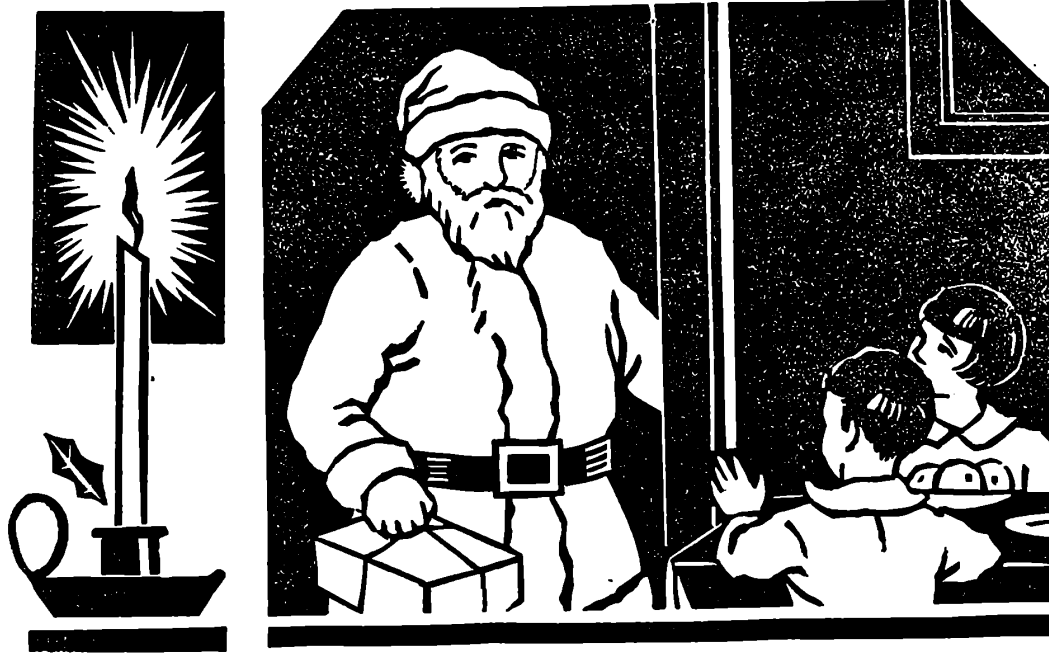


# The Christmas Party

By B. HILL CANOVA



“MOTHER,” asked Pablo, “are we going to have a Christmas party this year?”

“Yes, if you, Anselma and Emilio want a party you may have one. Decide whom you want to invite and we will start planning it,” said Mrs. Santos.

The three children each found a pencil and a piece of paper to make a list of friends.

“Here is my list,” said Anselma, “Biddy, Baby Nell, Anita, Imogene and Luz.”

“And mine,” added Emilio, “is Lorenzo, Billy, Pepe, Jose, Pedro, Alejandro and Medio.”

“I will tell you my list, because I do not know how to spell all of the names—Antonio, Tino, Vicente, Andres, and Tomás.” Pablo counted them off on his fingers.

“That makes seventeen guests, and you three makes twenty. With that many we can have a nice time,” thought the mother of the children.

“This is going to be fun. What games shall we play?”

“Hide-and-seek,” suggested Pablo. That is his favorite game.

“And San Pedro,” added Anselma.

“High-jump, too,” put in Emilio.

“Would you like me to teach you a game that children seldom play now, but it was a favorite when I was a little girl?” asked Mrs. Santos.

“Yes, yes,” agreed the three children.

“What shall we have for refreshments?” Emilio wanted to know. He was growing so fast that his thoughts often ran to food.

“What would you like to serve?” asked the mother.

"Egg sandwiches," was the older boy's bid.

"Bibingka," was Pablo's suggestion.

"A nice bowl of punch and cookies," added Anselma.

"Yes, cookies! Cookies with nuts in them," Pablo exclaimed. "I will remove the hulls from the nuts."

"If you will prepare the nuts I will bake the cookies the way you like them best," offered Anselma.

"May I add some nice ripe bo-oñgon?" asked Mrs. Santos.

"Yes," chorused the children, "we all like that."

The party took place on the afternoon of Christmas Eve. The day before the children went from house to house to invite their little friends. Everyone accepted and was looking forward to a good time. The mother remained at home baking bread for the sandwiches. Christmas Eve Morning the whole family was as busy as could be. Little Pablo, besides preparing the nuts for the cookies, ran many errands. Anselma made the cookies and helped with the punch. Emilio took a basket to the orchard to gather some ripe bo-oñgon and searched everywhere for eggs. All helped to make the house tidy. Anselma took great pains in arranging the flowers for the table.

By and by it was time for the guests to come. The mother and the children sat in the sala waiting for them.

"I am sorry," complained Anselma, "that father is not here for the party."

