

## LITTLE STORIES FOR LITTLE PEOPLE

## The Little Gardener

By Aunt Julia

“**E**DDIE, please keep quiet. You will awaken the baby.” It was Eddie’s mother shouting from the kitchen.

Bang! Bang! Bang! came the sound of pounding from the bedroom.

“Uha! Uha,” was the sharp cry of the baby.

Eddie’s mother rushed into the room. Eddie was hammering the door knob with a big piece of firewood.

“Mother, I am working on this. It is not straight and the door cannot be locked,” Eddie greeted his frowning mother. There was pride in nine-year-old Eddie’s voice.

“O, Eddie, please go downstairs. Here is a centavo. Buy anything, but do not come back here.”

Eddie stayed out until dark. When he came home, his hands and clothes were full of dirt. His older brothers teased him.

“Have you been helping the street cleaner?” asked Andres.

“No, perhaps he helped the grave digger,” Adong put in.

“Sh! Boys, keep still. Eddie will tell me

about his work,” the father said, beckoning to Eddie.

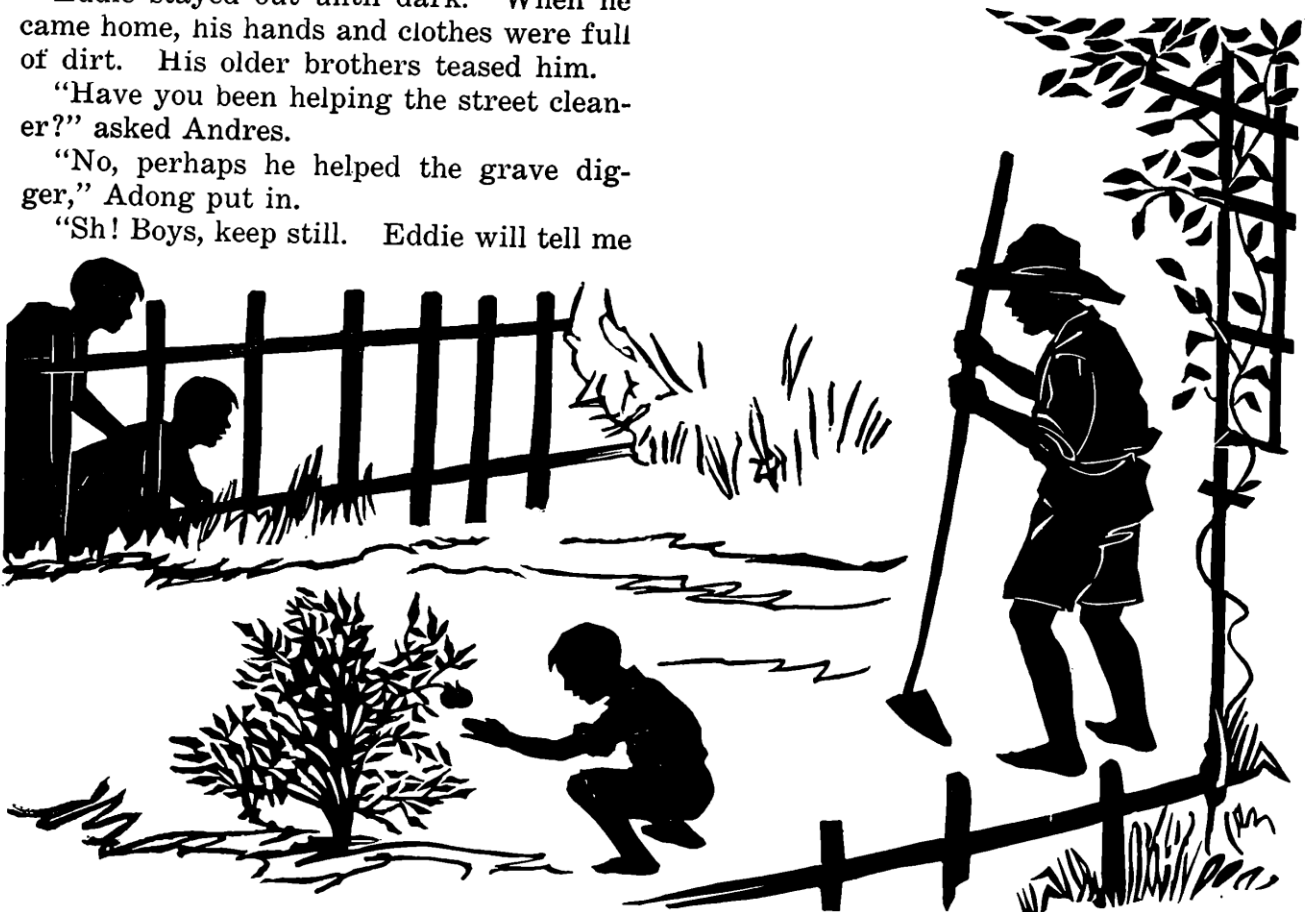
“I helped Juan work in his garden. We planted some tomatoes and built a trellis for some *bataw* vines,” Eddie informed his father with sparkling eyes.

“So my boy is a gardener! Well, that is fine. Now, wash yourself and get ready for supper.”

The next day, Eddie’s father had a surprise package for him. The mother reported that Eddie had been good. He had stayed away from the house and had not disturbed the baby’s sleep.

Eddie was delighted. In the package were little garden tools and little packets of seeds. There were tomato and *bataw* seeds.

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## THE LITTLE GARDENER

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Eddie's father gave him a piece of ground for his garden. He helped the boy prepare the plots. They sowed the seeds together, but Eddie alone took care of the young plants. Soon the tomato plants were big. They had plenty of leaves but no fruit. Eddie's brothers made fun of him.

"If tomatoes were planted for leaves, Eddie would receive a prize as the best boy gardener," remarked Andres.

"Perhaps tomato leaves can be eaten." Adong rejoined.

"It is your fault if my tomatoes do not bear fruit," Eddie answered angrily.

"Why, what did we do?"

"You often quarrel and fight near my garden."

"Ho! Ho! Ho!" the older boys roared. "What has our fighting to do with your tomatoes?"

"Father, my teacher says tomatoes do not like much water."

"I think he is right," the father answered.

"Well, you see, Father, when they quarrel, they turn the hose on each other. Andres hides among my tomatoes and the plots are

flooded."

"Boys, you must keep away from Eddie's garden. I want you to leave it alone."

Eddie worked in his garden before the other children were up. His brothers kept away from the garden, but whenever they walked by, they laughed loudly.

"Let us see if our laughter will help Eddie's tomatoes."

One morning, Eddie whispered something into his father's ear. The older boys watched their father and brother with wondering eyes. Father and son went into the garden. Although uninvited, the boys followed and peeped into the garden. There, in the heart of a big tomato plant, hung the most beautiful, bright red tomato. It seemed to smile broadly at the boys.

Seeing his brothers, Eddie said. "Look! It is laughing back at you."