

# The Kidnaping of KAMLON

By Agnes Newton Keith

LIKE EVERY BOY who comes in the garden except those two," I complain to Harry.

"Those big oafs! They're at least eighteen! They're too old for these kids anyway," says Harry. "I'll get rid of them pronto," and he starts eagerly toward the door.

"Now wait a minute, let's do it tactfully. Don't make them lose face. They may be quite nice boys, only I don't like the way they slouch around in Bowery fashion, and they use bad words — well, the words *sound* worse when they use them than when George does. They weren't very polite this afternoon when

I told them I'd rather they'd go home because they were older. They just leered at me and waited some time before they finally sloped off, and they were back inside an hour. But do be careful how you handle them, or there'll be a feud on our hands and we'll have everlasting trouble."

"I *handle* them!" Harry is out the door now and shouting at them: "You two big fellows over there—be off now, you two. My wife's already asked you to leave. Hurry up, get along, on your way, get going! And don't come back. This is private garden. I'll put the po-

lice on you if you come again. Hurry up, I say!"

It takes a couple of minutes for the astonished two to recognize the fact that this is a command, not a request. Then, while the smaller boys watch with awe, they turn about and slouch slowly out of the garden and up the compound drive that leads to the landlord's house.

"I wonder if they're related to Escoda," I speculate. "There's always a raft of boys around there, and he has hundreds of grandsons. I know they did t come in over our fence, anyway."

"How fast they go out is all that interest me. I don't think you'll have any more trouble with them. You must just let them see who's the boss!"

Our house is south of Manila at Parañaque, about twenty minutes by car. The compound we're in opens onto Manila Bay and we have a big garden. There's a barrio next door that makes the compound a bit noisy; our back fence is right against it.

The mass of Filipinos live in community units called barrios, having anywhere from a few to over a hundred small houses, overcrowded with people, children, dogs, pigs, chickens, sari-sari (notion) stores, maybe a community loud-speaker, and seldom either a sewage system or good drinking water. Barrios exist in cities and in the country. It is understood in the com-

pound that barrio people don't come in. The landlord is a Filipino — he lives in the first house by entrance — and he doesn't permit it.

Two days later I tell Harry, "Those two big lunks were in again today. They were playing with Kam. You know how Kam insists on being friends with everybody. I just can't get him to go out and bite the right people. Anyway, when I went out to ask them to leave, they started to talk to me about Kam, and say what a nice dog he was, and how they'd heard he cost a thousand dollars. I told them they should divide everything they heard by ten, at least. They don't seem too bad when you talk to them, only they're not nice the way the other kids are. But when I reminded them that we preferred just to have younger boys in the garden, they went on out without an argument. It's better to settle the thing amicably if we can."

"Damn it all, it's our garden! That's what we get for letting it be overrun!"

"The other barrio boys don't have anything to do with these two George and the others were up in the tree house all the time and didn't let on. Pricilio told George that one of the boys has served sentence in Muntinlupa for theft, and he's supposed to be one of a big gang in Parañaque."

"It's a good thing we're moving in a month. It'll weed out some of these friendships... What do the kids do up in the tree house?"

"Oh, read comics, and drink Cokes, and tell dirty stories, I suppose. The words are different, but the meaning's the same in all languages. George knows the same jokes now in Tagalog, Malay, Chinese, Japanese, and English. I think sometimes the boys smoke a little, but not much. Ponching's the only one that carries cigarettes. The rest of them are always in training for some magnificent athletic event that's going to make them famous. Pricilio lifts weights every morning, Bing chins himself hundreds of times, Junior does push-ups, and Fred jumps rope. They're all mad about physical fitness and strength, and everlasting perfecting themselves to grapple with the big opportunity that never comes. It breaks your heart to think that those kids just don't have a chance. It seems wicked when you think that there are people in this town who spend two thousand dollars for a cocktail party! It'd make a Huk out of me, for sure!"

"One hundred and fifty you mean, and that's one pup in a lifetime."

