURSELF.















































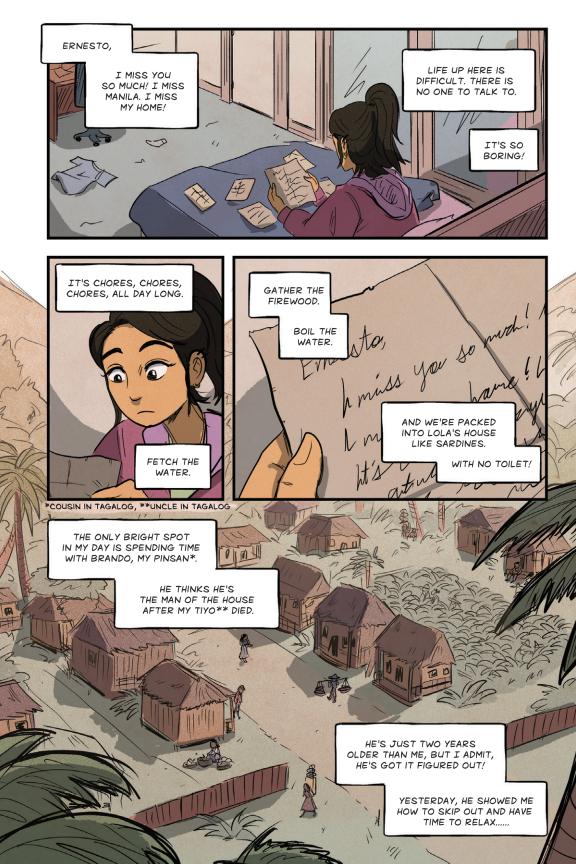


























































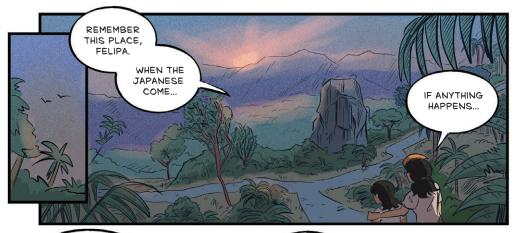




















# CHAPTER 2 VILLAGE LIFE































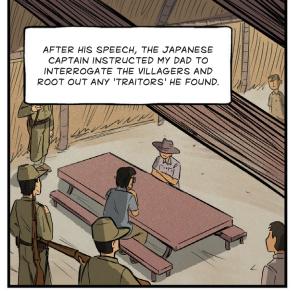


















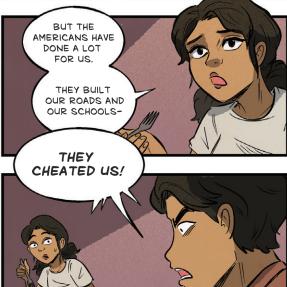










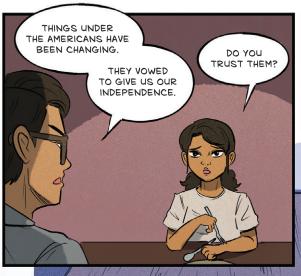














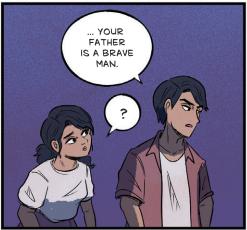


















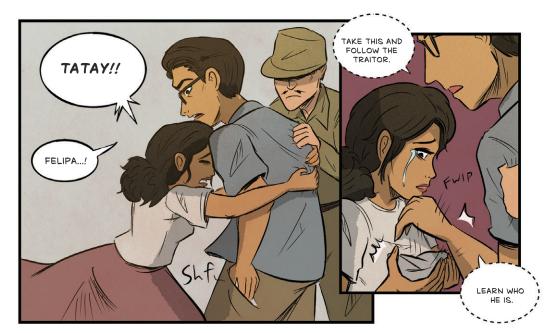


































YOU MUST

LEAVE. TONIGHT.

GO TO THE

GUERRILLAS.



JOIN THE

RESISTANCE.

THEN I WILL NOT

REPORT YOU TO THEM.











