

The Escape of Juanita

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Philippine

Easy
3 min read

Have you heard of the terrible Tic-balan,
A tall and thin and very black man,
With terrible teeth and a horse's head,
And covered with hair that is long and red?
He lives in the awful Balete tree,
And to pass the place you must say "Tabi";
If you do not, the Asuang comes at night,
And throws big stones till you die of fright.
Now once there lived in Santa Cruz town
A little girl known as Juanita Calaan;
She was gentle and sweet and as good as could be,
And she always bowed low to the Balete tree.
One day to the forest alone she did roam
To get some good wood for the fire at home;
She gathered some twigs that she found on the ground,
And all of them fast in a bundle she bound.

Then happy and free, with the pack on her head,
She followed the road that back to town led.
She sang as she walked, and so happy was she
That alas! she bowed not to the Balete tree.
All at once then she heard a most terrible roar,
And the Tic-balan fierce through the air seemed to soar.
He seized poor Juanita, and quick as could be
He shut her inside of the Balete tree.
Two days passed, and when the girl failed to come back,
Her parents went out, and no friends did they lack
To help in the search, for the whole pueblo came,
And loudly they shouted poor Juanita's name.
At last when they thought that the search brought no good,
One man found Juanita's neat bundle of wood;
He called the good news, and as more came to see,
Loud knocking was heard in the Balete tree.
Then many were frightened, but many were brave,
And wondered by what means the girl they could save;
For they knew that it must be Juanita who knocked,
And that inside the Balete tree she was locked.
Soon they ordered that candles and music be brought,
And a crucifix holy was what they next sought;
And when all was ready they closed round the tree,
While they prayed to the true God to set the girl free.
They lighted the candles and then the band played,
And Juanita's mother, who was not afraid,
Advanced with the crucifix held in her hand,
And tapped with the cross on the evil tree grand.
Then a roar shook the forest and chilled all their hearts,

And the awful Balete split into two parts;
Then they saw in the center, as each big half fell,
Their darling Juanita all smiling and well.
She ran from the tree to her fond mother dear,
While the band played and every one gave a loud cheer;
Then back to the pueblo they danced in delight,
And kept up their singing through all the long night.
Still there to this day lies the Balete tree,
But no more do the people that pass say "Tabi."
And the spirit no more can molest any man,
For God has more power than the fierce Tic-balan.

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