

The Story Of Ginger

By B. HILL CANOVA

Dear Young Citizens:

Come gather around and I will tell you the true story of my life. I am a little yellow cat and my name is Ginger. I have not had a very long life, but it has been rather interesting considering that I am a cat.

When I was born I was so very, very young that I do not remember the place or the time. The first thing I can remember about my life is one morning I was walking along on the wet pavement in the town plaza of Jaro, Iloilo. A light rain was falling, the wind was blowing and I was so cold. Not knowing what else to do, I crouched down in the shrubbery. I was too hungry to be able to think very well. I do not know how long I sat there shaking and shivering.

Presently I heard something going, "Tap, tap, tap." I looked up and two ladies were hurrying along in the rain. When I saw them I thought, "It must be nice to be ladies and have some place to go. It is so hard to be a poor, little lonesome, hungry cat with no place to go." Although I was ever so weak from hunger I managed to trot right to them and give a few faint meows.

"You poor little thing!" both ladies exclaimed. (One of these ladies was short and one was tall so I will speak of them as the short lady and the tall lady.) The short lady stooped and scooped me up in one hand.

"Look how thin and sick it is. It is cold too," she said.

"Here," offered the tall lady, "take my handkerchief and wrap it up."

I was so tiny then that the handkerchief was large enough to wrap me in. The short lady put the handkerchief around me snugly. "Will you carry this?" she asked the tall lady as she took something out of a small paper bag. The tall lady took the article and the short lady put me in the bag. "Now," she said, "the wind can't blow on the little wet thing." She left my nose, ears and eyes poking out of the bag so I could get plenty of air. She held me close to her and it felt mighty nice to be carried in a paper bag by a kind lady right through the plaza of my home town on a rainy day. I didn't say a word. I only sat still thinking how nice to be getting warm. A warm place means a lot to kittens.

"We must hurry home," suggested the tall lady, "and give the little creature some food. Here is a taxi, shall I call it?"

"Yes," agreed the short lady. Then she spoke to me, "Yes, little kitty-cat, you shall have something to eat soon. You are just skin and bones. The taxi will take us quickly."

"A taxi," I thought, but really I didn't think about the taxi very much for I was too busy thinking of the food the two ladies had mentioned. Now that it is all over I wonder how many cats have ridden in a taxi.

When we reached the home of the tall lady I heard dogs barking. I crouched as low as I could in my paper bag and

the lady held me close to her and spoke kindly so I did not feel afraid. The short lady was visiting the tall one and they both went into her house. As they went up the stairs the husband of the tall lady asked, "What is that in that bag?"

"Some fresh meat," laughed his wife.

"No, just a bundle of bones," corrected the short lady.

I did not mind them making jokes about me for I could tell that they were going to be good to me. They took me



to the back porch and quickly warmed a bowl of milk for me. Then they gave me a small fish. I did not like to eat so greedily but I was so hungry that in just no time I had lapped all the milk and gobbled down the fish. The place looked so strange to me but I felt ever so much better than I had felt when I crouched in the shrubbery in the plaza.

"The little dear is still hungry," said the short lady.

"Since he has been without food for so long I think it is not wise to give him too much at first. Suppose we give him a small amount every two hours until

he becomes accustomed to food," suggested the tall lady.

"That is right," said the other lady, "Now, little kitty, you must take a nice long sleep here by the kitchen stove." She made a little bed for me with an old towel.

I do not know how long I slept. The next thing I remember I was stretching and yawning on the little bed. When

I opened my eyes there the short lady was bending over me. "Yes, you tiny little thing, you slept like a top.



How about something more to eat?"

"Well, I was still hungry and something to eat sounded good to me. This

time she gave a bowl of rice and milk with a little sugar on it. This was so good and made me feel stronger but still I had no interest in playing. I just sat under the stove blinking at the cook as he went about his work. After a little the short lady came with a basin of boric-acid solution and small pieces of cotton. She washed my face, particularly my eyes and ears. I was still too weak from hunger to think about my looks. I did not feel like squirming to get away when the lady washed my face.

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"There," she said, "that makes you look better, even if you don't like it."

Several times during the day someone gave me more milk and a little fish. That night I was given a soft bed in a box. As far as I know that was the first bed I had ever had. I cannot remember where I had spent the nights before the two ladies picked me up in the Plaza. The next day the sun was shining



so I was taken out for a sun bath. In the garden I saw several cats. They belonged to the tall lady. I am sure they had never been hungry in their lives. They were so fat and full of play. A mother cat was giving one of her kittens a bath. I wanted to go near and play with the kitten but I was so shy that I only crouched by a tree. What else do you suppose that I saw in that garden with the cats? You may be surprised when I tell you that there was a nice brown dog romping and playing with the cats. He played with them as if he was

their big brother. Did you ever know of a dog with such lovely manners? During the second day I was fed several times and allowed to sleep by the stove. That afternoon the short lady came into the kitchen and picked me up saying, "You are just a handful of cat. Would you like to go home with me? I have a little boy, Tino, who would be so pleased to have a little might like you. He is a kind lad and I think you will like him."

