

Nydia Ecury



Promises Should Be Kept

MY MOTHER DID NOT LIKE US TO WEAR MUCH JEWELRY, EXCEPT MAYBE a gold chain with a medal of the Virgin Mary and the Sacred Heart.

But! In those days there was a sort of candy to be had, that came in a little box, which sometimes contained a surprise as well. So when my brother four years my senior got a ring with a blue stone in his box of candy, he was the king in our yard. We stopped all of our games to surround him and admire the ring. We begged and begged to try it on and finally the brother two years younger was allowed to do so. Worse luck, the ring broke into two measly pieces. The apologies did not stop the ring owner from crying his heart out. Our mother, whom we called Mai, came out to see what was going on.

"My ring, my ring is all broken", the boy sobbed.

"Dry your tears", Mai said. "Look", she continued, "see this ring on my finger? It is set with diamonds and a pearl and when I die, I shall leave it to you, okay?"

We all clustered around her. The pearl was lustrous and the diamonds seemed to wink at us.

The boy nodded and dried his tears and Mai went back into the house. But she had hardly done so, when my brother started crying again.

Out came Mai once more.

"So what's wrong now?" she asked.

The boy said: "I don't know how long it will take before you die!"

"Be brave", Mai said with a smile. "All you have to do is wait."

Pretty, pretty Mai. She thought it was the joke of the day. Her laughter pealed like little silver bells as she walked away.

Irony would have it that of all the thirteen children she bore, this boy turned out to be the only one who did not survive our parents.

Studying in Holland, he was caught by World War II and joined the resistance.

Caught by the enemy, he was put to death.

After his remains were found, they were buried with military honour on our native island. The coffin was sealed.

A thought that occurred to me over and over after my brother's burial was that Mai should wear the ring when she, herself, would come to die.

Promises should be kept. Since she could not give my brother the ring on this side of life, maybe on the other side?

