

## A GOOD SON

A Story

By Antonio Muñoz

**M**ANY years ago a boy named Rico lived with his father and mother in a small house near a forest. The father was a woodcutter. He was a good man and everybody in the neighborhood liked him. The only trouble with him was that he was hot-tempered. Sometimes when he became very angry, he would whip Rico but he always felt sorry about it afterwards.

Rico loved his parents very much. He stayed at home most of the time because his mother needed him to fetch water, gather fuel, and run errands. He had a few chickens which furnished the family with eggs when they had nothing else to eat.

One day Rico saw a snake near the chickens' nest. To save the little chicks, he got his father's narra cane and struck the snake with it just as its head entered the nest. In his haste, he missed the snake and the cane hit a big stone on the ground. The cane broke. Rico took it back to the house and put it in its place. He knew his father would be very angry.

When the woodcutter came and discovered the broken cane, he was mad.

"Who broke my cane?" he thundered.

"I did, father," answered Rico. "A snake came and . . ."

Rico could not finish what he wanted to say for his father's whip was on his back. He did not say anything but tears rolled

down his cheeks. He knew that his father was again the victim of his bad temper.

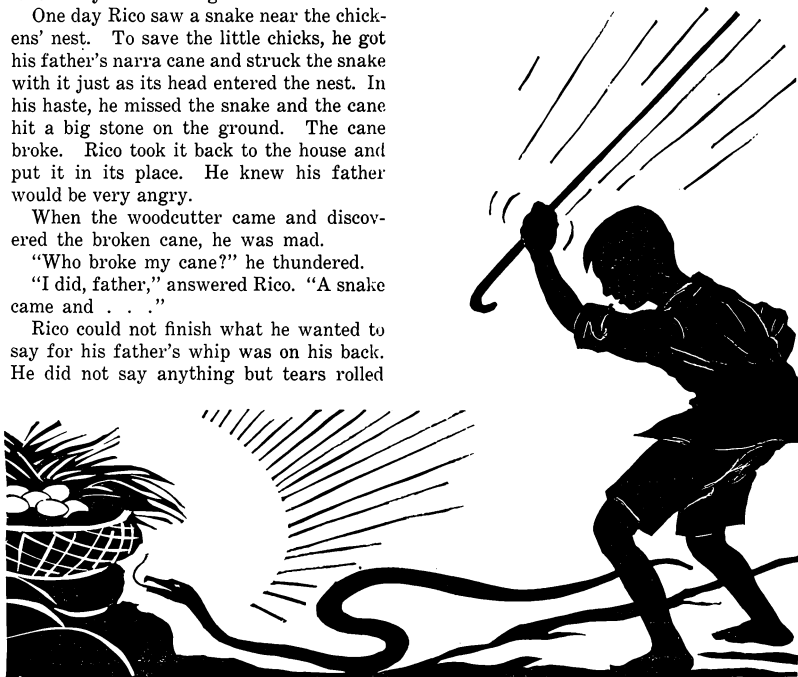
When his father went away, Rico knew that he was sorry. A few minutes later, he went to gather fuel under the trees. At noon he had a big bundle of dead twigs and branches. He sat down under a balet tree to rest.

"What are you doing here?" asked someone behind him.

Rico looked around and saw a beautiful lady standing near him.

"I am resting for I am very tired. I have

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just gathered a big bundle of fuel for my mother," answered Rico.

"Why is your back bleeding?" the lady asked him.

"My father whipped me because I broke his cane when I used it to kill a snake," Rico told her.

"Your father is cruel and you should do something to stop his cruelty," said the lady.

"No, my father is not cruel. He is hot-tempered. That is his weakness. Although he whips me sometimes, I don't think he is cruel for I know that he does not mean it and he always feels sorry afterwards," explained Rico.

"But you must do something to correct your father's temper. If you don't, some day he may kill you," argued the lady.

"What do you want me to do then?" asked Rico.

"Tonight," said the lady, "while your father is sleeping, get a big stone and give him a heavy blow on the forehead with it. That will cure his temper. Then lie down and go to sleep or pretend to be sleeping. In the morning your father will be cured of his bad temper."

"I cannot do it," Rico told her. "I love my father although he loses his temper sometimes and whips me. No, I cannot do it and I'll never do it."

"Listen, my boy," persisted the lady. "I hate your father because he is cruel to you. I like you and I don't want your father to abuse you."

"My father is taking care of mother and me," said Rico. "If he dies or becomes sick, we shall have a hard time. Nobody will support the family for I am too young to cut trees and mother cannot do hard work."

The lady smiled and said, "I can give you all that you need because I am rich. Come with me to the trunk of the baletre tree and I'll show you my wealth."

Inside the hole in the huge baletre tree, Rico saw piles of gold pieces. There were precious stones and jew-

## TITA'S DREAM

"Who are you?"

"Don't you know me? I am your friend. You play with me all the time."

"But I do not know you. I cannot see you. Where are you?" asked Tita looking around in the hope of seeing the unseen visitor.

"Listen!" said the voice. "And soon you will see me and know

els. They were very attractive and would tempt an ordinary person but Rico loved his father and was blind to all those riches.

"I love my father," he said finally, "and all the riches in the world cannot make me hate him or do him any harm. Please leave me or let me go now."

"Enough," the woman said. I am convinced now that you are a good and loyal son. I was just trying you. Now you deserve a reward. Take as much treasure as you can carry. You will find also that your father is cured of his bad temper."

Rico filled a small sack with gold coins and precious stones. After thanking the kind lady, he ran homeward as fast as his legs could carry him. When he reached home, he laid the sack in a corner at the foot of the stairs. He went up to his father with fear in his heart. He was surprised when he was greeted by his father in a very pleasant tone.

"Come to me, my son, and kiss your old father." And he pressed Rico against his breast. "Forgive me my child for having been so cruel to you at times."

"Oh, Father, let us forget the past. It was not your fault. I have a wonderful story to tell."

Rico ran downstairs for the sack. Placing it carefully before his parents, he related the story of the beautiful lady of the baletre tree. His parents were very happy over their good fortune, but they did not forget their poor neighbors. They shared their riches with the poor people. Everybody was made happy and prosperous because of a son's loyalty to his father.

who I am."

"I play with you all the time," continued the voice. "I cover the earth with bright sunshine. The birds sing, the butterflies flutter, and the flowers smile at the sky when I come to earth.

"When I come to wake you up from your sleep the air is still cold, the sky is soft and blue. The sun rises behind the mountains and smiles over the tops of the trees, the stars close their twinkling eyes to sleep, and the cock crows 'good morning' to the world."

"I paint the distant mountains with blue, the trees with green, and the flowers with all the colors of the rainbow.

"When I am about to go away the sun goes down behind the mountains against the western sky. And the sun makes the clouds into flowers of many colors—gold, yellow, red, blue and soft hazy purple. The heavens and the earth start to go to sleep.

"I make the people of all nations work, and I play with the children of all races."

Tita listened with amazement and wonder to the recital of the voice. When the voice ceased to speak, she recognized the speaker and understood the message.

"Yes, I know, now, who you are," she said with glad excitement.

"You are Day." And as she spoke, the place where she was sitting began to get dark and chilly.

"It is getting dark! Wait for a while, come back, talk some more, and play with me," cried the little girl.

"I cannot tarry any longer, I must go away for the night is coming," answered the voice as it receded away into the limitless distance.

Tita hardly heard the last word of the voice. It was already dark, and for an instant the flowers and the butterflies that she saw on the ground when it was yet bright seemed to have been transferred to the sky for the stars were already sparkling over head.

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