

Short Story

LINA saw the crowd at the gate. Already she could feel the breathing heat and humid perspiration smelling of earth and sunshine. There would be a rush when she opens the door, a usual occurrence during enrollment days.

There was the hush and hurried greetings as the young teacher elbowed her way through the crowd. Twice Lina bumped herself against people but it was a pleasant morning and she was sweetly smiling at them. These must be guardians of her would-be pupils. It would be a good start to cultivate their friendship and cooperation from the very beginning.

Lina took blank sheets of rolled paper from her leather bag and listed late comers. This done, she wiped beads of perspiration on her temple and viewed her lists approvingly. The minimum requirement was almost reached.

She rose to seat her new pupils, assigning them seats according to height, small children in front. These took quite a time.

Just then a little boy came in and walked toward her.

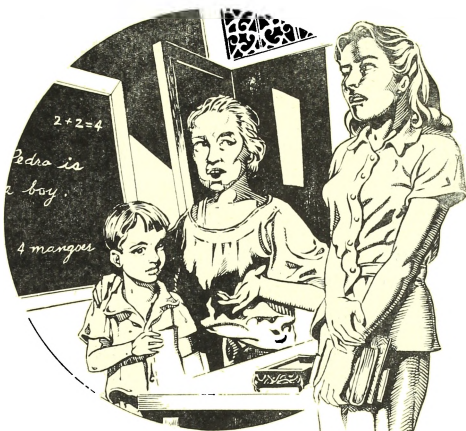
"Your name, my child?" Lina asked.

"My name is Julito Cruz," was the boy's ready response. From the extended hand she received a carefully folded piece of crisp paper. His birth certificate.

"You are Bertha's son, Julito?" She beamed at the child. Already she was overwhelmed with joy. The boy nodded timidly. The curly hair and eyelashes! The same mouth and forehead.

"Oh, you must not be ashamed of me. I will soon be your teacher. Your mother is with you, Julito, isn't she?"

But Julito was unresponsive. She glanced around scanning the faces of the crowd waiting outside. She smiled down at her but her friendliness did not arouse Julito's interest a bit. He was sad and tears began to roll on his cheeks from his large eyes. He did not look at her anymore. Lina was confused. So she guided him to his seat. This was his first day, she thought. He would surely get over his shyness in due time.



FATE

by

Maria Estrella
Villarosa

(Home Economics)

Later, she told her new pupil to go home and come back in the afternoon when she noticed that no more were coming to enroll. Alone she was in a pensive mood. The prospect of meeting Bertha gave her vigor and expectations. Once again she felt young blood surge through her veins, and her mind retraced the obscured years of childhood she thought she already had lost in a misty portion of her memory.

She would be seeing Bertha

again after all the years. Not the joy and gameness as a childhood playmate, perhaps, but she would be reminding Bertha which was her of all the pleasant memories of her own youth. A panorama of the past unfolded in his memory of years. Sometimes of an early morning hour, just when the enlivening rays of sunrise began changing the earth's pale streams into gold, Bertha would come to call Lina.

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"Lina, please come down. Let's meet the fishermen. Mother wants me to buy some **bindingen**."

Hand in hand the two either run or skip spritlike toward the beach, with the lightness and agility characteristic of vibrant adolescence.

Once on the seashore they would eagerly watch the approach of bancas, getting a better view of an exquisite picture.

After making their purchase, the little girls would still have time to wander on the beach. To feel the salty sand under their feet. The sun, a golden yellow, still was low in the eastern sky. And they would hang their baskets on a branch and race the length of the beach to the old schoolhouse. Scattered all over the beach were pretty, lovely, sea things. Shells aplenty. Shells horny and smooth. The sparkling sea water, shiny stones, and the deep blue sea.

Bertha used to be her classmate in the old days. There was that particular afternoon of long ago when darkness pervaded the mossy walls of the old schoolhouse. It was raining hard outside. The pupils submitted to the sullen atmosphere by crumpling their arms over their breasts, bringing their legs together to preserve so much body heat as possible. The door slammed open letting in a cold rush of wind. From the door emerged the dripping figure of Bertha.

"Bertha!" their teacher exclaimed. "How could you come in this rain?" But Bertha was unmoving. Tiny streams of rain water rolled from her bare legs on to the concrete pavement.

"Go back home, Bertha, and change into something dry and warm. Come back when the rain stops."

For her part, Lina understood the gnawing bitterness in Bertha's little heart at that moment. She knew how poor Bertha was. In their house, there was almost nothing she could wear to school. Poverty stalked in their dilapidated dwelling. In such a home Bertha lived a part of a large but indigent family.

Other girls were buoyant and gay, Bertha was seldom that. It was Lina who gave her gaiety and laughter with her companionship.

One day Lina learned her family was returning to the City. With much effort she told Bertha her sad story. "You will soon forget me,

Lina, because I am poor," Bertha sobbed.

"No, Bertha, no." I won't forget you. Never. Please don't cry anymore, Lina said as she embraced her passionately.

The last time she saw her, Bertha was standing near the bend, the wind blowing her curly black hair. Her tear-stained face was grave with sorrow.

There were times when Lina would dream of her. In her dreams Bertha would smile at her and showed her slimy, black-dotted jelly fish. How Lina would struggle to reach for Bertha's extended hand, only to awaken, that she had slipped from her clutches as slippery as the jelly fish she held.

From an adjoining room a key was turned. The clacking gave Lina a start: Other teachers were going home. Slowly she made for the door and left for lunch.

That afternoon, a senile looking woman came — leading Julito into the room.

"Good afternoon, Miss Rico," the woman greeted Lina. "Julito is my grandson. I'm taking care of him . . ." She faltered, searching her mind for the next words. Faint ripples twitched around her mouth, while her frail body shook momentarily.

"He was my son. The boy's father was my son. Honest, Miss, Bertha's husband didn't kill that man! I knew it all along. We can not fight a case in court without money. Cold money!"

"Bertha is dead, Miss. Poor child! A broken heart . . ."

Lina was not prepared for it. It struck her hard. To her the world seemed to have snapped from its orbit. Suddenly she gained composure.

"I'm sorry," Lina sighed, her voice sounded strange.

THE MOVIE MANIAC . . .

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I'm sure she won't forget or neglect to mention the boys who unflinchingly put up their feet on the back of the seat in front of them; or the inveterate chain smoker. Of the men, the most enthusiastic and omnipresent is the whistler or the clapper or shouter who whistles, shouts, or claps indignantly when the reel suddenly stops. Brother,

WHAT DO YOU THINK? . . .

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in divorcing education from religion because if the former aims at man's physical or intellectual perfection the latter tends to enrich and harness his spiritual potentialities. Education and religion as one will undoubtedly cure man of the moral astigmatism which has disquieted him in the past.

● **Joe Ricamora** — College of Liberal Arts, says: I think its time we clamp down on the superfluity of youth by instituting religious education. It will do a lot towards tempering a youth gone wild in regard to sensualism and lempérance. A generation drunk



Joe Ricamora

with inordinate desires for material things but famished of God is a generation gone to the dogs. Well, before we are dumped into the kennel and while we can still help not joining the canines, let us do away with our sluggish systems and join hands in sweeping the cobwebs of indifference so that we may be nearer to God and farther from the dogs.

what a racket these guys create when the screen goes blank all of a sudden.

At the end of the film some guys inevitably turn around to look for some friends, stand up, or give forth clearly audible call whistles. This is called The Search. Others neglect to bring their own matches or lighters to ignite their butts. And these are the Pests.

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