



THE OLD NOTEBOOK

by: **MARILOU D. REMOT**

In the quaint town of Vigan, known for its Spanish colonial and Asian architecture, lived a sixth-grader named Antonio. He was an average student who often found himself pondering in class. One rainy afternoon, while cleaning his cluttered room, he stumbled upon an old notebook hidden in a box. The pages had a yellow hue, were dusty, and looked like they hadn't been touched in years.

Antonio's curiosity led him to flip the notebook open and discover that it belonged to his late grandfather, who was a well-known mambabalagtas, a traditional Filipino poet. Each page was filled with beautiful Balagtas verses and detailed drawings of local festivals like the Panagbenga and Pahiyas. As he flipped through the pages, he felt a deep connection to his grandfather, whom he had never met. Inspired by the subtle lines and clear words, Antonio decided to expand his knowledge by writing and drawing in his own notebook.

Day by day, Antonio poured his thoughts and creativity onto each page of the notebook. He wrote stories, sketched characters with vivid expressions, and even made poems about his daily life, often including the rich culture and traditions of the Philippines. His confidence grew, and he began sharing his work with his family, classmates, and teachers. To his surprise, they were impressed and encouraged him to continue.

One day, his teacher announced that there was a school-wide writing contest focusing on cultural heritage. Antonio hesitated at first but decided to submit one of his stories, which was mixed with his grandfather's traditional Balagtas style and modern storytelling. He worked hard polishing his piece until he was pleased with the work. On the day of the contest, Antonio felt a mixture of excitement and nervousness. When the winners were announced, he couldn't believe his ears—he had won first place!

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This writing contest gave Antonio young age a turn after he won it. It paved the way for the enhancement of his self-esteem and further appreciation for Filipino cultural treasures. His story was aired in the school magazine and pamphlet, and people from this community began admiring his writing skills.

The mayor of Vigan asked Antonio to recite the poem that he had memorized and written for the contest at the town fiesta, which showcased its people's culture. On stage, he fell back to his feet, rooted in the place where he came from. In a very calm manner, he began to read his piece to everyone's attention, thus leading the viewers by following the old tradition, but at the same time, paying credit to his grandfather while also implementing his ideas.

Years later, becoming a writer and illustrator, Antonio wrote and illustrated his first book. Antonio had dedicated the book to his late grandfather, whom he credits for his old notebook, which sparked a lifelong passion.

Thus, in the town of Vigan, the story of a young boy named Antonio and his mambabalagtas grandfather continues to thrive through the curiosity, creativity, and pride of the Filipinos.

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