

ATENAS TODAY



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***ATENAS TODAY** is a free English language newsletter for the residents and potential residents of Atenas, Costa Rica. It contains informative articles and creative compositions submitted by our readers, and is distributed via email approximately once a month to over 350 email addresses. To get on the distribution list or to submit material, please send an email to Fred Macdonald at fredmac222@yahoo.com.*

Compositions from back issues are archived by category on the Atenas Chamber of Tourism and Commerce website, www.atenascatuca.com. Click on the English version and then [Atenas Today](#) on the business page.

The Plan

by Harriet Sheppard

This is not really my story. It belongs to my friend. I've been thinking about it for so long, I'd like to tell it.

It was mid-afternoon, lunch was over and the clouds were just beginning to come from the Pacific. It was time for a rest. My friend was browsing the books on the table next to her looking for one that would soothe her into a small nap. She found the perfect book, a light mystery, neither demanding nor boring. She listened to the children from across the street giggling in that conspiratorial way that kids do. She heard them often this time of day and it was a pleasant background timbre.

Lots of kids lived in the house across the road, a small green house with a prominent clothesline. My friend had remarked upon how they got their whites so white without a washing machine. There was a general atmosphere of busy ease over there, considering the number of people who inhabited the house.

She relaxed into her book. It was one of those bestsellers with a predictable set of characters and plot. After several minutes she realized she had not comprehended the last two pages. A yet unnamed thing distracted her. She put her book in her lap and tilted her head toward the window. The laughter, closer now, had gained intensity. She looked around for her walker, and as she did so, a ragged edge hemmed the laughter. This commotion was clearly in her own yard. What they were up to? She smiled and gently eased each of her legs off the ottoman, placing them gingerly on the floor. Groaning, she rose slowly, hefting herself up with her walker, the result of a recent hip replacement operation. She thumped her way toward the back patio.

In the distance she could see that two of the children, a boy and a girl about 10 years old, were running and chasing their small dog, Pelochin. (hairy chinaman) who was a long-hair spotted thing, about the size of a Pekinese. Seen through the wrong end of a pair of binoculars, he was the spitting image of a hunting dog. Snapping and growling, he was chasing chickens, a black and white one, a shiny red and black rooster and a few multicolored ones. There was a great herding effort in progress. The children were herding the dog, and the dog was herding the chickens. . The herding/hunting instinct in Pelochin's genes before his ancestors mated with a Chihuahua, had surfaced full bloom.

Within seconds, Pelochin had narrowed the herding down to the black and white chicken. The children, stumbling into each other and laughing, prodded the dog toward the backyard fence. "Oh lord," my friend thought, "they're riling up Hera (her dog) and all hell's going to break loose when Hera sees that chicken." A sled dog, with a rich thick coat of red, Hera had a history with chickens. As my friend ambled slowly toward the commotion and was about to say something like, "Get those chickens away from Hera," all Spanish words froze in her mouth. Rigid, she watched the squawking chicken, run

toward the fence where a snarling Hera waited wagging her entire body. Pelochin urged the chicken closer and closer until it had to choose - the fence with Hera on the other side or Pelochin's sharp little teeth. Trembling, the chicken stretched its neck though the fence peddling its feet in a futile attempt at escape, whereupon Hera, smiling and excited, snapped the chicken's head clean off. A butcher could not have done it more efficiently. Hera galloped to the other side of the yard and ate the chicken head in a biting frenzy. In a matter of seconds she gulped one last time, licked her lips and grinned.

Distraught, my friend watched silently as a few feathers moved gently in the grass. Pulling a chair out from the porch table, she sat. She had to recover from the sheer barbarity of the moment. Her sweet Hera, with the sensitive manner and intelligent eyes had acted like a wild animal. Reflecting on the dichotomy of Hera's gentle conduct in the house and her savage consumption of the chicken, she remembered the cultural lag between tame dog and wolf. It wasn't a pleasant thought.

Pulling herself slowly up out of the porch chair, she looked toward the children and the still prancing chicken. The children chased the headless thing and laughed with abandon. My friend stared and stumbled lightly against her walker. Regaining her internal balance, she realized there was no remorse or sadness in their dance. Instead there was glee and conspicuous gaiety. The children were thrilled. They picked up the chicken and skipped away.

Tired now, she limped back to the sofa and eased herself into its comfort. Reviewing recent events, she questioned whether or not the kids had orchestrated the entire incident. Had their mother told them to go kill a chicken? Who wants that job? Or, had they wanted chicken for dinner, if so how? Had they come up with this triumphant plan? Hera had a good piece of meat. They had a headless chicken ready for the pot and my friend didn't have to apologize for her misbehaving dog.

I choose to believe that they were the architects of a plan born of a life without plastic toys and internet games; a plan born of a childhood with an old box and a ripe imagination with which to play; a plan of ingenuity and creativity, and in my opinion a really fine plan.

Recycling in Atenas

Atenas has an active recycling program. You can bring your recyclables to the APRODISIA collection station Monday through Friday, from 7 am to 3:30 pm. The station is located between the Red Cross and the Caja Medical Center.

If you have a large quantity, you can call APRODISA at 446-8088 and arrange for a pickup at your house.

Items must be separated as follows:

1. Paper (all types except carbon paper)
2. Cartons (all types except milk cartons)
3. Plastic containers (all types)
4. Glass (clear and colored, except mirrors and windshields)
5. Aluminum containers (all types)
6. Car batteries

Please rinse away food particles to discourage insects and rodents.