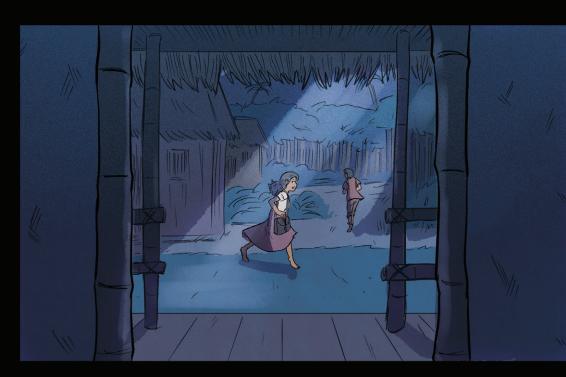


























































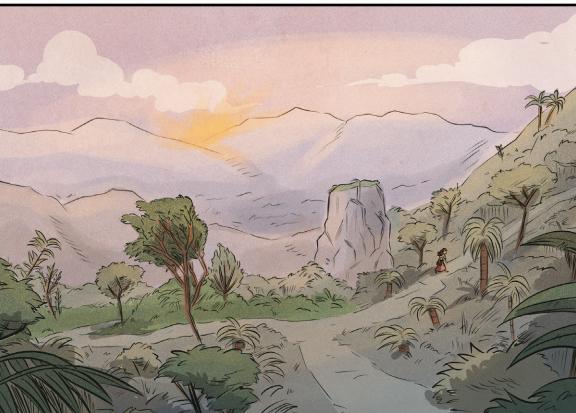




















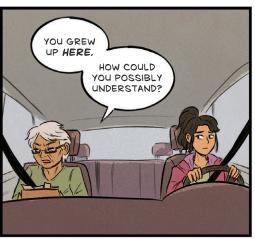




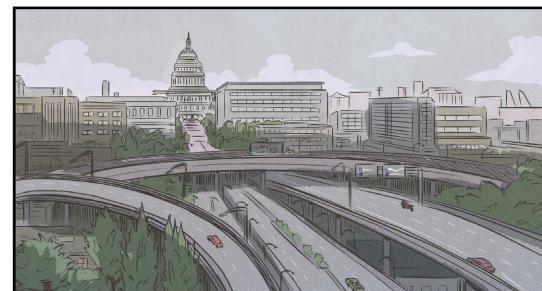


























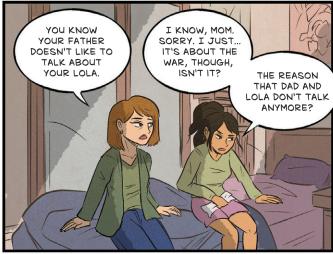














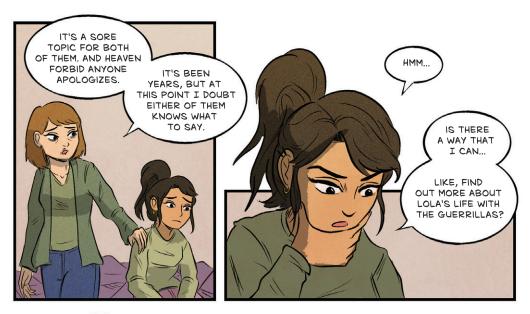




























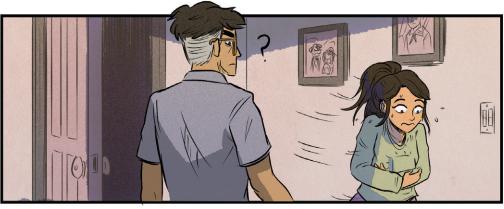
















CHAPTER 3

## THE GUERRILLAS



























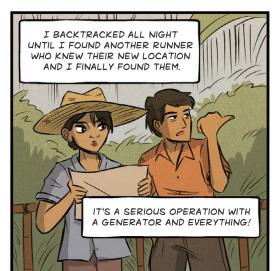


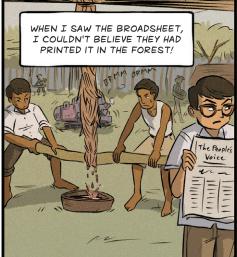










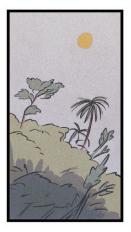


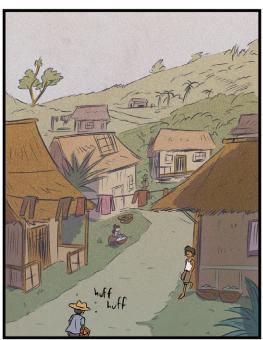














































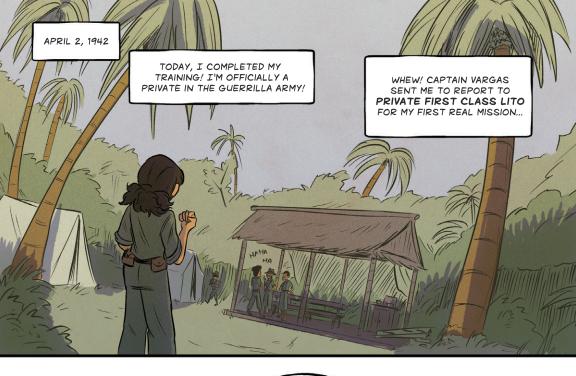




















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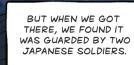
ON OUR WAY, JUAN
EXPLAINED THAT OUR
MISSION WAS TO
LIBERATE SOME
STORES OF U.S. ARMY
MEDICAL SUPPLIES..

... FROM AN
UNATTENDED
JAPANESE
SUPPLY DEPOT
NEARBY.