Soon the little friends gathered and the games started. After they had played a while Anselma called her mother to come show them the new game. The children thought it was

great fun for Mrs. Santos to play with them and they liked her game.

When it was time to serve the refreshments Anselma and Emilio led their friends to the table. The table looked so nice with its white table cloth and the basket of red flowers in the center, with green streamers running from the basket to each plate. Emilio sat at the head of the table as the host and Anselma was at the other end as hostess. Mrs. Santos and Pablo sat opposite each other on the sides of the table among the guests. Emilio served the sandwiches, Anselma the punch, and little Pablo's eyes sparkled when he started the plate of his favorite cookies around the table.

When everyone was about finished eating the postman came, bringing Anselma a letter. At once she recognized the writing of her friend. "A letter from Trudie! Do you remember her?"

"Indeed, we do," the children cried.

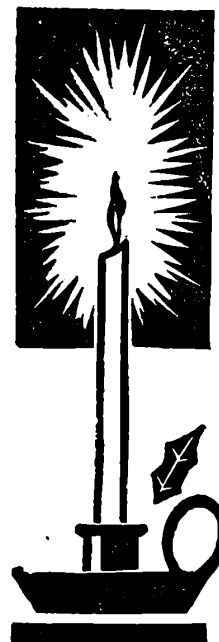
"Shall I read her letter to you?"

"Please do."

"From the date," Anselma said, "this letter has been more than five weeks coming to me." She read: "Dear Anselma,—Do you remember the Christmas party at your house last year? I certainly do remember it. What a good time all the children had! I was the oldest one there but I had as much fun as the younger ones.

"This is November, but by the time this

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### THE CHRISTMAS PARTY (Continued from page 337)

reaches you it will be near Christmas. I want to wish you and all my friends there a very merry Christmas."

"A merry, merry Christmas to Trudie!" all the children shouted clapping their hands.

Anselma continued, "Christmas here will be rather different from the way I spent Christmas in the Philippines. For one thing it will be very cold. We will have a big roaring fire to huddle around. When we go outside there will be warm coats, heavy stockings, gloves and a cap to pull down over the ears.

"Do you remember once at your Christmas party we all went swimming in the sea? This year I am planning to go skating on ice. I do not know which is the most fun—a warm Christmas or a cold Christmas. I am very happy here in Europe. but I often think of the years spent in the Philippines. Again let me wish all of you a merry Christmas."

"A merry, merry Christmas to Trudie!" the children shouted again.

When Anselma finished the letter and folded it she glanced toward the door. Her mouth came open, her eyes were wide open and she stood stone still. "Oh—it's—Good afternoon, Sir," was all she could think of to say.

In a flash all eyes were on the door.

A tall man made three solemn bows to them. He was dressed in a long red coat with the collar turned up well around his

ears, and a cap pulled down over his eyes.

"Santa Claus!" screamed little Pablo.

"Santa Claus!" repeated all the children.

"Merry Christmas, girls and boys," the red-coated person.

"This is a happy surprise, Santa Claus," said Mrs. Santos, "wont you come in?"

"Thank you, madam, I do have a few parcels to leave for the children."

"Thank you," cried the children.

"How very nice," said Mrs. Santos.

As he pulled out each package he called the name of the child to whom it belonged. Each one shook Santa's hand and thanked him for coming.

"I do wish father was here to see how happy everyone is," said Pablo.

The person who had given the gifts threw off the red cap and coat, and gathered his little boy into his arms, saying, "Well, so he is."

"Oh!" gasped all the children at once.

Little Pablo threw his arms around his father's neck and started laughing, crying and talking all at the same time. "Oh, father, I thought you were Santa Claus. You and Santa are both so good to me that sometimes I can't tell which is which."

All the children gathered around Mr. Santos. Each one

### MANOLING'S LANTERNS (Continued from page 350)

"He is in the hospital. He was almost burned to death. However, he is now on his way to recovery.

"How did this happen?"

"Our neighbors believed the fire to have been caused by defective electric wiring, but no. The fire started from our Christmas tree. Only two days ago I bought a Christmas tree for Manoling. I decorated it nicely and bought a string of small electric bulbs of different colors. In the afternoon, Manoling brought home some Japanese lanterns with small candles in them. I did not know there were candles in them until after Manoling had lighted them at night. I was tired all day so I made our beds early and soon fell asleep. At about ten o'clock I was awakened by a glaring light. I stood up and saw the Christmas tree burning. I tried to put out the fire but I could not do anything. The curtain hanging near the tree caught fire. The fire spread so fast that I became terribly frightened. I lost my presence of mind and ran out of the house gasping for breath. I shivered . . . gradually lost my strength . . . and finally I fainted. Manoling was trapped in the house, and had not one of our neighbors had the courage to save him, he would have been burned to death." Aling Luisa finished her version of the incidents with a sigh.

shook hands with him again, thank him over and over for the gifts and wished him a very merry Christmas.