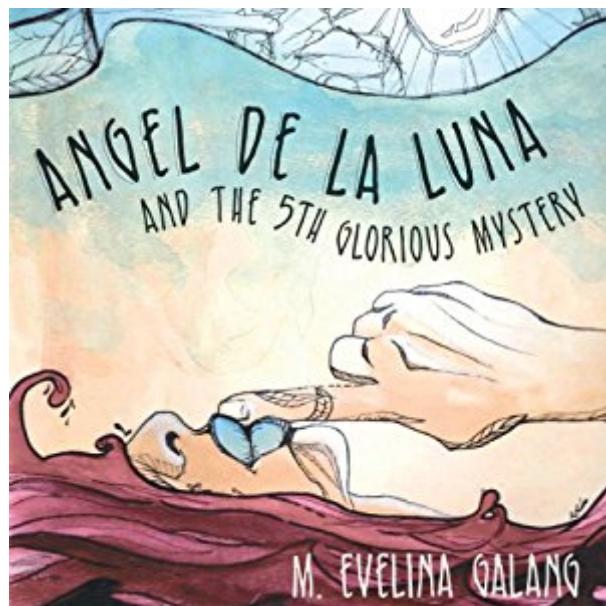


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Angel De La Luna: And The 5th Glorious Mystery



Synopsis

Angel has just lost her father, and her mother's grief means she might as well be gone, too. She's got a sister and a grandmother to look out for, and a burgeoning consciousness of the unfairness in the world - in her family, her community, and her country. Set against the backdrop of the second Philippine People Power Revolution in 2001, the contemporary struggles of surviving Filipina "Comfort Women" of WWII, and a cold winter's season in the city of Chicago is the story of a daughter coming of age, coming to forgiveness, and learning to move past the chaos of grief to survive.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Angel is an engaging story of a young Filipina immigrating in the wake of her father's death. The dialect lacks any key or glossary which some readers are likely to find frustrating. But the tale nonetheless sweeps up the reader. There are several scenes that especially draw strong emotional responses from the reader and flaunt Galang's ability to compose. The tale reads swiftly and ends with little resolution of the plot. Overall, Angel is a masterful tale of a girl becoming a young woman in a world she doesn't understand and well-deserving of a read. Or two.

Amazing story. Difficult subject matter, but then war is terrible. I was not aware of the level of suffering the Philippines experienced during the war and the long lasting political effects.

Within just a few pages I suspected that this was a book that would challenge me and make me

work “ make me think. Prior to reading this book I had very little knowledge about the history of the Philippines and the novel covers a lot of historical territory. The bigger issue initially though was language. The majority of the text is in English, but Galang’s characters code switch between English and Tagalog and there are no italics to be found. Yes, the meaning was often clear through context, but it was challenging to read with that bit of uncertainty. Looking to the back of the book, I found that there was no glossary, but there was a rather thorough explanation for that choice “In Context (Or, Why There is No Glossary) [...]- I’ve read articles about authors using or not using italics and including or omitting glossaries and she makes a very strong case for writing in this style. The reader who doesn’t know Tagalog may choose to use the Internet and find the definitions or just fall into the story and go with the flow. I really wanted to know what all of the words meant, but a conversation between Angel and her father convinced me to skip the definitions. He was explaining about how to listen to the blues, “The trick, Angel, is not to think. Just feel it.” There is plenty to feel in this story. Angel and her family are dealing with the unexpected loss of her father. In the aftermath, her mother pulls away from the family and adds one more loss. The book moves on to other issues though as Angel becomes increasingly involved with politics. She protests the corruption in the government in an effort to overturn the presidency. This section of the book was a little harder for me to follow. I wasn’t always certain what exactly was being protested and why, but even so, Galang’s story pulled me along. Angel, her sister Lila and her grandmother also visit elderly comfort women. These are women who were taken by Japanese soldiers during WWII and were used as sex slaves. The amazing strength of the women in this book and the stories of the comfort women blazed through any confusion I may have had on my first read through. The beginning of the story centers on Angel’s immediate family and those closest to her. The second portion expands out into the larger community and the final section pulls back in again to a more intimate view of Angel’s inner conflicts. It’s in the final portion that the book felt the most like a young adult novel. In spite of the teen main character, it felt more like an adult novel in the beginning. I still can’t place my finger on why that was true for me, but maybe it was that there was so much that was unfamiliar in that part of the book. Also, when Angel was in the Philippines, she was attending a private Catholic school for girls and that was only part-time. Most of her time was taken up with work, family duties, and politics. She was dealing with adult situations as she stood in for her absent mother. The final section takes place in Chicago with her mother and around high school and her new friends. There was revolution in her political acts in the Philippines, but there almost seems to be more revolution here as she settles into her new situation in the U.S. and certainly in her interactions with her mother. This is a

story of self-discovery, family, hope and healing. There is a lot of pain and heartbreak within these pages, but there is also strength and beauty. Galang's writing is lyrical and rich "something to savor. Recommendation: Angel de la Luna and the 5th Glorious Mystery was on the 2014 Amelia Bloomer Project List and I am not surprised. This is a book not to be missed. Get it soon. It may require a little extra effort for a reader without the background knowledge or Tagalog language skills, but any effort is totally worth it. Angel and the women in her life will be with me for a long time to come. Review originally posted at [...]/review...

