



# BLANCA AND THE OLD COUPLE

By Constanca L. Marquez

**B**LANCA was the name of the cat living next door. Her fur was as white as the lace on Sister's dress. Her eyes were as blue as the sky. She lived with an old couple whom the old children in the neighborhood called Lolo Juan and Lola Maria.

Lola Maria had found Blanca in the street one chilly morning seven years ago. She brought the sick cat to her house and gave her warm milk. She also placed her before the fire to warm her shivering body. Since then, Blanca remained faithful to the aged couple. She caught mice. She drove away bad cats who wanted to steal food from the cupboard.

The old woman was gentle and kind, but her husband was cruel and silly. He came home late in the evenings and kicked everything that stood on his way. Once he held Blanca by the neck and kicked her out of the door. Lola Maria did not say anything. She simply went out and lifted Blanca in her arms and carried her into the house. From this day Blanca was careful with Lolo Juan. She would not go near him any more. She would not rub her fur against his trousers as she used to do before.

One stormy night Lola Maria was darning her husband's socks. She heard scratches at the door. She went to the door and opened it. Blanca came in mew-

ing like a child. Lola Maria knew that something was wrong. She thought that her pet was hungry. So she went to the cupboard to get her some food. But Blanca tugged at her skirt and pulled her toward the door. The old woman followed.

When she opened the door, whom did you think she saw lying in the middle of the street? It was Lolo Juan. He was stone drunk and dead. Perhaps he had been walking carelessly along the street. An automobile passed by and ran over him.

Lolo Juan's death made the good old woman feel lonely. Although he had been a bad man, she loved him still. She remembered the days when both of them were young and happy.

One day Lola Maria fell sick. She could not leave her bed any

more. Blanca was always at her bedside. She snuggled close to the old woman to give her warmth, but in vain. Lola Maria died one late afternoon when the birds were going to their cozy nests to sleep. All the world was silent. Even Blanca lay quietly on a chair, her face resting on her paws.

When Lola Maria's remains were being carried to the cemetery, the people saw an old white cat walking slowly behind the hearse.