"Well, I'm not so sure that a pedigreed pup was a very good idea out here."

"But the city's full of pedigreed pups. It was in the social column the other day that somebody's prize pooch had a set of traveling tweeds made for him in London to wear on a trip to the States, and somebody else's French poodle wears a rhines colar. Kam's just a sum dweller compared with lots."

The day has been overwhelmingly hot, and now at six o'clock I am sitting on the doorstep wondering how the boys can possibly have the energy to climb trees. I don't see why they don't fall, or the branches break, as I watch them swinging precariously with complete assurance thirty feet above ground in the tallest mango. The descent to earth is simple; Junior comes first, drifting down from the tree house with the end of a bending bough, sweeping to a branch and catching its end, which plunges him down to a lower limb, which bends with his weight till he drops to the ground. Then Bing's turn, then George... Crack!

I see the leaves and George plummet down together, turning in air, not sweeping. He hits the ground headfirst — it looks. Almost before he alights I am on the way to him, Pricilio shoo's down from the tree and Junior is on the spot. I think he'll never rise, but he bounces to his feet holding his shoulder, and shouts "I'm all right, Ma,"

then falls down again and passes out. Pricillo support him to the house, and I can scarcely get to him. They carry him in and put him on the bed, where he revives enough to see that he has become a hero. Now he groans, just often enough to show he is in pain, and infrequently enough to show he is being brave. He can't move his shoulder, his face is cut, but nothing else seems wrong. I cut off his singlet and call the doctor.

"A fractured shoulder," the doctor says. "That's not much to complain of for a thirty-foot fall."

"I didn't fall," says George proudly. "The branch broke with me."

"You're still up there, eh?" says Doc.

"George, you can't possibly go swimming with your shoulder swaddled up like that!"

"I won't get wet. I'll sit on the life raft, and the boys will paddle it."

"Only in shallow water then."

"And can we go in the banca Sunday?"

"No, you can't go in the banca again until your shoulder is quite all right and you can swim."

"But, Ma, in a banca I don't have to swim."

"I know all the answers, and they're all NO."

"But, Ma, there's nothing to do but read comics or go to the

movies — and you know Dad doesn't like me to do that. Anyway, I can swim fine with one arm."

"Now, George, Dad will be home very soon, and if he agrees that two arms are superfluous, then you can try swimming with one. But not till he's here." As soon as Harry comes back from his trip to the pine forest of the Mountain Provinces we are moving to another residence, as the friends from whom we rent this house are due back in Manila from their holiday.

Renting a furnished house in Manila usually means moving every few months, a process called puddle-jumping. Fortunately I have found a very nice place only five minutes walk from where we are, and situated so that you can walk from the garden into the water of the bay.

**M**OVING DAYS are even worse than Christmases for cataloguing age and disintegration of the human spirit. This one in Manila began badly at 8 A.M. when the station wagon came to move our ration of luggage and Harry said, "Where's Kam?"

"Isn't he on the rope?"

Kam has started to wander, so we have formed the habit of clipping his lead to a long rope. Later in the day, when we are prepared to be on vigil and whistle at intervals, he is allowed to run free. I keep a rope

tied from coconut palm to coconut palm across the length of the front garden for this purpose, and Harry, who is usually first out of bed, always attaches Kam to it.

"On the rope?" Harry says. "Oh, I took the rope down last night and packed it with his dish and blanket so that we wouldn't forget it this morning. I just let him run loose this morning. I thought he'd be all right for once."

With the station wagon waiting, I run around the compound from house to house, whistling and calling, and asking one and all if they've seen Kam. I run up Quirino Avenue, down to the bay shore, back to the barrio, whistling, calling, and asking until my mouth is parched, my voice hoarse, my temper bad. Now as I pant up the compound drive, the station wagon honks as if to convey the impression that I am deliberately delaying the move. Breathless, almost voiceless, very mad, and beginning to worry, I gasp out to Harry, "That damn dog's no place!"

