

THE VILLAGE reached to the news like a house on fire: Aling Sisa's son was coming home!

Isidro was her only son and she was inordinately proud of him. She told her neighbors, friends and acquaintances of his coming and they,

• Short Story •

LURE OF THE CITY

by ADELINO B. SITOY

in turn, told their neighbors, friends and acquaintances. Isidro was her darling and she would rather have her husband, Intong, starve than deny her son anything that he demanded.

Ten years ago, when he left Tangaran for the city, her eyes were deep pools of tears, bleary and red. Her heart kept jangling in sobs and for weeks her face was colorless and pallid. Deep inside her was the furtive fear of city life. She was not deaf to the news brought by those who returned to the village after living for months in the city. Some of the stories were true, others were thoroughly exaggerated. Nevertheless, they were stories of the innumerable killings, robberies, hold-ups, kidnappings, flood, and fire that preyed on city residents. She was wont to ask returning villagers about her son but because they had dwelt only in the swampy districts of the city, far from any school, they could not answer her. Her anxiety could only be quieted down by the mailman who would hold out to her Isidro's fortnightly letters.

As soon as she received his first letter which a neighbor read for her, she commanded her henpecked husband to mend the fence, fix the roof and remodel their house and make a new bamboo bed to subdue the vacuous appearance of the house.

Many a friend of Isidro had asked her several questions. And they were varied questions concerning her son. Would he bring a wife beautiful enough to be the pride of the village? How would he look this time, after a lapse of ten years? How expensive would be his

clothes? How handsome was he nowadays? Would he snub his boyhood playmates now? And Aling Sisa would chide these fellows for talking nonsense. "My son will remain unchanged, silly! He will still be the same Isidro, handsome and debonaire and smart. He is still as young as a carefree teen-aged darling. But I am proud to tell you one thing: he is tops in philosophy and letters. His English is *summa cum laude*. So, be careful about your speech and manners when he comes; else, he will beat you down with his philosophical ideas and arguments and his English.

The girls who heard Aling Sisa's unending remarks would giggle half-consciously, fearing Isidro, the philosopher and master of the English tongue, and silently adoring Isidro, the handsome and the young.

● Aling Sisa's house almost came apart under the weight of the throng that flocked inside to greet Isidro. The young and the old of all sexes gathered around him, extending their hands to him for his kind condescension. The girls flushed at the suspicious glances of the village boys as they bustled up the house to see the newly-arrived. The small boys elbowed their way amidst the thick and eager crowd. Perhaps, Aling Sisa was right when she said Isidro was a philosopher and a master in English. But she was

wrong... rather, she was lying... when she told them her son was handsome and young. For they saw he was not. His bulging, large eyes were crossed; his nose was squat; his ears were rabbit-like; his lips were sullen. He did not look younger nor older. He looked thirty-five. For he was thirty-five. So, of those who thronged to welcome him, the small boys and the young ladies were the first to leave. They were disappointed by Isidro's appearance, although they still somehow believed he might truly be a learned man. After the last man left the house, Aling Sisa went into a tizzy over her idea of a *bienvenida* party. Her husband was assigned as the cook so he failed to greet his son. The roasted chicken, upon Aling Sisa's order, was cut into two. When they were about to eat, Isidro noticed that his father had no share of the chicken. "Why does Tatay have no share?" he pointed at the dissected fowl.

"Because he cut it into two only," she replied gruffly and pointed at Intong, passing the blame on him.

"But..." Intong would have presented his side had not Isidro interrupted.

"And because Tatay cut that chicken into two, we have only two slices produced? How elementary is your addition here!"

The mother and the father looked up in amazement. "What do

you mean?" Aling Sisa asked in surprise.

"Your one plus one here is always two, isn't it?"

"Sure. How else will it be?" answered Aling Sisa.

"That's wrong. To us, philosophers, one plus one can be three."

"Three???" the father stood up in astonishment and relief.

"Yes, three," the son replied assuringly.

"Then find the third, my son. These two slices will be Sisa's and mine," the father answered, at the same time nibbling hastily at the slice. He consumed it before the "bakya" of Aling Sisa took a swift landing on his bald head.

