

## The Clever Dog

By VICENTA A. LACSAMANA \*

**R**ITA AND CARLOS were to have a treat that Saturday afternoon.

Mother had promised that if they were good, would mind the baby, clean the yard, attend to the firewood, she would be able to get through with her washing quickly. Then in the afternoon she could cook bibingkas for them. Never had two children worked more quickly and never more gayly. Carlos wheeled Little Sister in the improvised milk case cart while Rita swept the yard and burned the dry leaves and the pieces of paper. Then Rita rocked her in the bejuco hammock to sleep while Carlos cut the "madre cacao" twigs and carried them in. In almost no time at all the space under the stove was filled. He did not forget to set out the coconut husks under the sun so they would burn well when Mother cooks the rice cakes.

They even had time to bathe themselves thoroughly and to give the bamboo floors a rapid cleaning with wet rags and banana leaves.

After lunch Mother sent them to the store to buy soap, sugar for the rice cakes, petroleum and some thread. They must take with them the large basket so they could easily carry their pur-

chases. "Take care when crossing the bridge," Mother called to them as they skipped merrily away with Barong carrying the basket in his mouth.

When they reached the brook Carlos ran ahead and tried to make the foot bridge away as he ran along. Barong dropped the basket with a little delighted bark and plunged into the water. "Naughty dog, he surely wants a swim," Rita called out as she picked up the basket.

Before they left the store Carlos checked off their purchases to be sure they had everything their mother wanted and to see if the change given Rita was right. He put the two balls of thread into his pocket because the storekeeper had stuck a needle through them as a little "extra" and his mother would not want to lose it.

They carried the basket between them while Barong frisked teasingly in front. When they came to the bridge they walked very carefully. This time Barong did not choose to swim. He too was using the bridge. Suddenly he barked and ran wildly as a carabao driver bellowed echoingly to his herd. The frightened dog ran past Carlos' legs so that the poor boy slipped and down to the shallow brook the basket fell.

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"Foolish dog," Carlos shouted at Barong who was already shaking himself on the bank. When Rita pulled the basket out of the water the paper bag had no more bottom and of course no more sugar in it. Luckily the petroleum bottle was well corked so it was not spilled and the soap was only wet. Carlos was sore as he threw the empty bag at the dog for he was sure there would be no more rice cakes this week end.

They walked home quickly to tell Mother the sad tale. When Carlos looked around for Barong because he was going to tie him up for being naughty he could not be found.

"Maybe he is afraid," Rita ventured as she got out her toy pots as there would be no coconuts to grate anyway.

After a while she heard Barong on the steps and looking out she saw him carrying a basket in his mouth. "Sugar, Mother," she cried when she felt the bag that was in the basket. Barong was now hanging out his tongue because he was very tired.

"Clever dog!" they all cried, "but how?"

"You better go to the store and find out. Return the basket and take this ten-centavo piece so you can pay for the sugar," Mother told Carlos. "Rita you may start on the coconuts."

Carlos was back in almost no time panting out in happy excitement, "Mang Blas was so delighted with Barong he did not make me pay for the sugar. Do you remember, Rita, that I threw the empty bag at him? He bit that empty bottomless bag and ran back to the store with it. He went right up to Mang Blas and showed him the bag. Mang Blas rightly guessed that the bag of sugar fell into the river so he gave him another one."