"Well, we can't wait all day! Come along! He'll turn up. I've asked the boys to watch out for him and bring him around if they see him. It's only three minutes to the other house anyway," says Harry.

"Come on, Mafi he'll find us when he gets hungry. Nobody

else around here can afford to support him," says George.

"I'm afraid he's been stolen," I worry. As the station wagon rolls down the drive I look back anxiously, half expecting to see a plump, fawn-colored Teddy bear with his leg up at somebody's pet bush. No hope.

As soon as we unload our possessions at the new place, I hurry back to the old house to superintend the frantic cleanup that is going on. Again I half believe that I'll see Kam asleep in the drive, nosing somebody's garbage, chasing the ducks — and again I don't. It is midday before I begin to feel about me a conspiracy of silence, reinforced by meaningful looks, which Luz and Lavandera are enclosed in, as we scrub closets and shelves. At one o'clock Luz calls me to come to the kitchen, and says, "Tomas talks now over the back fence to people who say they know where Kam is."

"Where are the people? I'll go and see them. I'll tell them to get Kam and bring him back right away." I start for the door but Luz says, "I think better you do not go out, or they will be frightened and go away. Best to leave Tomas talk to them. I think they wish reward."

I peek out of the back window and see Tomas plastered against the fence on our side and a crowd of dark heads sticking up on the barrio side. "You

go, Luz, and see what's happening," I urge. "I don't understand all this mystery. If they know where the dog is, why don't they bring him?"

As Luz appears voices are raised; then the crowd thins out and Tomas leaves the fence, talking to Luz. She is back in minute and says, "A friend of Tomas brings a message from people who see the dog this morning. They can find the dog if you give a reward."

"I'll give a reward when I get the dog back. Tell Tomas to tell them so. But who saw the dog? Are they the ones who stole him, do you think?"

"Tomas says his friends didn't steal the dog, but they know who did. I think it is that Paranaque Gang."

I have always laughed at the hair-raising stories that Lavandera and Luz tell about the Paranaque Gang — stories they manufactured, I have thought. Now I say, "Well, I don't care who did it. Tell them we want the dog and we'll give a reward *when we get him back.*"

If it hadn't been moving day I would have felt much worse. As it was, I was too busy to assess my sense of shock; I just wanted to get the dog back, the house clean, and the new beds ready to sleep in. I was still cleaning the closet when Luz came back.

"They say that if people give

rewards now, they get dogs back more quickly."

"I won't give a reward till I get the dog — that's definite. They've got a lot of nerve. It must be the very people who stole the dog that Tomas is dealing with, if they're making conditions."

"No this is friend of the people who took the dog. Lavandera says for sure this is that bad gang. The uncle of one boy lives next to her, and the boy is bad. He is the big boy who comes in the garden that day the Master says to get out."

Then I recall my conversation with the big boy: "This is a very fine dog, I guess?" "Yes, Kam's a fine pooch." "I think this is a very expensive dog, eh? I hear you pay one thousand dollars for him!" "Heavens, no! Divide that sum by ten. . ."

"Luz, tell Tomas to send word that I will pay a reward as soon as I get the dog, *but not before.* And I want him back tonight!"

It all seems silly and like a tabloid except for the fact that it is true, and Kam is gone. This time Luz comes back to say, "The people are frightened, and they have gone away. Tomas says maybe they won't come back now because you didn't pay the reward."

"But, Luz, they'll come back for the reward. That must be why they stole the dog — to get a reward."

"But they are very bad gang. Maybe they do it because Master says, Get out!"

**B**Y NIGHTTIME Kam has not turned up and we go to bed a very sad household. With sorrow, George becomes extremely morose and won't talk at all; I keep on falking endlessly in the effort to make it make sense; and Harry just says, Wait. Luz and Lavandera, who have decided to come with us rather than return to their former jobs, have been talking endlessly all afternoon. Lavandera has gone home to the barrio now, and I am hoping she may hear news there. Tomas, our closest link with the dog, has stayed in the old house.