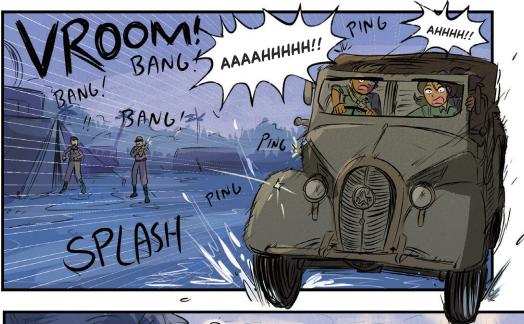


























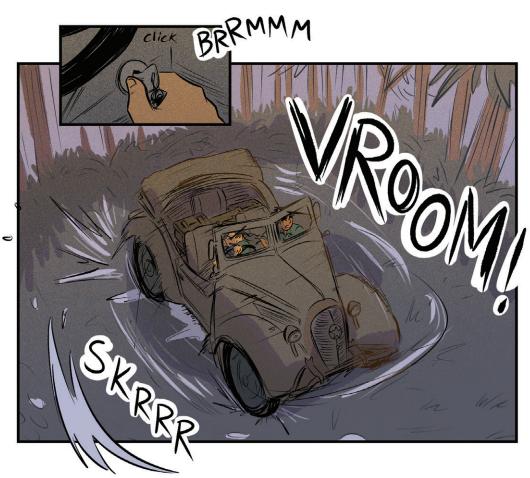












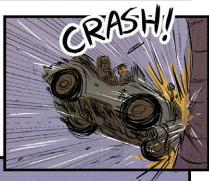




































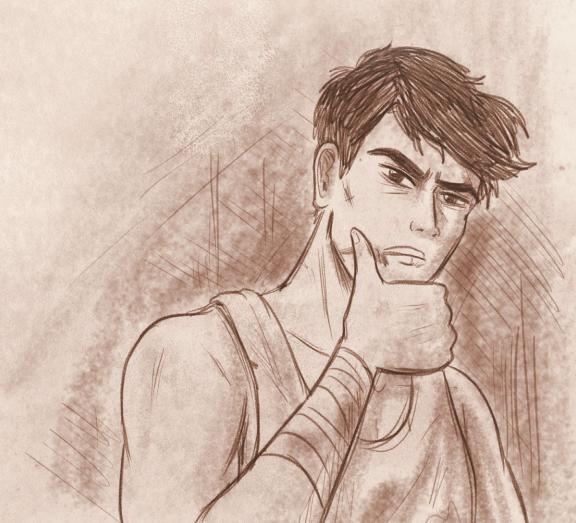








## CHAPTER 4 ANDRES





































































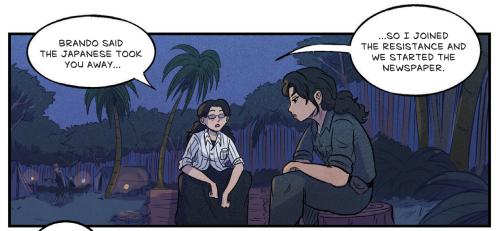










































































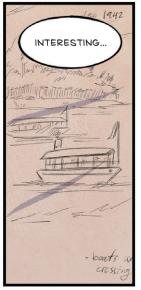
CHAPTER 5

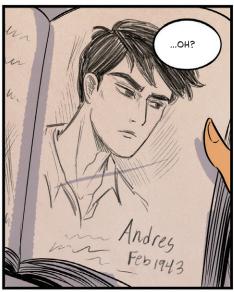
## ON THE RIVER







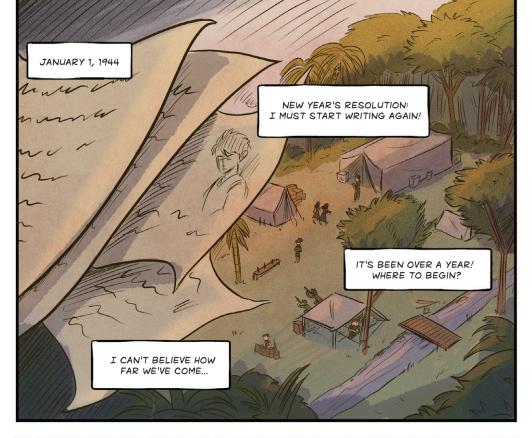


























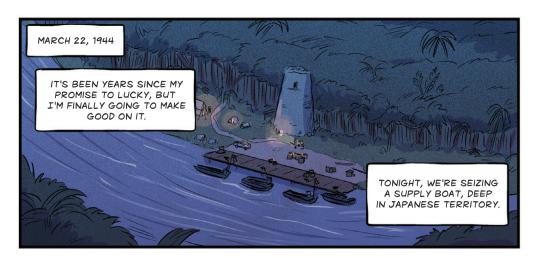


AFTER ALL OUR HARD WORK,

WE'RE FINALLY READY.









