

# • LITERARY ATTEMPTS •

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## The Deluge At Bay

By T. M. B.

When the skies are clear blue above the Laguna Lake, at Bay, the oldest town of Laguna, and when the tides are low, one may take a banca and about a mile from the shore touch the top of the former church-tower of that town. If the lake water is not turbid, one, by dipping his face, can see the cross under the water. Some people say that when Mount Makiling erupted many years ago, and this fact is borne out by an article written by one Abella Casariego, a forest engineer of the Spanish forest service in the Philippines in the eighteen hundreds, the earthquake and upheaval, the like of which had never been seen before, shook the earth so heavily, that in certain places, the ground caved in, swallowing up houses like a gargantuan monster. In other places where the soil was loose, huge structures like churches, mansions and schoolbuildings; that is, what remained of them, sank in the soggy soil like heavy booted feet going through mud and muck in a swamp.

An old woman, at whose granddaughter's home I happened to be a week-end visitor, told us that the cause of the deluge that had engulfed the town had been the three sisters, Maria Makiling, Maria Mayondon, and Maria Tungtugin, after whom a mountain and two hills were named. Accordingly, they had a quarrel with the Spanish friar, for not waiting for them as he was wont to do when he, after impatiently waiting, said mass one Sunday without them.

"It happened, one Sunday," said Lola Basiang, "that after waiting for almost half an hour for them, and the congregation was getting restless, as a matter of fact, the men folks had started going out, the parish priest decided to say the mass. Then as the host was being elevated, the rumble of carriage wheels and the clatter of hoofs was heard

above the ringing of the bell. Everybody turned around. Then the inaudible whispers growing into a drone attracted the priest's attention. As soon as he had made the consecration, the priest told the *sacristan mayor* to close the church doors. You should have heard the banging at the door and the hysterical shouts of three maddened women. The congregation was scandalized, and no longer could follow the service; the priest himself was so visibly irritated that when he noted that one of the sacristans was looking around instead of minding his own business, he turned around and losing his temper, he let go one hard kick that sent the poor frightened rogue, rolling down the altar like a beer keg, and got his head stuck between the communion railings that for all his howling and wiggling, he could not get out. The more the congregation was scandalized. The titter of the children and the girls was soon drowned by the guffaws and roar of the men. The priest, like a maddened bull, shouted at the congregation to 'keep quiet in the house of God!'

"By this time, the church door was broken open, and the three sisters, mad like a hornet's nest, rushed up the aisles, crashed through the altar railing's gate, and running up the altar demanded from the priest why he did not wait. Before the palefaced priest could say a word, the three sisters pounced on him like three hungry cats on a fat mouse. When they stopped, the poor priest was a specimen of wrecked humanity. He tried to get up, but it seemed that his spinal cord had been broken, and his face was so red, one would have mistaken it for a huge gumamela that was stuck on a priest's robe. Then the three sisters called for the coach driver to pick up the priest and put him in their coach. As the coach drove away, the whole town followed like a swarm of bees.

"Outside the walls through the gate, they saw the sisters opening an iron cage and

telling the coach driver to pitch in the priest or whatever was left of him. The priest tried to stand up but could not. He held on to the bars but he sagged down on his knees. The three sisters spat on him and mocked him. 'Now,' said Maria Tuntungin, 'Let's see what you can do. Call on your Master to help you.' And she laughed, and her diabolical laughter echoed from the patio to the walls outside, on which many boys by now were sitting. The priest just mumbled and mumbled, his fingers running from one bead to another on a rosary that hung from his belt

"But the three sisters kept taunting him, and the crowd joined them. The boys clambered down the walls, picked stones, and pelted the helpless priest inside the cage. Soon the men and then the women had become like blood-thirsty hounds, and in blood-curdling shouts yelled, 'Let's kill him.'

"As the priest tried to say something, a stone hit him between the eyes and he fell with a heavy thud. Then in a very clear voice they heard him say, 'Your town will be cursed. Nothing will be left of your church. The whole town will appear under water.'

"But they only laughed like possessed by a thousand devils. And when the priest was taken out from the cage, they trussed him up in a cornfield. When the sun was setting, his figure was etched against the blood-red horizon like a scarecrow. Then as the evening shadows deepened, eerie sounds as of moaning could be heard. The clouds began to darken the face of heaven. Gusts of wild winds had begun in good earnest. Then a heavy rain followed and kept pouring for days without a let up. Then the waters in the creeks, brooks and rivers began to swell and the lake soon overflowed its rim and the water rushed under houses, flooding the streets and ricefields. Then Mount Makiling began belching forth fire and lava. A heavy earthquake shook the earth. The church began to crumble to pieces. The tower alone, like a huge finger pointing to an

