

PABLO OF FLOWER MOUNTAIN



THE GOOD AND THE BEAUTIFUL LIBRARY

BY CHRISTINE VON HAGEN

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ILLUSTRATED BY ZHENYA GAY





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I



PABLO TALKS WITH PAPACITO

Pablo wanted something.

He wanted it so badly that it made him unhappy. His brown face, round as a coconut, had lost its usual carefree expression. His tilted dark eyes no longer sparkled with fun. And even his coarse black hair, which ordinarily sprang up wildly in spite of his peaked straw hat, seemed to lie down tamely.

All this was reflected in the pool of clear water in the noisy little stream where Pablo was washing dishes. Slowly he scooped up a handful of coarse yellow sand and scoured a tin plate. Just as slowly he tossed it behind him onto the crisp green moss which grew by the river. His unhappy frown deepened.

Pablo wanted a horse. For eleven years he had been content here in his home on the Mountain of the Flower

in Honduras. He lived in a neat little adobe house with his parents, his grandfather, his brothers, and his sister; he had two pairs of trousers and two shirts and an extra straw hat with a purple butterfly embroidered on the front. Best of all, there were always beans and hot corn cakes to fill his hungry stomach. Up until now these things had satisfied him. He had not known what it was to want anything else.

Pablo sat back and rested on his bare heels. Pushing his peaked straw hat off his forehead to the back of his head, he looked around him. The merry little river boiled at his feet. Tall, slender, green pine trees swayed overhead. And beyond this, as far as his quick eyes could see, stretched the rolling green hills that gave Honduras its name. *Hondo*—deep—it was well named, for the mountains resembled the deep, undulating waves of the great ocean.

Not that Pablo knew about the ocean, or any place else for that matter. His whole life had been spent right in these hills of the *Montaña de la Flor*, Mountain of the Flower, and he knew of other places only from his old grandfather and his father.

This was one of the reasons he wanted a horse so badly. He could picture himself, mounted on a fine black horse, riding over the hills and far away to visit the strange towns that lay somewhere beyond them. Besides that he just wanted a horse—something all his own for him to care for.

Pablo drew a deep breath and pulled at his ear with a wet hand, thoughtfully. How was he, Pablo Lopez, ever to get a

horse? He would need money, and that was the one thing he did not have. Not even his father had money.

Pablo's eyes followed the flight of a pair of red and yellow macaws that squawked noisily overhead. Straight as an arrow they flew, their long tail plumes streaming behind them like the tail of a kite until they came to rest in a tall pine tree just back of Pablo's home.

Pablo's home, like most of those in Honduras, at least in the mountains, was built of wattled walls plastered over with brown mud. It crouched on the hilltop until the brown walls almost seemed to melt into the brown earth of the clean-swept yard. The thatched roof of palm leaves had long since dried out and lost its green color until it looked like dried hay. Around the house was a fence made of split rails, and inside this the chickens scratched and the pigs rolled in the dust of the yard from morning until night.

A tall figure stepped through the narrow doorway into the warm sunlight. Hurriedly Pablo dipped another plate into the cold water. He did not want his father to see that he was not working. Angrily he clattered the plates together. That was another thing: he was eleven years old and he still had to do women's work around the house. Here in Honduras, a boy of his age should be a grown man, doing a man's work.

Señor Lopez approached slowly and squatted down near his youngest son. Idly he chewed on a blade of grass. The soft

pine-scented air blew over his forehead and stirred his curly beard. He sighed contentedly.

There was a long silence as Pablo tried to get up his courage. If anyone could help him, it would be his father.

“*Papacito*,” he said timidly, “*Papacito*, if you were a young boy, not quite a man, but almost,” he hurried over this last part for everyone in the family teased him because he was so small for his age, “and you wanted a horse, not a big one but just a small horse, what would you do?”



His father glanced at him with twinkling eyes. Then his face became serious as he considered the question.

“Well-l-l—a horse such as you mention would cost money. As much as twenty *lempiras* and no one we know has so much money.”

Pablo’s eyes fell. His forehead wrinkled more than ever. Just as he had thought, how could he ever hope to own a horse?

“But,” his father continued, “if I wanted one very much I think I would grow something in this fine soil.” He picked up a handful of dirt and let it sift through his bony, calloused fingers. “Then I would try to sell it. It might be beans or perhaps corn. Yes, corn would be better; there is always a market for corn. And with the money I would buy my horse,” he ended triumphantly.