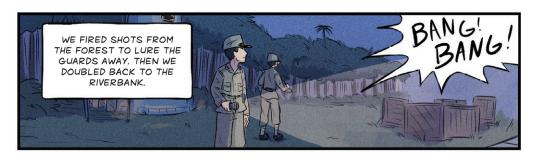


























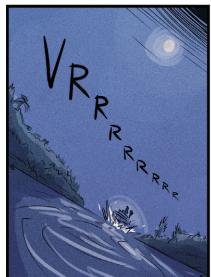


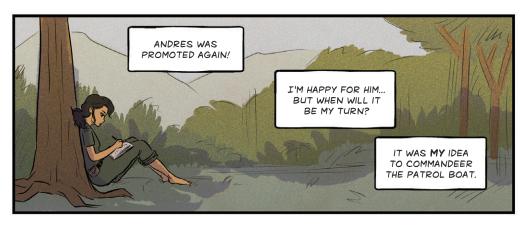














































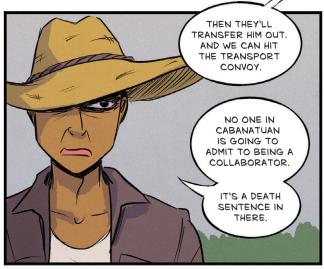


























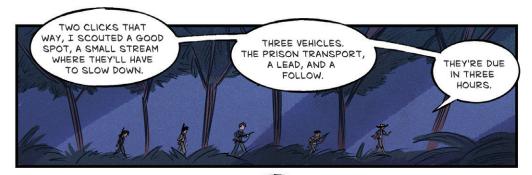




CHAPTER 6

## PRISON BREAK













YOU AND HARRY CIRCLE BACK HERE AS SOON AS IT'S SAFE.



























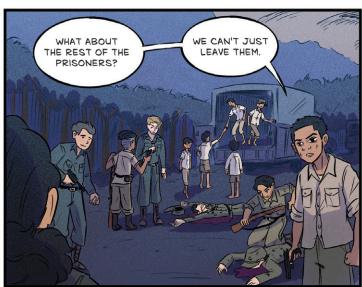
































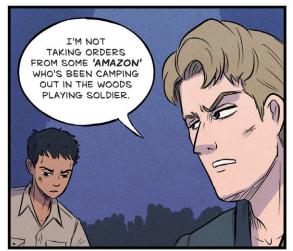






























I'M HEADING TO THE RENDEZVOUS, FELIX? YOU?

















