When he attended the dance held that night to mark the vesper of the fiesta, he was the object of the laughter of all. He was wear-

ing an old white coat, rumpled at every square inch, mottled with stain all over the back and the sleeves. His black tie was a PMT cravat which was loosened and dangled about his breast. His pants were also of white sharkskin cloth but riddled with moth holes, two on one leg and four on the other. His footwear consisted of a pair of rubber shoes, originally white but turned brownish by the dirt and mud that clung to it. The girls were ashamed to dance with him. Not only because of his comical attire, but also because of his ugly and age-worn figure and his unorthodox stroke in dancing. Almost always, he would step on the girls' innocent and naked toes (the girls were only wearing sandals).

He could not dance for long because he was snatched by an old bachelor friend who begged him to write a love letter to the lovely girl, Rosita, the belle of the evening. He could not disappoint the friend he just met.

So, for his friend's sake, he wrote:

"My everlasting dearest Rosita,

Of all the queer birds I ever did see, you, Rosita, are the queerest by part to me.

Yes, Rosita, deer, sweet, U R always N my heart. Even thought you are not awakad.

I was planning to dance over you but I felt ashamed very great. Besides, you are very dancing with pretty men.

Please visit to me, Rosita.

Thank you. You are welcome.

Your very own,

Ritss"

They could not give the letter to Rosita while she was yet at the dance. So they accompanied her up to her house. Even during the long walk to her house, Isidro and Rito could not muster the nerve to hand over the letter to her. So when Rosita was inside the house, they serenaded her, deciding to hand the letter the moment she looked out of the window. But she did not, even at the tenth repetition of the only song Isidro had learned in the city. Instead, her window was slammed in a final gesture of annoyance the minute Isidro aped Johnny Ray.

The prospect of giving the letter looked bleak and dim, so Isidro

decided to climb the window and whisper to Rosita about the letter. This he did. But before he could bring up his other foot, Rito, who was half-sprawled under the house mapping out the location of Rosita's bed, stepped on a sleeping pig which squealed in anger and in pain. Rosita's father, who was awakened by the noise, quickly looked out of the window and saw Isidro climbing up. He tapped Isidro's dome with a "garrote" which sent Isidro diving into familiar, solid tierra firma.

That brought him back to the city for hospitalization! #

The PATRIA Story

(Continued from page 22)

ganizations within and outside the country.

On the occasion of the celebration of the first Archdiocesan Marian Congress in Cebu, the SCA, realizing the splendid opportunity offered by the affair, obtained permission from the Archbishop to collect donations from the many persons who attended the celebration. The permission granted, a Patria Crusade was immediately organized under the leadership of Mr. Lindy Morrell who conducted the drive so competently that no less than two thousand pesos were collected.

The barangay Raffles, the Candle Guessing Contest, the Patria Collection Sunday, the Asian Festival, and other special events were some of the features sponsored in conjunction with this fund-raising effort.

The various activities continued throughout the months during which the Center was in the process of construction. The drive attained its maximum success with the participation of several prominent city residents who were organized into the Patria Fund Drive Committee with no less than Mrs. Luna Brienes herself, the Governor's lady, as Chairman. Among those who took an active hand in the drive were Don Gil Garcia, Don Mariano Gonzales, Mr. Francis Lim, Doña Esperanza Osmeña, Mrs. Celerina del Rosario, Mrs. Luisa Pido, Mr. Ismael Lim Kakeng, Mr. Miguel de los Reyes, Mr. Felipe Pareja, Mrs. Loreto Victorino, and many others. The Rev. Fr. Wrocklage who used to go out soliciting for donations as early as seven o'clock in the morning and as late as nine o'clock in the evening, should be credited for being the most enthusiastic, the most zealous, and the most untiring of all fund solicitors.

The proceeds of these efforts, in addition to bank and private loans, satisfied to a certain extent what amount of money was demanded for the construction of the project.

The Construction

Approximately fifteen months after the drafting of the resolution to construct the Patria and after accumulating a saving of about ten thousand pesos, the SCA decided to start the construction. August 15, the Feast of the Assump-

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