

Doves for Nani

By LORETO PARAS-SULIT

SHE waited with breathless interest as her Koyang paused to steady the cage before he unlocked its door. The doves around her, white, soft, and dainty, like this little round-eyed girl had stopped their cooing and stared at the newcomer.



"Oh, Koyang," whispered Nani excitedly, "don't let him out yet. He might fly away and return to Daddy. He looks so strong. He is not like these doves."

"And what is it? If it is not like a dove?" questioned Koyang with impatience. Girls were so dull and made queer absurd conclusions.

"Perhaps it is a parrot," answered Nonoy for Nani which earned him a pitying, sarcastic look from the Big Brother.

"All you can recognize is a fish," was his comment.

Mother who had come quietly behind laughed softly. "It is a pigeon, you little know-nothing dears. Don't let him out until he gets used to us. He might return to Daddy."

Nani gave her eldest brother a I-told-you-so look.

"What is the difference between this and those other doves Daddy has sent Nani," asked Choy of his mother.

"They look very much alike, don't they," explained Mother, "but some pigeons know how to return to their homes although they have been carried far away from them. So some people teach these pigeons to carry letters from one place to another. During war they are sometimes used to deliver messages. Now some newspapers use them to carry important news from one office to another."

"Can this pigeon carry a letter to Daddy?" asked Nani. Mother's eyes misted. "I don't know, sweet; Davao is such a far, far place. The poor bird might get tired and fall into the sea."

Nonoy was speculatively eyeing the plump gray bird. "Let us cook him on my birthday, sister," he announced. Nani cried out her indignant refusal.

Nani loved all her doves dearly for the sake of the Daddy who sent them to her, the Daddy whom she remembered only vaguely as a tall, oh, so gentle and kind a man who took her up at once when she cried. Her brothers said she was Daddy's sweetheart. But why did he not return to them. Instead he

sent her a beautiful white dove every year when her birthday was near. "For my Nani," that was what her Daddy always wrote to her mother. Three white doves and this strong, gray pigeon with the quiet, sure ways of—of—Choy when he was studying his lessons. Each bird stood for a year of Father's absence. One—two—three—four. She was so big now; next June she would study, Mother said. And Daddy was not yet here to see her go to school. Of course, it was fun to receive such a beautiful present every year much to the envy of her cousins. But she wanted to have a Daddy like them.

An idea came into her mind. As the idea grew, her eyes became rounder and brighter with the excitement it aroused in her. Then when she remembered she did not know how to write, her spirits fell. She had to have a helper. And she had wanted to do it all by herself. All day she was quiet and did not play. Mother often felt her forehead to see if she was feverish.

That afternoon Nani eyed her Koyang wistfully as he was writing in his notebook.

"Are you writing to Daddy?" she asked him.

"No, I am drawing a moon and some stars," he answered shortly.

She was silent for a while. Then timidly, "Koyang, will you write me a letter for Daddy?"

Choy frowned but seeing the pleading almost tearful face of his little sister, he softened, "Give me some paper. What do you want to tell Daddy?" Nani joyfully handed her brother the little piece of cardboard she was hiding.

"Tell him to come at once so I will have a Daddy like Noli and Nene and other children. Don't you think it is awful not to have our Daddy, here, Nonoy?" Her fat, round brother agreed with a grave "opo." "Tell him also, Koyang, to bring papayas, pineapples and oranges," he added.

"Won't that be too heavy for the pigeon to carry?" asked Nani before she knew she was letting out her precious



secret. But she realized she had to have the help of her brothers to tie the note around the pigeon's foot. So she explained the whole project to them.

They were as excited and enthusiastic as she. Choy laboriously traced out his letter while Nonoy went to look for a stout piece of string. Then amidst the struggles of the bird and the "arays!" of her Koyang, the message was tied to the pigeon's foot.

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DOVES FOR NANI

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Then—then—in awed silence, the cage was opened! The pigeon stared at the door of freedom. A turn about the cage as if he did not believe his eyes and then out—out to the skies above and their island clouds. It sailed far—far away till it was lost in the blue hills beyond.

That night it rained. The wind rattled the leafless branches of the trees outside. Nani could not go to sleep. She thought of her brave pigeon, of the darkness, and the rain and the wind. It seemed as if it was she who was flying in this rainy night above a great, great sea to carry a message to her father.

When her mother called her to say her prayers, she responded eagerly. And when she went with Auntie to Quiapo Church the next Friday morning, she pleaded, "Please, please, dear God, don't let my pigeon fall into the sea."

Many days passed. Nani wondered what had happened to her messenger. Mother, too, like her was much worried because the postman brought them no letter.

Then one noon as Mother was sending her and Nonoy to their afternoon nap, a Halili truck stopped in front of their house. Mother peeped out of the window and suddenly ran out. They heard her joyful exclamations. Nonoy left the bed and Nani was about to follow

HOMES OF SILK

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There must be time for the insect to be made over from a creeping caterpillar to a flying moth. This change takes place while it is a pupa.

The caterpillar does not wind the silk about itself as if it were a ball. It swings its head with a slow, steady motion, while the silk comes out of the opening through its lower lip as a very fine fiber. It holds its head up and guides the silk with its little hand-like feet that are near the head. Each kind of caterpillar makes its own kind of cocoon. When you go out this afternoon, try to look for a cocoon among the trees in your neighborhood. Do not disturb the sleeping owner for it has had a hard time building its home and it must be dreaming of future days when it shall fly as a golden butterfly among the flowers and green leaves.

him when someone rushed into the room.

She saw a tall man whose eyes held out all his love for her.

"Is this Nani?" he asked her as he gently kissed her. "I received your letter, Nani, and so here I am."

"Did he not fall into the sea?" she asked her Daddy later.

He shook his head and smiled at her. But he waited until she was asleep that night before he told Mother that the pigeon had flown to the ship that brought it and so was able to return again to him.

LEARNING NEW

(Continued from page 149)

II. Finding the correct words.

1. What words tell how the banca moved?

2. What words tell you that the bay was calm?

3. What word makes you see at what stage the moon was?

4. Find the words which tell how the companions sang.

5. Which word makes you see how the oarsmen paddled?

6. Say the word which makes you hear the sound of the water.

7. What name is given to the parts which prevent a banca from overturning?

8. We say that a banca *capsizes* when it overturns.

9. Answer number 7 again using another word in place of *overturning*.

III. Copy the new expressions you have learned. Use them in your own sentences. Use them in telling of your own experience about a ride in a banca.

KEY

- I. 3
- 5
- 7
- 8
- 10

- II. 1. glided smoothly
2. glassy surface
3. crescent
4. soft crooning
5. rhythmic strokes
6. splash
7. outriggers
9. The outriggers prevent a banca from capsizing.