"But what shall I do if they don't bring Kam back tomorrow?" I ask Harry, who is leaving early next day for the Mountain Provinces again. "I'm not going to just sit back and let Kam go, forever. It's all so stupid. If somebody stole him for a reward, and I agree to pay the reward, why don't they bring him back and get the reward?"

"Give them all day tomorrow, and if Kam's not back by the next morning go to the local Parañaque police and report it," Harry advises. "Promise the reward to the police if they find the dog."

"I think maybe it is not good to go to the police," suggests

Luz. "The thief will be frightened then to bring back the dog."

"But what can I do, go out and call the thief pet names to reassure him?"

"Lavandera says best to wait," Luz warns.

Next morning Harry leaves. No messages come about Kam and he doesn't appear. Pricilo wanders up the road to the compound gate and the watchman won't let him in, so he comes up the shore instead and whistles to George from the beach. They sit on the wall in front and talk for a long time. George tells me later that Pricilio feels bad about Kam being stolen, and says he will watch for any news of him inside the barrio.

The following morning I get out of bed determined to go to the police. I tell Luz and rather expect her to protest. Instead she says, "I will go with you to help you talk." I am now beginning to think less lightly of her "Parañaque Gang," and do not wish to involve her in any local gang wars, so I say, "Never mind, Luz, I'll make them understand if I have to bark like a dog to do it!" But when I go out to the car Luz is there in her shopping dress waiting, and Lavandera is with her.

Arrived at the police station, we work our way through several minor gangsters till we get to a man looks as if his part in law enforcement were to intimidate

witnesses. I start to give my report in English, but Lavandera cuts in Tagalog, and Luz carries on a duet with her, and I soon give up and sit back. The only facts the policeman makes a note of are how much we paid for Kam and how much Kam eats, which latter item has to be told to him twice, and he obviously finds it incredible. Lavandera is in top form, and I imagine tells our entire family history, true and false, and her own, while Luz in an affirmative refrain.

When at last the two of them slow down, I say loudly and firm, "We will give a generous reward to the police if you get the dog back."

Then, for the first time, policeman turns around and really looks at me. He suddenly looks quite cheerful, and smiles pleasantly, and seems to be waiting for something nice to happen. Nothing happens. It isn't until after I've left the station that I realize that of course this was my cue to press the reward right into his palm. I don't know why I didn't see it at the time; I guess because it seemed too crude that way — the little station cubicle was full of police and their clients, and somehow although I knew one bribed the police, it never occurred to me that one did it so openly.

It isn't until I get right away from the stale station smells of

urine, tobacco, and garlic that I recognize the fact that there isn't any finesse about this deal, and nothing is too crude. I know them for sure that the police will not be heard from. I have forfeited my rights.

**N**OW COMES the part of the story that I still can't quite believe. By midafternoon verbal threats are coming in from all directions, via third parties, that the gang that has stolen Kam is angry with me for going to the police and has sworn to kidnap George and tie a stone around his neck and drop him in the bay of Cavite Point, a favorite gangster disposal system here. The story comes through Luz through Lavandera, the compound gardener, the night guard, the neighbor's cook, the cook's neighbor, Lavandera's neighbor who is uncle to a boy in the gang, the new houseboy, the policeman at the corner, Justino our driver, and everybody's friend. Each one has gotten the story through somebody else, nobody has spoken with the person who made the threat, but everybody swears it is true. And then everybody, even strangers whom I do not know but who know me as George's mother, sends warnings to me, comes to me tell me, or tells a friend to tell me, Keep George at home; don't let him swim, go to the movies, go away, go off in ban-



cas, go in buses — keep George at home!

It is fantastic, it is ridiculous, it is terrifying, it is hysterical — things like this don't happen. But things like this do happen in Manila.