Slowly the frown was erased from Pablo’s face. Of course! Why had he not thought of that himself? It would be simple to sell the corn and then he would have his horse.

“When—?” he began, waving a wet plate excitedly. Then his eyes lost their excitement. He had so often seen his father and his older brothers return from the cornfield high on the hillside, exhausted by their hard work.

First one had to clear the forest and burn the trees before the corn could even be planted. How could he, an eleven-year-old boy, do this by himself? No, that was not the way. Unless—

“*Papacito*, I want a horse of my own more than anything else in the world. If I had one, I could help you a great

deal. I could ride to Orica, and to the Indian village. Then I wouldn't be so slow." Pablo tried to be as persuasive as he knew how. "Would you help me plant a corn *milpa*?" he finished breathlessly.

"Well, my son, it takes a man to own a horse, and it takes a man to raise a crop of corn. You have always played instead of doing the work I have set you." His father looked accusingly at Pablo, who dropped his head.

It was true. Whenever his father sent him on an errand, he found so many interesting things to do on the way that, before he knew it, the day was gone and he had forgotten what he was sent for.

"When you are grown up enough to do a man's work, I will help you with your cornfield," his father promised.

Pablo's spirits sank lower and lower. It might be years before his father thought he was a man. In the meantime, he would have to do dishes and work around the house as he had always done.

Papa Lopez was thinking deeply. It had always worried him that his youngest son knew so few things. His other seven sons had learned a man's work almost from the time they could walk, but Pablo had been left in the house to help his mother and Maria, his only sister.

"Pablo, you have often heard me say," continued Papa Lopez seriously, "that to be a man and live in these wild mountains one must first of all know how to build a house

and make a clay stove. Then, if one is to eat, one must be able to make sugar from sugarcane, to care for the bean fields, and to make a corn *milpa*. Then there is hunting—and many other things. Otherwise, a man would be no better than the beasts of the forests, without heat and shelter, eating only wild berries and fruits.”

Pablo only half listened. He had heard this so often. As long as he could remember, there was an older brother to be taught how to live in the mountains. Now they were grown up, and only he, Pablo, was a little boy.

“Pablo, if you will learn these things carefully when I teach you, I will promise you something.”

The boy looked up.

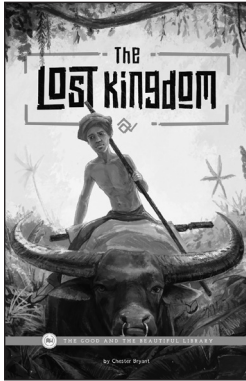
“I will promise that when I feel you are enough of a man, I will help you clear and plant a cornfield so that you may buy a horse.”

Pablo looked at his father eagerly to see if he really meant it. He would learn so fast his father would be surprised. His chest puffed out in pride.

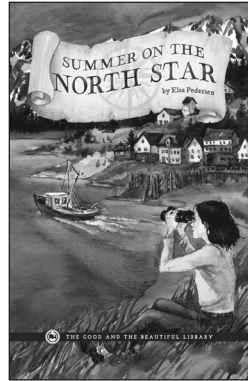
“*Sí, Papacito*. I will begin by making *raspadura*—brown sugar.”

His father paused, then went on, “Now you must finish the dishes.” With a backward glance of amusement, he walked away, leaving his youngest son to glower impatiently at the stack of dirty tin plates.

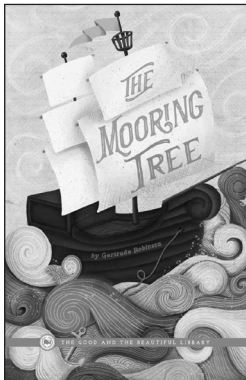
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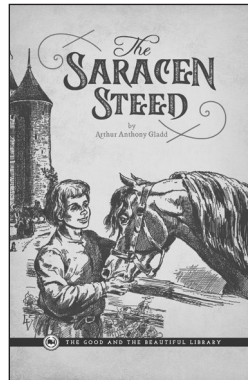
The Lost Kingdom
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Summer on the North Star
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The Mooring Tree
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The Saracen Steed
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PABLO OF FLOWER MOUNTAIN

Pablo lives high in the beautiful mountains of Honduras. Surrounded by his family, with plenty of corn to eat, and living in a clay house built by his papa, Pablo has almost everything he could want—almost. He has a deep but seemingly impossible wish. Join Pablo’s adventures as he pursues his wish and finds that life holds many challenges and wondrous surprises for a courageous boy.



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