

Friday, December 30, 2015
Philip Kan Gotanda

Curtain Raiser for Remember the I-Hotel
Running time: ~7 minutes.

SPEEDY DADO

Small table, a chair. Photograph, pen, lay on the table.

MAN walks on stage in shadows. We hear the *echoes* of a roaring boxing crowd. Lights up. Sound ends. Revealing a stylishly dressed man of the 1930's with an angled fedora. Does a few quick boxing moves --

Clicks on the first slide:

An ancient Fresco showing two young naked men in a fighting pose --

Speedy Dado: This is where it all began. A Minoan fresco. 4000 years ago. Two guys. Beautiful young men. Naked. Squaring off. Getting ready to beat each other to a bloody pulp.

Looks back at the slide --

Or an offer to Embrace?

Shrugs, clicks the next slide --

Slide of I-Hotel in the 20's.

The International Hotel, more commonly known as the I-Hotel. Built after the Great San Francisco Earthquake of 1906.

Slide of a young Speedy Dado --

Speedy Dado: 1906, the same year, I was born in Manila Metro. Diosdado B. Posadas. A few years after the Philippine American War. *Digmaang Pilipino-Americano*. 1899–1902. A fight between the First Philippine Republic and the United States. Guess who won?

After which the US occupied the Philippines. Got rid of much of the native culture, introduced much venereal disease. And boxing, 'Keep your dukes up' - standing straight up like Jim Corbett. (demonstrates) We, the locals, added *Arnis de Mano*, the Luzon name - our own form of self-defense, a constant moving of hands and bodies bobbing and weaving -- (demonstrating). We were good. Exciting. Colorful. Pilipino boxers became a popular import to the States – Dencio Cabanella, Pancho Villa, Small Montana, Ceferino Garcia - *The Mosquito Fleet*. And me. Speedy Dado.

This was the late 20's. This was at the same time the US was bringing in Pilipino men for cheap labor. And the beautiful Pilipinas?

Slide of pretty Pilipino women --

A Pilipino WOMAN walks up to Speedy. They flirt for a moment, have an exchange in Tagalog. Then she exits, blowing him a kiss. Speedy sighs as he watches her leave --

Speedy Dado: Not allowed entry. Just the 'small brown boys', to do the dirty work. We were all alone. You could not start a family. And California anti-miscegenation laws wouldn't allow you to marry outside your race. "Race preservation" was big in California in the 1930s.

Slides of Pilipino American life in SF Manilatown --

The West Coast. Seattle to San Diego - full of young, good looking, sharp dressing Pilipino males looking for action. For a better life. For just a taste of whatever that big American dream was supposed to be...

Slide of the I-Hotel in the 1930's --

You lived where you could. Where they let you. The I-Hotel.

Slide of quote projected --

“This land is too valuable to permit poor people to live on it.”

-- Former Director of the SF Redevelopment Agency.

Sees something. Indicates a quiet sign with his fingers to his lips. Sneaks up, bends down and scoops something up. Holds it, its wings flapping. He laughs, then releases it. He watches it fly away. The *sound of flapping wings* --

Speedy Dado: Boxers have quick reflexes --

Holds up his hands --

Speedy Dado: Good hands --

Blonde WOMAN appears. Stands in a pool of light.

Mae West: -- Yes, you do.

Speedy Dado: Did I tell you I knew Mae West? I chased some guy into her limousine --

Slide of Mae West attending a Dado fight.

Speedy runs up to her --

Mae West: Oh my...

Mae West looks him over. Dado preens.

Mae West: Is that a gun in your pocket or you just happy to see me?

Speedy Dado: I reached into my coat pocket and --

-- pulls out a *gun*.

Mae West: I'm talkin' 'bout the other one.

Speedy Dado: That one I only take out when I mean to use it.

Speedy and Mae West look each other over.

Speedy Dado: I became her driver. I drove her all over the place. I drove her places she'd never been.

Mae West exits --

Another slide of the I-Hotel --

I visited the I-Hotel a few times when I was in Frisco --

He sits down and signs his autograph to a *photograph* of himself.

In the play, Nado makes reference to a signed photo of Speedy Dado hanging on the wall. He got it for Vicente by writing Speedy. Had to track him down by asking his mother, who knew his grandmother, on and on – Metro Manila.

People send me letters. I get requests for signed pictures.

Series of slides showing Speedy in various boxing poses --

Look at that, look at that guy. Now that's a beautiful man.

Getting up --

Not as much now since I retired back to the Philippines. I live with my mother and grandmother. Quiet life. Stay out of the public eye. Not sure how they found me.

Slide of the I-Hotel in the 1970's --

Speedy: "This property is too valuable for poor people to live here". Justin Hermann said that. The former executive director of the San Francisco Redevelopment Agency. He was talking about the I-Hotel.

Thinking. Clicks on the slide of the two young Minoan men.

Field laborers. Day workers. Dish washers. Bus boys...

Studies the slide.

Maybe they weren't fighting...

Fade to black –

End of Curtain Raiser.