Ordinarily, I do not believe third-person stories. I always ask, "Who said it?" and don't accept it unless I can verify it firsthand. It cannot verify these rumors, I can find no one who will admit hearing the threat made; each one has heard it each one swears it is so, and obviously believes it.

"But why?" I ask. "What does anyone have against George? If they stole the dog for money, I can understand it. But why this crazy threat? It doesn't make sense. What's George done to anyone? What can they get out of it but trouble? It's not even a kidnap-ransom threat. It's just plain evil. It doesn't make sense. It can't be so."

I wouldn't believe it. I must be growing hysterical, I told myself; I should know better.

But I did believe it. I knew that one mistake would be too many. I was a stranger here, a foreigner among an impoverished people, people of violent emotions, a people with wrongs to resent.

So I didn't believe it, and I did believe it, till I was nearly crazy. Meanwhile Kamlon, the victim of the original crime, is

not forgotten — but has become just a dog, while George is our only son.

The servants establish a voluntary relay guard over George which annoys him frantically. George refuses to take any of it seriously, except the absence of Kam. He laughs at me and everybody else who tries to talk precautions to him. He says, "Oh, Ma, they're kidding you!" and never loses a wink of sleep, and goes swimming in the bay with the boys, just one more bobbing head among the rest, while I strain for him to come safely in. Or alternatively, if I manage for a minute to persuade him that it might not be a joke, and that he should stay near home, then he arms himself with a bolo and a pair of knuckle dusters, traded for with a barrio boy whose brother uses them professionally.

"That's the best way in the world for you to get bumped off, you crazy child!" I warn angrily. "You can't use a bolo the way the Filipinos do. They'd have your head off before you got the thing out of its shell."

"Not shell, Ma, please. That's a sheath. And I'm better than you think with a bolo!"

Next day a neighbor tells me that he had a car stolen once and he gave twenty-five dollars to the local motorcycle cop, Luis, and Luis traced the car and brought it home, so why

don't I ask Luis to get to the bottom of the mystery?

So I do ask Luis. He comes around and I present my case, and he says he'll need some expense money to begin on. This time I get the cue immediately, and go well above what I think he expects, just to be on the right side. Luis says he'll report when he gets something to report, and he disappears and is not heard of again.

Meanwhile Harry has been gone ten days in the pine forests, and I can't get word to him. Half the time I do not dare to go to sleep at night, and the other half I cannot sleep. This night as I lie in bed wondering how long I can stand it, and wishing I could get Harry home, I hear a whistle outside my window. I sit up and look out and see a white-clad figure standing in the shadow of the tree ten feet away.

In a minute a masculine voice calls softly, "George! George!" in a clipped Eurasian accent.

"My God," I think, "a decoy! They're trying to get him to come out, and then they'll snatch him! They are to come right into the compound and up to the house!" I shout out, "Get out! Get out! Get out! Get out!" quite hysterically, and the figure melts into shadow. I fall back in bed feeling quite ill, then — but with my mind made up. I have waited long enough.

I will go to the American Embassy tomorrow and ask them as an American national for protection for my son. I'll ask them to investigate the whole matter, and meanwhile to give me a United States military guard for the house, or else take George into the protection of Embassy quarters until they can determine if the threats are genuine. After all, I have approached the police here, and they have done nothing, and I have crossed Luis's palm and he has disappeared. We have two armed guards in the compound — but who can tell to whom they owe allegiance? With my mind made up, I fall asleep.

**T**HE NEXT morning at seven, while I am having coffee, Harry walks in. It is one of the best surprises I have ever had, and a wonderful relief to tell him all about it. At first I wonder if he will pooh-pooh it and think I am being hysterical. Perhaps I am.

"... 'And we'll have to do something right away. Today,'" I say. "I can't stand it any longer. I've watched George day and night now for eleven days, and even if nothing happens to George, I'll be completely crazy if this goes on. I've made up my mind to go to the American Embassy today."