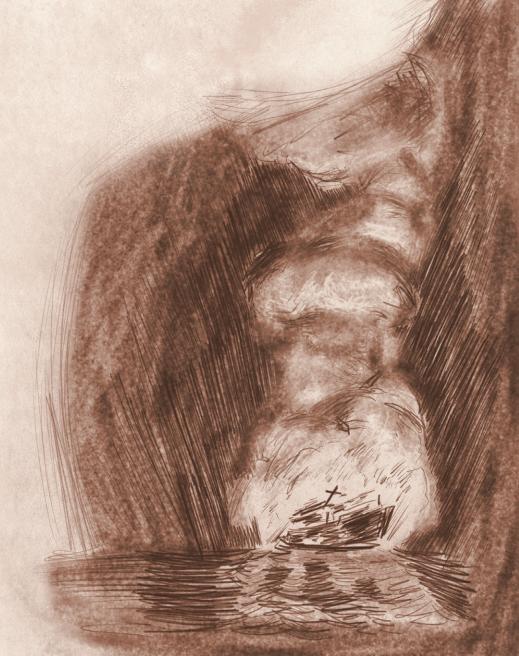






CHAPTER 7

## DEMOLITION



















































































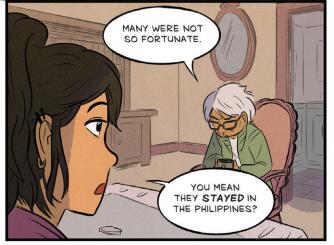




























































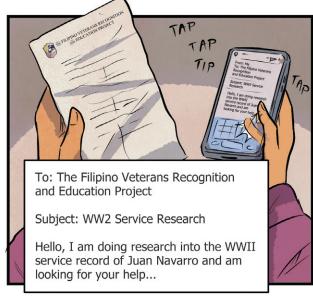


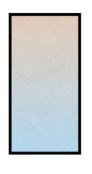






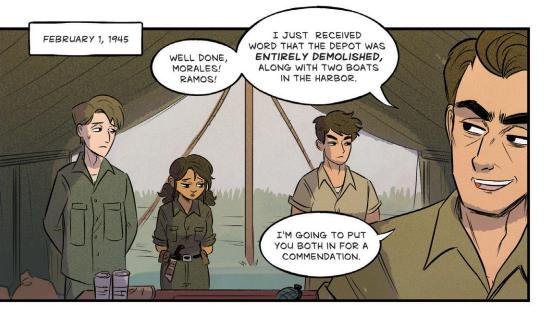










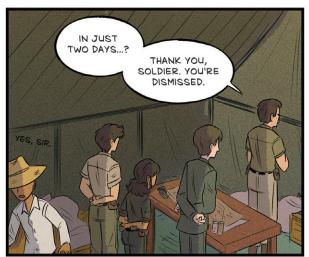
























































































\*"DARLING, WHO'S THERE?" IN TAGALOG

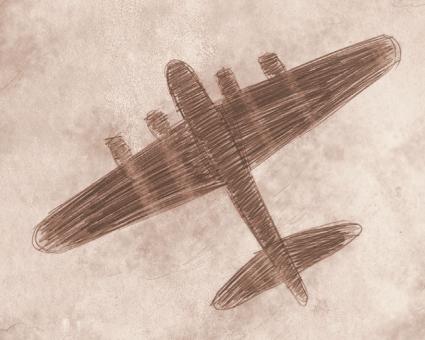


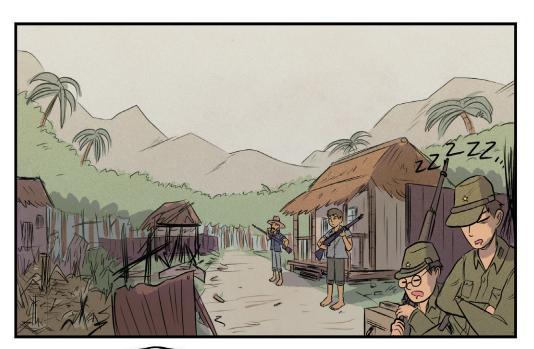




CHAPTER 8

## THE FINAL MISSION



























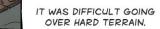












































































































































































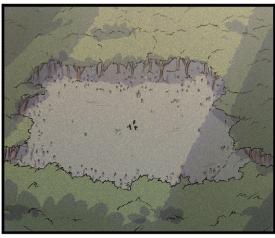
















































































CHAPTER 9

## FELIPA AND BRANDO













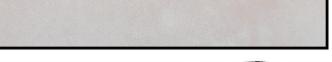
























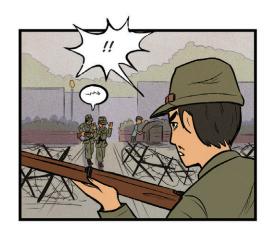
















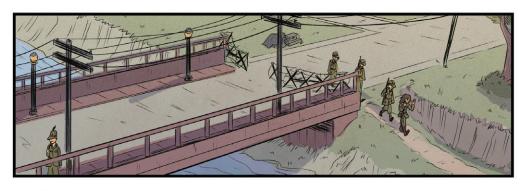
































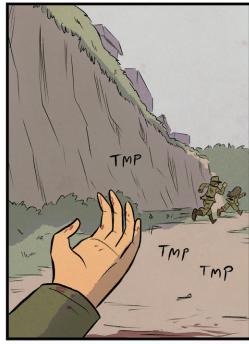
































































































































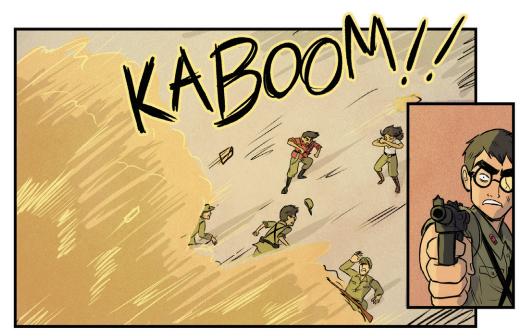


































CHAPTER 10

## GONSTANGE SPEAKS













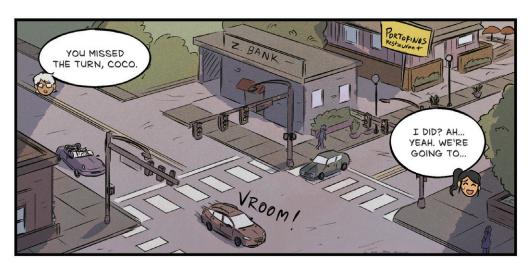




















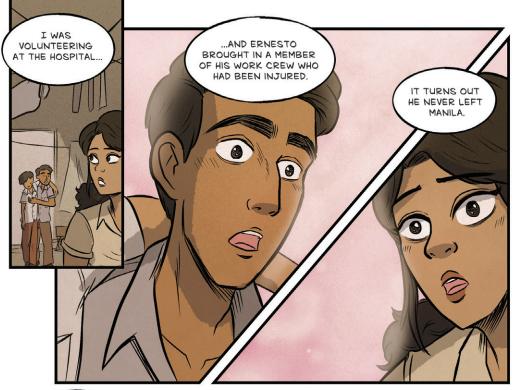
























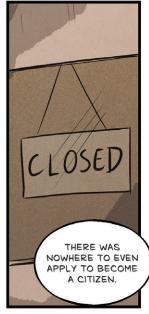




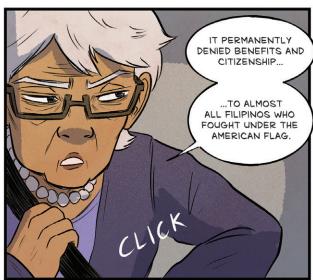












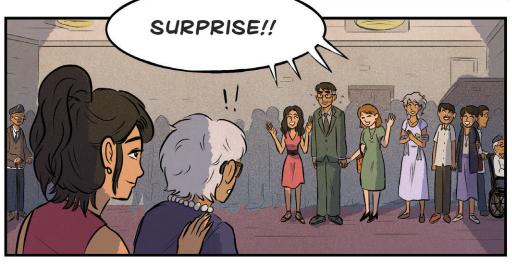


















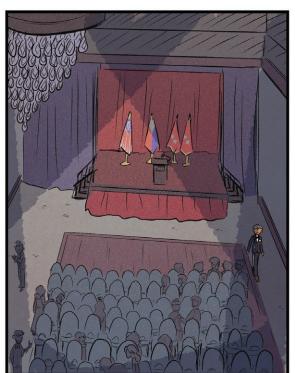






































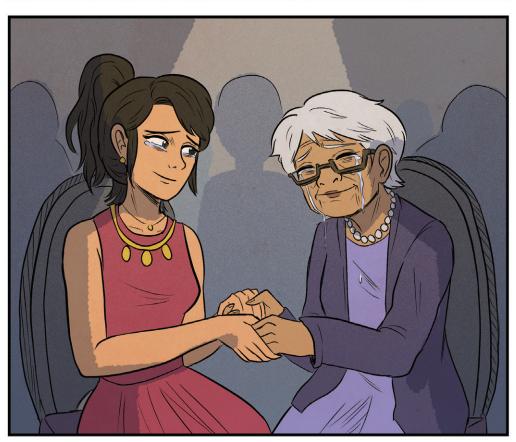


























































## ABOUT FILVETREP

The Filipino Veterans Recognition and Education Project (www. filvetrep.org) is an IRS approved 501(c)(3) tax exempt, community based, all volunteer, charitable and educational organization. It is committed to educating and raising awareness of the national recognition of Filipino and American World War II soldiers across the United States and the Philippines for their wartime service to the U.S. and the Philippines. The United States promised these brave men and women American citizenship and Veterans' Administration benefits, and yet they were denied these benefits after the war and for over seven decades. Many died without receiving any recognition from the U.S. government for their sacrifice.

