



Chapter One

A LUCKY DAY

TONIO had been a beggar boy ever since he could remember. The old man whom he and everybody else called "Lolo" was blind and a beggar. The only life he knew was that of a begging boy and leading a blind beggar. He was not ashamed to beg. He was accustomed to walking from door to door expecting to be given a handful of rice. But somewhere in his head was an idea, not very clear, but an idea just the same, that he would not be a beggar all his life.

It was unusually cool that morning of Good Friday when Tonio and Lolo made their way slowly through the narrow and crooked alley which led to the street. The old man felt his way with his *camagon* cane which was an heirloom from his great grandfather who had been a *cabeza*.

THE ADVENTURES OF A BEGGAR BOY

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by Julio Cesar Peña
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"I am sure we shall have good luck today," the old man began. "We always make much on Good Friday."

"Why, Lolo?" Tonio asked, glancing up at the sightless eyes of his companion.

"Because the remembrance of how the Lord Jesus died for sinners makes everybody generous. Every kind act on this day brings about the forgiveness of many sins."

"Shall we stay out and work the whole day, Lolo? Shall we not go to church this afternoon?"

"We shall do both. The church is the best place for work and worship today."

After a long pause, the old man continued: "If we make much in April and May, you can go to school in June."

"O Lolo!" Tonio exclaimed, "Am I really going to school?"

After a while, Tonio continued: "But Lolo, it is impossible for me to go to the day school."

"We shall see what we can do before June. You are almost ten. I ought to have sent you to school two years ago. God knows I would have done it if I could."

"Yes, Lolo, I know how good and kind you have been to me."

The morning proved to be both profitable and interesting. At a *pabasa*, every guest gave the begging pair silver coins. A well-dressed young man standing by the window was about to drop a bill on the outstretched hand of the old man but an old woman warned him saying,

"Don't you ever drop money from the window, *hijo*, if you do not want money to leave you."



The fine young man thanked the old lady good-naturedly and took the trouble of going downstairs to place the money on the beggar's hand. The old man expressed his gratitude by entreating the Lord to pour blessings upon the generous youth. "May you have perfect sight all your life," he ended.

The hostess detained Tonio and Lolo for lunch. It was the heartiest meal they had for many a day. The menu consisted of boiled mudfish with soya bean sauce, broiled milkfish with tomato and onion filling, and fish-pond crabs. The hostess saw to it that no meat was served nor anything cooked in lard.

On their way to church they passed a stand where several kinds of sweets were offered. Lolo and Tonio were invited to take generous helpings of *ubi*, bean, and *makapuno* desserts. The old man explained to Tonio that such a stand of free sweets was called *caridad*. It was an act of charity on the part of the owner for the atonement of sins; that is, he did a kind act hoping to gain forgiveness of his sins.

The church was packed. The people stood so close together that it was impossible for one to move. There were weeping, sobbing, screaming, and fainting at the recollection of the suffering and death of Christ.

The beggars went home thankful and happy. Tonio was trying to guess how much they had made. If only every day were as good as Good Friday! "Could he go to school?" was the question he repeated to himself over and over again.

The old man broke into his thoughts.

"I will set aside our today's earnings. We shall see how much we have when we reach home. I am anxious to send you to school. There is a prediction about the fortune of the person to whom the last member of our family will give this cane."

"O Lolo! What is it? Tell me the story, please!"

"Yes, *hijo*, after supper."

(What is the story of the *canamogon* cane? What fortune will its next owner have? Read the next issue of *The Young Citizen*.)