



Chapter three

PLEASANT DREAMS

THAT night of Good Friday, Tonio slept little. His light slumber was nothing but a series of dreams. He dreamed of strange beings that lived in mountain caves, in hollows of trees, and in great mounds which people of book-learning called ant hills. He dreamed of being befriended by a tiny man who talked and behaved like an adult but who looked like a chubby and dimpled newly-born baby. He recalled the stories his *Lolo* had told him about the *tianak*, a mischievous creature of the woods whose amusement was to waylay people. The *tianak* would lead a person to take a long roundabout path which led him nowhere. At sundown, he would find himself at the place where he started, hungry and worn-out. It was only then that he would realize his having been the victim of a *tianak's* trick. As a climax to his exasperation, he would hear the loud burst of laughter of the highly-amused *tianak*. If he was wise, he would remove his clothes and put them on again wrong side out. He would then easily find the right path homeward.

But in Tonio's dream, the *tianak* played him no tricks. On the contrary, it led him through the shady woods, along a laughing brook on both sides of which bloomed lovely flowers, and on into a long underground road which opened into a

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large orchard of different kinds of fruit trees. At the middle of the orchard rose a stately mansion like one of those he saw not far from the Philippine General Hospital. While the ones he saw in his waking hours looked forbidding, so much so that he never dared knock at their gates for alms, the one he saw in his dreams appeared inviting. There were no "Beware of the Dog" signs to drive him away. On the porch stood a beautiful woman with outstretched arms as if ready to embrace him. He, who had never tasted a mother's love and care, suddenly felt a great longing to throw himself into the woman's bosom. Just as he was about to rush toward the woman, he felt being held back and pulled away. He heard his name called and, opening eyes, he saw his *Lolo* seated beside him.

"O *Lolo*," he exclaimed in a reproachful tone, "why did you awaken me? I wanted to know her."

"What are you talking about? Have you been dreaming, my boy?"

"Yes, *Lolo*, it was a dream. But she cannot be a dream, so beautiful and good. Love and kindness shone on her face. And she seemed to want me so much."

Tonio related to the bewildered old man his long and pleasant dream. He sighed sadly as he ended it with a description of the woman of the mansion.

The old man remained silent for a while. Then he said slowly and reverently,

"God will perhaps lead you to your mother before long."

"Isn't my mother dead?" Tonio gasped.

"I don't believe so. Do not ask any more questions, my boy. When you are older, I'll tell you the story of your life. Meanwhile, we shall await the will of heaven. Run to the bakery now and get some hot rolls."

Always quick to obey, Tonio got up and ran all the way to the bakery. But the picture of the woman he had seen in his dream seemed to be always before him. He felt sure he would recognize her if he met her in life.

At breakfast the old man announced his plan of staying at home, that day being Saturday before Easter.

"We must rest today," *Lolo* said. "God is still dead."

"Do you mean He is really dead today, *Lolo*?"

Before the old man could answer, they heard the peals of the distant bells. The old man stood up, held Tonio under the chin and on the nape of the neck, and lifted him from the floor.

The astonished boy blurted, "Why, why, *Lolo*."

"Never mind now. I'll tell you by and by. Run to the yard and shake the coconut palm."

Tonio rushed to the ground and shook the palm with all his might. When the sounds of the bells died out, the old man called out for Tonio to stop and come up.

"Now, *Lolo*," Tonio begged breathlessly.

The old man spoke in a solemn voice,

"Lifting a child at the ringing of the bells on *Sabado de Gloria* will hasten his growth. Shaking a tree will cause it to bear fruit plentifully."

Tonio listened with awe. His *Lolo's* stories and teachings would seem queer to others, but to him they were wise. He, therefore, not only loved the old man, but respected and revered him.

After mopping the bamboo floor of their *kubo*, Tonio got the fishing basket from the hook on the bamboo beam and asked his *Lolo* to let him go to the beach for mussels.

"We can have boiled *paros* for lunch. The rest can be salted and sold." Tonio said as he prepared to go.



"Be careful, *hijo*, not to go to the deep water. And do not get yourself into trouble with the beach ragamuffins."

Tonio slung the basket on his waist and left.

(What was the story of Tonio's life? Would he ever find his mother? Do you know what exciting lives children of the sea have? Read the succeeding chapters of "The Adventures of a Beggar Boy" in the coming numbers of *The Young Citizen*.)