



Catalina of Dumaguete

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There is no one on the great island of Negros who does not love the name of Catalina. Even the wild mountain men speak it with respect, and down in the coast towns at night, when the typhoon is lashing the waters of Tañon Strait, and the rain and wind make the nipa leaves on the roofs dance and rattle, the older people gather their little black-eyed grandchildren around the shell of burning cocoanut oil and tell them her story.

Many years ago there lived in Dumaguete a poor tuba seller named Banog, who made his daily rounds to the houses just as the milkman does in far-off America. But instead of a rattling wagon he had only a long bamboo from which he poured the drink, and in place of sweet milk he left the sap of the cocoanut tree.

The bad custom of mixing tuñgud, a kind of red bark, with the sap, and thus making of it a strong liquor, had not yet been known, so Banog, though poor, was respected, and the people tried in every way to help him and his daughter Catalina.

Catalina was a beautiful girl of sixteen and very good and industrious, but with many strange ways. She scarcely ever spoke a word and spent most of her time in looking out over the sea. Sometimes she would suddenly stand erect and, clasping her hands, would remain for a long time looking up at the sky as if she saw something that no one else could see. On account of these strange manners the people thought her a wonderful girl and she was supposed to have mysterious powers.

One day many ships came up from the island of Mindanao and hundreds of fierce Moros landed. Shouting and waving their terrible knives, they fell upon the peaceful people and killed many, among them poor Banog. Then they robbed and burned the houses and, seizing all the women they could find, set sail for their great southern island. Among the prisoners was Catalina. With her eyes fixed on the sky she sat very quiet and still in the bow of one of the boats, and though her companions spoke often to her she made no reply.

Suddenly she sprang into the water and a wonderful thing occurred, for, instead of sinking, she walked lightly over the waves toward the distant shore. The Moros were so astonished that they did not try to stop her and she reached the land safely.

Many people who had hidden in the forests ran out to meet her but she spoke to no one. With her eyes still fixed above she walked through the burning town and along the road to Dalugdug, the Thunder mountain, that lies behind Dumaguete.

On Dalugdug there lived a terrible Sigbin. Its body was like that of a monstrous crow, but just under its neck were two long legs like those of a grasshopper, which enabled it to leap great distances without using its wings. It ate any one who came near its home, so when the people saw Catalina start to climb the mountain they begged her to come back. She paid no heed to their cries, however, but went up higher and higher, till her white dress seemed merely a speck on the mountain side.

All at once she seemed to stop and raise her hands. Then a fearful shriek was heard, and the fierce Sigbin came rushing down the mountain. It appeared to be greatly frightened, for it took tremendous leaps and screamed as if in terror. Over the heads of the people it jumped, and, reaching the shore, cleared the narrow channel and disappeared among the mountains of the island of Cebu.

When the people saw that the Sigbin had gone they ran up the mountain and searched everywhere for

Catalina, but they could find no trace of her. Sorrowfully they returned to their homes and busied themselves in building new houses and in making their town beautiful once more.

Several years passed in peace and then again the Moro boats came up from Mindanao. The men hurriedly gathered on the beach to meet them, and the women and children hid in the cocoanut groves.

This time the Moros had no quick and easy victory, for the Visayans, armed with bolos and remembering their lost wives and sisters, fought furiously, and for a time drove the enemy before them. But more Moro boats arrived and numbers told against the defenders. Slowly but surely they fell fighting until but a few remained.

Suddenly a bridge of clouds unfolded from Dalugdug to the town, and across it came the lost Catalina holding a beehive in her hands. Then she spoke and thousands of bees flew from the hive to the ground. Again she spoke and waved her hand, and the bees changed into little black men with long sharp spears, who charged the Moros and killed every one of them.

Then Catalina, the hive still in her hand, went back over the bridge and disappeared once more in the mountain.

The people came out of their hiding places, crowding around the little black men and questioning them, but they received no answer. Instead the little warriors gathered together and ran into the forest and up the mountain side, where they were soon lost to view.

Such is the story of Catalina, Since that time Dumaguete has been safe from the Moros. The Sigbin has never returned to Negros. It still lives in the mountains of Cebu and the people are so afraid of it that they lock themselves in their houses after dark and can hardly be induced to come out. Up in the mountains of Negros live the little black men. They are called Negritos and are very savage and wild.

The savior of Dumaguete still lives in Dalugdug and is worshiped by the people. And in the town, now grown into a big busy city, the old people for years to come will tell their grandchildren the story of Catalina.

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