## ABOUT DUTY TO COUNTRY

**Duty to Country (www.dutytocountry.org)** is an online educational project produced by FilVetREP. The project is a state-of-the-art, interactive, web-based educational program accessible and free to the public. It provides compelling historical accounts, oral histories and stories, primary sources, lesson plans and teaching activities, and artifacts depicting the legacy of the Filipinos and Americans who fought in World War II in the Philippines. In 2017, Filipino Veterans of World War II received the Congressional Gold Medal in recognition of their service during the war. The Duty to Country Education Project was started in 2019 to educate the public about the story of Filipinos and American veterans of WWII and the decades-long civil rights struggle to gain recognition and benefits for Filipino veterans denied them after the war.

# INSPIRED BY TRUE EVENTS

**IN THE SHADOW OF GIANTS** is a work of historical fiction born out of an interest in bringing a complex and layered history to life in a single visual, dramatic story. It is a history that has been overlooked in popular accounts of WWII, but that veterans and their families helped to keep alive. The events depicted, including the Japanese Occupation of the Philippines during WWII, and Filipino Veterans' decades-long struggle for recognition and benefits, however, were very real. In many cases, the actual history and wartime experiences of Filipino Veterans were even more astonishing than those experienced by Felipa and her crew.

The following pages showcase just a handful of the scenes in the book that were inspired by true events. Watch animations, oral histories, and archival footage on **www.dutytocountry.org** to learn about the true events that inspired scenes from **IN THE SHADOW OF GIANTS.** 



#### WOMEN OF THE RESISTANCE

The Philippines was exceptional for the number of women who served in leadership and combat positions in WWII. **REMEDIOS GOMEZ-PARAISO**, aka **KUMANDER LIWAYWAY**, was known for her prowess in battle and for putting on red lipstick before a fight. She had a squadron of 200 men under her command. Check out the animation **Women of the Resistance**.

### CARMEN ROSALES

**CARMEN ROSALES** was another famous woman of the resistance. Known throughout the country as a movie star before the war, Rosales took up arms with the guerrillas when her husband was killed. After the war, she starred in the film **Guerilyera** in which she portrays herself in a dramatization of her wartime service.