I was not anxious to leave the house of the tall lady. I did not think any house could have so much food and good cheer. However, the short lady bundled me up in her arms, she and the tall lady got into a car, and off to the wharfs we went. This was my second ride in a car. This time I was feeling so much stronger than I had felt during my first ride, and I tried to take more notice of what was going on. The lady held me up on her shoulder and I looked about, thinking what big world this is.

When the short lady and I sailed away for Negros on the *S. S. Tañon* I was held up to the rail to give the tall lady a farewell look. I put my tail and ears up as proudly as I could to show her how well she had fed me while I was in her home. As we floated out the mouth of the Iloilo River I saw an airplane land in the near-by air port. I thought, "Well, I have traveled in a paper bag, in two cars and am now on a ship. I wondered if I should ever fly by plane. I rather doubt it. I think planes are better suited to

people than to cats.

I wanted to walk about and explore the ship, but it wobbled about so much and I did not feel strong enough to keep from falling. The short lady placed a chair for me beside her own chair, and I dozed along as she stroked my back. It is nice to have your back stroked when the ship rocks. At dinner time the table boy gave me some rice and fish. I think he must be a very nice boy for he helped me so gently from the chair to the deck when he gave me the food. And, Young Citizens, do you know that kittens appreciate gentleness, particularly on rocky boats?

Nothing very exciting happened during the night on the boat. I sat, wrapped in something warm, in a chair beside the lady's cot. The weather was smooth and the moon shone brightly. As dawn came I saw the eastern sky turn gray, then a deep red and gold. Just before the sun was up we landed at San Carlos. Cargadors carried the lady's baggage ashore, but she would trust no one to carry me. She took me in her arms and made me feel safe when we went down the gangplank. I could see the water below, and as you know, cats do not care to fall into water.

The lady, her baggage and I all got into a calesa. I thought, "My, my, there are so many ways to travel—paper bags, cars, ships, calesas," and I wondered what next.

When we reached the house everything was so still. Nothing, except the big red rooster and a few hens, were stirring

about. We crept into the back door. The lady peeped into the bedrooms. Every one was asleep. She moved about quietly and gave me some milk. Next she washed my eyes, ears, and paws with a boric-acid solution. She whispered into my ear, "You play around and I'll take a bath, and perhaps by that time Tino will be awake. He is going to be a proud little boy when he see you."

I walked slowly, slowly all through the house, looking under chairs and beds. I made up my mind that this would be a nice place to live. The milk I had had was so good. I could hear the water splashing in the bathroom. When the lady came out she was fresh and clean. She took me up and told me, "Now let's go into Tino's room. I expect he is awake." We peeped in and there on the pillow was a small boy with soft, brown eyes wide open.

"Oh!" he said, a little startled to see the lady. "you are at home. When did you get here. Oh!" he repeated when he noticed me in the lady's arms. "What is that?"

"A kitten. It is for you."

"Thank you," he cried and sprang out of bed. He took me in his arms ever so gently. "Good, little kitty," he said as he rubbed my back and head. He felt so warm that I started purring at once. "Is it really for me?" the little boy asked.

"Yes, you are to be its master."

"It isn't very fat," noticed the boy.

"No, I am afraid it has had a hard life thus far. We must feed it well and help it to grow strong."

"I'll let it have my egg for breakfast," offered Tino.

"We'll have an egg cooked for you and one for the cat too," said the lady.

Tino dressed quickly and went to the kitchen to tell the cook to prepare an extra egg for breakfast so the cat could have one. As he stood about the kitchen waiting for breakfast he noticed the spice cans standing on the shelf. On one of them he noticed the word "ginger." He did not know how ginger looked so he opened the can and peeped into it. "Why, it is just the color of the kitten," he said to himself. He ran in to the lady and shouted, "I have found a name for the kitten."

"That's good, what is it?" asked the lady.

"Ginger."

"Why, that is a fine name. The kitten looks as if he had been powdered with ginger."

"Tino went hopping back to the kitchen calling, "Ginger, Ginger, Ginger."

Breakfast was soon ready, and what do you suppose I had to eat? An egg and some bread soaked in milk! Did you ever hear of such a lucky kitten as I? Tino fed me many times during the day and I soon felt like playing. Tino had some marbles and pingpong balls. He rolled them and let me chase them. It is lots of fun batting

a pingpong ball with your front paw and then chase it all through the house. I think it is good to Tino to let me share his playthings. He has a little brush and every day he brushes my coat. I pur and pur while I am being brushed.

I have been with my little master several days now and am as happy as a kitten can possibly be. I am never hungry and am growing fatter and stronger all the time. All of my life that I can remember is just one week and I have told most of the important things that have happened to me during that time. As I said in the beginning, I was so young when I was born that I do not remember the time and place. Tino says I must be about a month old. A month is not a very long life. I hope to live much longer and hope to stay with Tino all of my life. He says there is a cat across the street that is fourteen years old. Perhaps I shall get acquainted with him some day and ask him how it feels to be so very, very old.

It is now time to go to sleep, and all young creatures need plenty of sleep. If anything else happens to me that I think will interest the Young Citizens I'll write you about it. Being a cat, of course, I can't actually write, but I'll put my mark by my name so you can see that this is a really true story.

Good night, Young Citizens,

GINGER