

Kayumanggi

My young master, Pepe, found me near a creek while I was still a puppy. Pepe was then looking for a place to hide while three bully *mestizo* boys were after him. When he took me home, Mang Delfin, his father, scolded Pepe.

“Why did you take that puppy?” Mang Delfin asked. “*Itay*, I cannot leave a poor and hungry puppy alone in a cold night,” Pepe explained.

“We barely have anything to eat. What will you feed that puppy?” his mother, Aling Tikang asked.

“*Akong* has lots of left-over foods from his *panciteria*. I am sure *Akong* would not mind if I take it home instead after I clean the tables,” Pepe said.

“What if his owner looks for him?” Aling Tikang asked. I think his owner left him intentionally as he is a half-breed. Can I keep him, *Inay*? If he is left wandering on the streets something bad might happen to him,” Pepe said.

“I saw a notice at the *plaza* that locally-breed dogs should be kept well in their backyards. Otherwise, the *guardia civil* will shoot any local stray dog on the spot. I heard that the *hermano mayor* included a dog parade and dog race for this year’s *fiesta*. Only the aristocrats’ pure-breed dogs can participate,” Mang Delfin added.

“You had always been a very good boy. You can keep the puppy for your coming birthday, *Anak!*” Aling Tikang said.

“What name will you give to the puppy?” Mang Delfin asked. “I will name him *Kolate!* It’s a short version of his full name, *tsokolate*. His brown color reminded me of the rich *tsokolate* we drink to keep us warm during the cold mornings of December,” Pepe explained.

While I was still a puppy, I stay at the *kubo* with Aling Tikang since Pepe helps Mang Delfin in the fields and also works at Akong’s *panciteria*.

When Pepe comes home in the afternoon, I jump on his lap, lick his palm and wag my tail. I also like fetching Pepe’s stick. Pepe gives me a pat on the head as I catch it with my mouth and bring it back.

As months have passed, I have grown bigger. I am now able to bring Pepe a clean pair of *tsinelas* and place his muddy slippers at the *batalan*.

One day, Pepe told Aling Tikang that he will be bringing me to the *panciteria*.

“*Inay*, I am going to take *Kolate* with me today,” Pepe said. “Would it be alright with *Akong* to bring a dog?” Aling Tikang asked. “*Akong* told me to bring *Kolate*. He wants to see my dog when I told him that the left-overs are for *Kolate*,” Pepe said.

At the *panciteria*, “Aba, Pepe, is that the dog you are talking about?” *Akong* asked. “Yes, *Akong*. His name is *Kolate*. He is a helpful and friendly dog,” Pepe said.

“He is a healthy-looking dog. He must have liked the food from the *panciteria*. And look at his big dark brown spot on his forehead...It’s a good luck sign. He will bring good fortune for my business and can also guard the *panciteria* during night time,” *Akong* said.

“But *Akong*, he’s been with the family for six years year now. *Kolate* is not for sale,” Pepe said.

“You are a young man now, Pepe. So, how about if I exchange your dog for a horse instead? In a year or two, you will be able to ride it already. A horse looks much better for a young man than a dog. I will also give you a cow which will be more useful for your family,” *Akong* convinced.

Whenever I miss Pepe, I always recall what he said to *Akong*. “*Kolate* is my beloved dog, *Akong*. He is very special to me,” Pepe said.

Some days after Pepe brought me to *Akong’s panciteria*; the *capitan* announced at the *plaza* that all Filipino males, 16-60 years old will be required to work. Pepe and Mang Delfin were among the men who were sent-off to build a road in another province.

“It has been almost two years now since Pepe and my husband left. I am glad that I have you here, Kolate,” Aling Tikang said.

“Without you, our chickens could have been stolen. I would have been scared to gather fruits in the forest without a companion,” Aling Tikang said.

The following day, “Kolate, Kolate! Come quickly. Look...” Aling Tikang said. “Aw! Aw! Aw!” I barked. “Oh, Kolate, I thought you wouldn’t recognize me. I am happy to see you,” Pepe said.

That night, “Have you thought about it, *Anak?*” Mang Delfin asked. “Yes, *Itay*. I will be leaving and join them,” Pepe said. “Must you do this, *Anak?*” Aling Tikang asked.

“Yes, *Inay*. I am sorry for leaving so soon but this will be for a good cause,” Pepe said.

“*Anak*, I am already old. I cannot join you anymore in this fight. I will stay behind with your mother,” Mang Delfin said. “Don’t worry about us. We can take care of ourselves. *Anak*, please take Kolate with you. At least, you will have someone by your side,” Aling Tikang said.

Are we going to fight monsters? Will this be a dangerous journey for me and Pepe? I did not quite understand actually what Pepe and his parents

discussed. But, knowing that I will be going with Pepe far from home sounded like an adventure for me. “Ruff! Ruff! Ruff!” I said excitedly.

Early next morning, Pepe and five more young men joined him. As they were trekking the forest trail, they met three *guardia civils*.

“Halt! What are you doing here?” the *guardia civil* asked. “Aha, you are armed as well,” the other *guardia civil* said.

“Arf! Arf! Arf!” I barked. “Oh, we thought you were rebels. Be careful on your hunting,” the last *guardia civil* said. What a smart dog! Wow, two wild birds retrieved...”the *guardia civil* said. “And look...he is now picking woods for fire,” the other *guardia civil* said.

It was already night when we reached an old house. Several men were already gathered. Pepe told me to stay downstairs.

“Aw! Aw! Aw! I barked. “Kolate, I told you to stay downstairs!” Pepe said. “Ruff!” I said. Then, I pulled his pants forcing Pepe to stand up. “Kolate, stop this! This is not a time for playing,” Pepe said.

“Grrrowl!” I said. Then, I continued to pull his pants until we were near the window. “*Mga Kapatid*, prepare! The *guardia civils* are coming,” Pepe said.

The following day, “Pepe, the *Supremo* wants to see you. *Ka Andres* also said to bring your dog,” Ka Pilo said.

“Pepe, I heard about your dog. He saved us twice. What is your dog’s name?” *Ka-Andres* asked.

“His name is Kolate. It is like *tsokolate*,” Pepe said. “I would like to christen him with a new name, Pepe. His dark brown color reminds me of *kapeng barako*, a very strong coffee which we, Filipinos drink,” *Ka Andres* said.

The *Supremo* tied a red scarf on my neck with my new name, “*Kayumanggi*.” It is the esteemed color of the brave brown race. “Awwwwr! Awwwwr!” I said. In my doggie language it means, I am proud to be a canine *Filipino Katipunero*.