#### **UNDER THE HOOD**

Many Filipinos were coerced into becoming collaborators, working alongside the Japanese to root out guerrillas. This scene is inspired by the oral history of Rudy Panaglima. As a young guerrilla, Rudy was tasked to follow the traitor into the forest to catch him taking off his hood. Check out the animation *Under the Hood*, based on his oral history testimony, or Rudy's oral history.

#### THE LIBERATOR

This encounter is based on the oral histories of Sonny Izon and Derek Ledda. Sonny's father edited **The Liberator**, an underground newspaper printed in the jungle. Derek's father smuggled **The Liberator** in a breadbasket on his



bicycle, risking capture as he passed through Japanese checkpoints. Check out the animation *The Liberator* or Derek's and Sonny's oral histories.







### **CRASHING THE JEEP**

Felipa's escapade with a jeep was drawn from the experiences of veteran Ladines. Ciriaco Ciriaco was a teenager in the guerrillas when his unit got a hold of two U.S. jeeps. A squad mate convinced an uncertain Ciriaco to teach him how to drive. Although the jeep flipped and was totaled, both young men escaped unharmed. Check out Ciriaco's oral history.





#### **ESCAPE FROM BATAAN**

After the fall of U.S. forces at Bataan, tens of thousands of USAFFE servicemen were forced into a brutal and lethal death march to prison camps. This daring escape is based on the oral history of Pamela Tarectecan, who tells of her grandfather's experiences as a medic in WWII. To learn more, check out the animation *Escape from Bataan*.



#### **GUERRILLA GUNBOATS**

Guerrillas in the Philippines were known for their ingenuity. Wendel Fertig commanded an American-Filipino guerrilla force with a fleet of gunboats armored in scavenged metal with machine guns from downed airplanes. One of his ships even shot down Japanese airplanes! Check out *Guerrillas* in *Chapter 2* of the *Under One Flag* online exhibition.

#### SURRENDER PARTY

Towards the end of the war, Japanese soldiers began to surrender. Ciriaco Ladines was a young member of his guerrilla band when they were ordered to receive the surrender of a small group of Japanese soldiers. What started as a few dozen Japanese swelled to over 3,000. Like Felipa, Ciriaco finds mercy for his enemy where others could not. Check out Ciriaco Ladines' oral history.



## READING QUESTIONS

**IN THE SHADOW OF GIANTS** contains many themes, among them courage and compromise, divided loyalties and trust, forgiveness, and fairness. These questions are designed to help you unpack the events of the graphic novel, as well as to consider these larger ideas.

As you read, compare the events of the novel to the real-life people and incidents they are based on (see *Inspired by True Events* for a look at the inspirations behind Felipa's story). Consider also how the illustrator's choices help tell the story by shifting perspectives, showing the passage of time, and depicting inner conflict and turmoil.

The biggest questions the graphic novel raises are ones of justice and equity. What were Filipinos fighting for during the war? What were veterans owed for their service? What promises did the U.S. make, and how did they break them after the war? How did veterans seek justice? Why is it important to tell this story, and how do books like **IN THE SHADOW OF GIANTS** ensure this history isn't forgotten?

- What is Felipa's life like before the war? How is it transformed by the arrival of the Japanese? What change would you find most difficult to adjust to?
- 2. What prompts Felipa and her father to join the guerrillas? Why do you think other villagers don't join?
- **3.** How do Felipa's responsibilities change during her time with the guerrillas? How does she herself change during the war?
- **4.** How is Felipa's experience as a guerrilla shaped by her being female? How does it affect her ability to be recognized and receive benefits after the war?
- **5.** What role does the newspaper play in the fight against the Japanese, according to Felipa's mother? What evidence is there that publishing the newspaper is of high importance to the guerrillas?
- 6. How many different acts of resistance can you find in the story? What kinds of risks do these acts incur? What non-combat actions are depicted, and how do they contribute to the war against the Japanese?
- **7.** Who are the different kinds of people in the guerilla movement? What motivates them to join? How do their experiences differ?