"No. I'll go to the Secretary of Foreign Affairs myself first

thing this morning," Harry says. "The Philippine Government is responsible for our protection here, and Foreign Affairs is the legitimate liaison between the government and the United Nations. I know they will take immediate action. If you go to the American Embassy, they will have to go through government in any case. Now don't worry any more, we'll get to the bottom of it."

"Thank God you're home. I'm getting so jittery I can scarcely tell fact from fiction. At the same time I'm angry with myself for feeling so frightened when perhaps the whole thing is ridiculous. I never appreciated before how wonderful it was to have a police force you can rely on in time of trouble"

At ten o'clock Harry calls me. "There will be a National Bureau of Investigation agent out immediately. Tell him all about it. And cheer up."

In half an hour Agent number X, who goes unnamed, of the N.B.I. is in the house and on the job. He is a fine-looking, well-built young man, gentle in speech and in manner, and intelligent. He is as reassuring to meet as my police friend was disappointing. I tell him the whole story, and add, "If you can assure me that I'm being hysterical and foolish, and that there is no danger to

George, I'll believe you, and refuse to believe these threats."

"I cannot tell you so, madam," he says cautiously. Then he talks with George, Luz, and Lavandera, asks for snapshots of Kam and a description, asks for our address in the other compound, and says, "I will place a guard on your house until I know what is behind this. Meanwhile, keep George within sight, or inside the house. I will report to you later." And he leaves to visit the barrio, the old compound, the neighboring houses, and Lavandera's neighbor who is the uncle of a boy in the gang.

As the young agent walks down the path I feel like a person whose sentence has been lifted. I am no longer helpless against an unknown, evil force; something is being done.

Next day I hear from Lavandera that Agent X has done some thorough investigating of the old compound, the local sari-sari stores where gossip sells with goods, and the house of Lavandera's neighbor. Prilio drifts down from the barrio in the afternoon to talk with George, and he tells us of house-to-house visits in the barrio by Agent X. Everyone in the barrio is being questioned, and I begin to feel decidedly apologetic to them.

Most of the boys are staying away from us now, and I real-

ize it is in order to protect themselves from being classed on our side by the thieves, and as such being exposed to a venom from which they have no protection. For we can hire guards, we can call in the N.B.I., but the barrio has no one but the police. In the barrio, saint lives by jail mate, and innocent child beside ex-convict, and their only protection is to mind their own business.

Five days later at five o'clock, Agent X telephones me. "I think I have your dog. Can you come with me to identify him?"

I agree eagerly, and am waiting for Agent X when Harry arrives home. Agent X, accompanied by another agent, picks us up in his car. He has located a dog he believes to be Kam in the home of a Chinese family who breed dogs and who claim to have purchased Kam for one hundred dollars from a Filipino who was offering him for sale on the street. Now, about ten minutes drive from our own house, we turn up a well-known street in a good district and stop at a large compound.

"Are you sure you can identify the dog?" asks Agent X again.

"Yes."

While we walk toward the rear of the compound the occupants of the houses are ga-

thering to see what business brings four strangers here with such an earnest air. There is a garage at the extreme rear where I see a small brown object on the floor by the door, and while Harry and the agents stop to argue with a Chinese who intercepts them, I call, "Kam!" For a moment the brown thing doesn't move, then a head lifts wearily and I see it is Kam — but Kam doesn't see it is me. He is chained to the floor with a short chain, and although he lifts his head dispiritedly at the sound of my voice, it seems to mean nothing.

It is Kam, but he is no longer the golden Teddy bear, as wide as he was long, who left us. This is a thin, ribby, worried creature with a dull, soiled coat, who has already learned that the world is harsh. I call again, and he looks up again. Suddenly the idea penetrates, the golden body jerks and pulls against the chain, while I run to the garage, and end up on the floor with Kam slobbering all over me in a crazy, hysterical fashion, wagging his rear end madly, tangling me in his chain so that I can't escape, and getting up and sitting down in nervous anxiety for fear I will disappear. Now, to the crowd which has gathered and watches with interest, it becomes quite plain whose dog this is.