I am only in the third chapter, but I found myself sobbing last night out of joy, relief, sorrow and simply being moved by Evelina's words and storytelling. I felt I was mourning with the family in the book, mourning my young self and how I always felt like I was stupid and a slow reader compared to American children. Being an immigrant, writing and reading has been a challenge for me though I consider myself a writer and artist now. This book in just a few chapters already captures the memory and understanding I lost after leaving the Philippines, it connects me to a motherland I can't currently return to while undocumented, it perfectly captures the religious and folklore practices and beliefs in our culture and the use of Tagalog are all woven carefully and thoughtfully in a way that moves the reader, especially if they are Filipin@ and speak Tagalog. I feel extremely nostalgic for a home I don't even remember, but am living vicariously through Evelina's writing.

The year is 2000. Fourteen-year-old Angel de la Luna loves her family. She tells the story of how she looks forward to the day when they have enough money to leave Manila and go to America in search of a better life. Unfortunately, Papang, Angel's father, has been missing for two weeks. In their search for him, Angel and her family discover that he is dead. The happiness Angel once had is replaced by anger towards God. Because of depression, Inay, her mother, feels powerless to be the source of strength and comfort Angel so desperately needs during this difficult transition in her life. This only fuels Angel's anger, especially since she thinks that Inay doesn't love her. As a result, she begins to distance herself from her mother. To make matters worse, Angel is furious when Inay suddenly decides that it is time to leave for America, expecting Angel to come with her. "Remember the dream?" Inay says. Angel replies with, "But Papang is gone. How can we live the dream? So instead of heading out to Chicago with Inay, Angel adamantly decides to stay back with her grandmother and little sister in the only home that she knows, Manila. The plot, up to this point, is not as cut and dry as it appears, and it is not even near the middle of the book since there, indeed, is more to come! Galang masterfully weaves Filipino history

-- from World War II (WWII) to the People Power Revolutions -- with the rising tension between Angel and Inay. And of course, this all comes at one of the most inconvenient times in Angel's life: puberty. Fortunately over the next two years, Mother Mary, of St. Magdalena's school where Angel and her little sister attend, opens Angel's eyes to her country's politically unstable history by introducing her to new words, "words I am going to have to look up -- feudalism, proletarian internationalism, imperialism, bourgeois populism, and pertinent people, such as the aged Comfort Women, as well as farmers and other workers who are imprisoned for protesting against the Philippine government. Obviously, Mother Mary, who is no stranger to the horrors of WWII, is also an avid protester against injustice. Angel's eye-opening knowledge eventually leads her to protest in the People Power Revolution to overthrow President Estrada in 2001. Though her involvement with the Revolution provides meaning and purpose in her life for the first time in the year since Papang's death, it is short lived when she receives word from Inay that provisions have been made for her to move to Chicago. Galang's meticulous portrayal of Angel's immigrant experience in America is nothing but poignant. Now educated in the truth about how the American government exploited her native country, Angel's view of "the country of her parents' dreams," is tainted. In addition to entering foreign territory, Angel feels as if she's been placed into a foreign family: Inay has since remarried and now has a toddler. It doesn't help that there is a language barrier at school, since the students' spoken English flows much faster than what Angel had been taught in Manila. Between unresolved conflict with Inay and trying to fit in at school, Angel keeps to herself until she hears the words of Dr. Martin Luther King's "I Have A Dream" speech during Black History month. His words not only encourage Angel to speak up about injustice, but also help her realize that she has the skills to start a protest in her new school. This, of course, gets her in trouble at school, which only compounds her conflict at home. Desperately seeking answers to her plethora of questions about Inay, Angel begins corresponding with her grandmother, the only person who she feels understands her. Indeed, her grandmother has answers and solutions; however, it is up to Angel to seek them out. Angel de la Luna and the 5th Glorious Mystery is not just a fictional story about a Filipino girl's search for identity. Angel, in many respects, reflects the humanity in all of us. Interspersed with strong language and adult themes, I consider this a heavy read since it is filled with the hard realities of life and deeply profound thoughts, which I recommend for mature young adult readers only and, definitely, not for the faint of heart. Engaging and visceral, yet compassionate and heartwarming, these are but a few choice words to describe Galang's third in a collection of fabulous books focused on Filipina American issues. Originally posted on Teenreads.com Anita Lock,

Book Reviewer

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