- **8.** Felipa is strong-minded and tough; some might say stubborn. What effect does Brando's betrayal have on shaping her outlook? How does her perspective on Brando and other collaborators change during the war, and why?
- 9. Brando is a complicated character. Can you name an example where he aids the guerrillas? And another where he aids the Japanese? Why do you think Brando chooses the path of smuggler and collaborator? How does his position help and hurt the guerrillas during the war?
- 10. There are several examples of forgiveness and mercy in Felipa's story. Which one stood out to you the most? Many collaborators in the Filipinos were forgiven, if not given official amnesty, after the war. Why do you think that was the case?
- 11. What happened to Lucky after the war? Why was he not able to obtain the medical care that other veterans received?
- 12. Why is the war a sore point for Felipa and Constance's father?
- **13.** What do you think motivates Constance to start digging through service files and other wartime records collected by her family?
- 14. What hopes and expectations did Filipino soldiers have of the United States during the war? After the war, how did the U.S. betray its promises to soldiers like Felipa, Lucky, and so many others? How did those broken promises affect veterans and their families?
- **15.** How did Constance's father and grandmother, along with other veterans and their descendants, fight for recognition and benefits? What did they accomplish?
- **16.** Based on what happened in the story, and perhaps drawing on what else you know about the Filipino veterans movement, do you think justice was achieved for Filipino veterans? Why or why not?
- 17. What is the Congressional Gold Medal? Why does it matter for veterans and their families? Are there other ways Filipino veterans should or could be recognized?
- **18.** The Rescission Act is still the law of the U.S. How has it affected veterans and their descendants? What, if anything, should be done to rectify it?
- **19.** What details does the illustrator include to show the characters' inner conflicts? How does the illustrator depict the passage of time? What panel from the graphic novel is your favorite, and why?
- **20.** Felipa's story is drawn from the experiences of many real-life Filipino guerrillas; you can find a list of references in *Inspired by True Events*. Which scene makes you most curious to learn more, and why?

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Foremost we would like to thank the **Filipino Veterans of WWII**, their families, and their supporters, for their service, dedication, and sacrifice.

This book would not be possible if not for the leadership and generous support of FilVetREP, most notably Major General Antonio Taguba (retired), Marie Blanco, and Jonathan Melegrito. We thank you for giving us an opportunity to tell such an amazing and important story. Next, we would like to thank our scholars, Dr. Colleen Woods, Associate Professor of History, University of Maryland, and Dr. Christopher Capozzola, Professor of History, Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Both provided invaluable insight into this history and exhibited a talent (rare in historians) of supporting us as we walked the line of plausibility in bringing this story to life. Any factual errors or inconsistencies were entirely of our own making.

Thanks to **Leah Nahmias** for contributing our reading questions. Thanks to **Noel "Sonny" Izon** and **Dr. Seth Watkins** for their support for FilVetREP. Special thanks to **Dr. Sam Malissa** for his assistance in the Japanese translation. Thanks to everyone at **Night Kitchen**, particularly **Ethan Miller** for his meticulous research and **Dan Knapp** for design input.

Matthew would also like to thank his family for their support and enthusiasm. Aria would like to thank her mom for supporting her and her art career, the Utot Komiks Collective for all their encouragement throughout, Dani and Quita Chuatico for helping revise, Kim Wang, June Dao, and Nur Schuba for their invaluable assistance in providing character flats, and Richard Mercado for being an amazing and steadfast colorist.



## ABOUT THE CREATORS



## ARIA VILLAFRANCA

**Aria Villafranca** is a Filipino-American comic artist and editor from Ewa Beach, Hawai'i. She received her BFA in Drawing and Painting from the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa in 2017, as well as an MFA in Sequential Art from the Savannah College of Art and Design in 2021. **Aria** is based in

Savannah, GA, where she enjoys drinking coffee, walking her dog, and winding down from making and editing comics by reading comics. She also enjoys rollerskating, reading about history and politics, fiddling on the piano, and generally living in the world. Visit her online at www. ariavillafranca.com.



## MATTHEW FISHER

Matthew Fisher is the principal of the digital storytelling studio Night Kitchen Interactive, where he writes and produces interpretative and educational experiences for art museums, cultural organizations, and science centers. He was inspired to write this story soon after he began capturing

oral histories of Filipino Veterans for **FilVetREP** in 2018. Together they went on to produce the **Duty to Country** education project. **Matthew** lives with his wife and son in Maine, where he enjoys baking bread, getting out on the ocean, and reading aloud more children's books than he can remember.

When Constance discovers an **old photo of her grandmother as a teenager**, she is blown away. It's not just the shock of seeing that **her lola** was a badass resistance fighter in World War II. What really intrigues Constance is the mysterious handsome man standing beside her. Solving this mystery **transports her back to life in the Philippines under the Japanese Occupation** and reveals the lasting impact of the war and its aftermath on her family and many Filipino Americans today.

Inspired by true events and the experiences of veterans and their descendants, IN THE SHADOW OF GIANTS is a historical fiction with real-world significance.

"... Reminded me of my own journey discovering my family's legacy from the war."

- RETIRED MAJOR GENERAL ANTONIO TAGUBA
US Army and Chairman of The Filipino Veterans Recognition and Education Project

"Terrific. Does a fantastic job."

- DR. COLLEEN WOODS

Associate Professor of History, University of Maryland

"Really informative and inspirational."

- DR. CHRISTOPHER CAPOZZOLA

TITIE

Professor of History, Massachusetts Institute of Technology



THE FILIPING VETERANS RECOGNITION

AND EDUCATION PROJECT

NIGHT KITCHEN INTERACTIVE Digital ISBN: 979-8-9891878-1-2 Cover Art by Aria Villafranca Cover Design by Richard Mercado

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