Agent X detaches himself from Harry and the Chinese, who are now shouting at each other, and looks at Kam and me with satisfaction and says, "I guess the dog has identified you."

Now I hear Harry say, "I certainly won't pay you what you paid for the dog! It's people like you who buy stolen goods who encourage people to steal. You must have known that no good dog would be offered for sale on the street without papers, if he hadn't been come by crookedly."

The man, who doesn't seem to have much faith in his own case, says rather feebly. "Then just pay twenty-five dollars please, to help my loss."

"I won't pay you a damn cent," Harry shouts. He strides toward me and Kam, jerks the chain right out of the staple in the floor, and starts for the car. Meanwhile, to the aggrieved keeper of Kam, the agent hands a little paper saying that the dog has been confiscated by the N.B.I. as stolen goods and returned to the owner; that any redress the man seeks must be from the person who sold him the goods. With Kam in the lead, we sweep out of the compound, leaving a very depressed man surrounded by his neighbors enjoying his misfortunes.

THOUGHT YOU SAID we might have to wait for a court order before we could take the dog home," I said to Agent X.

"There was no doubt the dog was yours," says X with a grin. "So I think we can call this case closed. That man will do nothing further."

"But what about George? Is he safe now? Do you know who stole the dog?"

"We think we know who took the dog, but we do not have proof, and probably could not get proof, because people are afraid to testify in court. After we learned who took the dog, we were able to trace him through some relatives of the thieves who are respectable people and work in government offices. The relatives are very unhappy that the young men always make trouble. These relatives known they might lose their jobs because of this. So we tell them that if they can help us find the dog, we will take it as proof of their own good faith. So they find out that the dog was sold to this Chinese breeder, and we get the dog. Now we tell them that if anything happens to the Keith family while they stay in Manila, the N.B.I. will come straight to them and hold them responsible, and they will lose their jobs — so better to make the young relatives behave themselves."

"But why did anybody want to do this to us? We don't have half the money wealthy Filipinos have. Most of these people around here are our friends."

"This is a bad neighborhood. It is outside the city. There are many gangs here. There are many very poor people, and rich people live beside them. There is temptation."

"But what about George? Will this gang be waiting for revenge on him?"

"I think George will be alright now, because the thieves are frightened. But it is best not to let him go away from the house alone—always let a servant go with him, or let him accompany friends. That is for safety's sake, but I don't think there will be any trouble. We could not prove this case in the courts and convict the thieves, because we cannot get sworn evidence. But we got the dog back."

Now Harry asks the agent to accept the reward we had offered for Kam, but he refuses firmly and says, "It is our reward to solve the problem. We are here to serve the people."

The next day Harry writes to the head of the N.B.I. and thanks him for the efficient work of Agent X, and encloses a check as contribution to whatever welfare fund they may have. The check comes back with a letter saying again, "We

are here to serve. Our reward is to help solve your problem."

"Well," says Harry. "Then return of the check is the only unbelievable part of the story!"

"The N.B.I. agents probably get paid a living wage," I suggest.

Whether or not the two young men who were thrown out of our garden were the thieves, we cannot say, and we will never know, for silence has fallen. Lavandera says nothing now about her neighbor who is the uncle of a very bad boy. Luis is too cautious to make any report. Luz, if I ask her who she thinks the thieves are, says, "Best not to speak of these things." Justino, our driver, a Tagalog, says when I ask him, "Tut-tut-tut! These Filipinos!" Rustico, the new houseboy, a Visayan, says haughtily, "All these Tagalogs are thieves!"

But Esteban, the compound guard, solves the problem in the popular way by saying, "You see? No Filipino would do such a thing! There was Chinese initiative behind it. That's the way it is with these crimes, Chinese master minds plan them and make us poor Filipinos commit them."

"But Esteban, in this case the Chinese master mind got stung by the poor Filipino!" I suggest.

"You see? It served him right, ma'am."