angry heaven, stood. Other buildings toppled over. Trees and nipa huts wobbled and the earth trembled again, opened up, and the flood water in gurgling sounds carried everything with it to the bosom of the earth. Only the tower remained. There it was, pointing to the sky. Then the water rose higher and higher. Those who had remained at home, and had not participated in the blood orgy at the mansion of the three sisters, were able to cling to floating lauans carried by the water from the forest of Makiling. For days and days it rained and the water rose higher and higher. Many died in the flood. Only the good ones were able to save themselves clinging to driftwood. My grandmother tells me that of the many families that once lived in the town only ten survived. And these ten survived by tying the log to which they clung for life to the cross of the steeple. And they prayed and asked for forgiveness for their town and for the eternal rest of the priest's soul. It is said that the two sisters, Tuntungin and Mayondon were turned into barren and ugly looking hills. And the once beautiful summit of Mt. Makiling was scooped out and scarred by fire and smoke and since then it began leaning and perhaps some day will topple down, too."

## The Devil's Bride

By T. M. B.

There was not a thing which God did, which the Devil did not also like to do. But generally, he was given permission to assume all forms and shapes when God and he wished to put to the test the faithfulness of man, woman, and child. He had succeeded on some occasions and on others, he failed, as in the case of Job. This time it was a woman and he laughed because in his black heart he knew that like Eve, this woman would also fall an easy prey to his blandishments.

And so, one day he decided to see this strange woman, who lived by herself in a

very big but haunted mansion, with no one except an old woman, who looked like a witch, and half a dozen black cats. Since the death of her lover, someone whispered that he died because of poisoning, by no other person save this woman, who, in a frenzy of jealousy, poured arsenic in his drink. But the children dared not see her, except through the grills, covered by a tangle of bougainvillea vines, of an old iron fence and behind bushes and trees. She seldom left the house. And this she did only once a year. That was on All Saints' Day. She wore a red dress, though, when everyone wore nothing but black or purple. No one visited her. There seemed to be no one interested in her, nor in her life, so that to the townspeople, she did not exist. Only the gossipers "chewed the rags" about her. Even they, too, tired of her. Until one day something happened, that made everyone in town sit up and take notice.

This began a ripple of ugly gossip. A handsome young man in a four-horse carriage stopped before the rickety gate of a ramshackle, vine-covered iron fence. The stranger, so handsome that many of the town belles gasped for breath at the sight of him, wended his way on the weed-covered walk and with the smoothness of gait never seen in a human being, he sailed towards the door. The hard knock brought out the old maid, who rushed in, bringing to the door her mistress. From that day, every afternoon until late at night, the young man was seen visiting the strange woman.

Then one Sunday, the somnolent town awoke from its lethargy when the parish priest announced from his pulpit that the strange woman was getting married. The groom, the young man. It was agreed that the priest would solemnize at her home. The whole town was invited, but only the curious ones went. And what was served there became the talk of the town for months. The food was delicious beyond compare. The music seemed to come from hea-

ven. Everybody wanted to find out who the groom was.

On the night of the wedding, when the groom entered the bride's bedroom, he revealed himself at last. Two horns protruded under his silky curly hair. And in his slippered feet, it was not hard to distinguish the goatlike hooves that were his feet. The strange woman was not afraid. She told the devil that she would not allow him to sleep with her until the ninth day. And the devil sulkily had to sleep in an adjoining room. He cursed himself for his ill luck. But he thought it best to bide his time. After all, what is nine days in a devil's life. And so he patiently waited. In the meantime, the strange woman had started saying a novena to St. Anthony, asking him to help her, if he was really miraculous, and to see to it that the devil could not touch her. On the ninth day, when the devil tried to enter, he was met with a balderdash that sent him reeling. And before he could recover, another blow felled him again. Not wishing to get additional punishment, he rushed out of the room, and locked himself in his room nursing three big bumps on his head.

The second night he tried again to enter the woman's room. All of a sudden he felt a whiplash on his back that bit into his skin like a million scorpions. It was not long. The instrument that sent cold shivers up and down his spines was only a rosary. But a rosary to a devil is more painful than leather thongs.

And what was worse, the food that was served by this woman was no better than hog wash. The toast was no toast at all. It was bread turned charcoal. The soup was like mud, and what was worse, it was cold as ice. Every time he sat down, the devil was afraid that he was getting ulcers, not because of the food but because of worry and anger. Anger gnawed at his heart and soul.

When he could no longer stand it, he decided that there would and should be a showdown. But when he started the argu-

ment, he found that this reticent woman could be turned into a machine gun of words that burned like acid. Then, when he knew that he was no longer a match for this virago of a woman, he decided to go back to Hades.

When he arrived, the lesser devils were surprised to see how changed he was. He was pale and every time he heard a rustle as of starched skirts, he would jump as if stung. Every time there was a knock at the door, he would shout, "Find out first who knocks . . . if it is a woman . . . don't let her come in."

"How do we know she is your wife?"

"Ask me no questions!" he bellowed. "Just take a quick look at her and if she is different from the rest . . . then it is she. Then by the seven tails of the lightning bolt that door."

Since then, it is said, that that strange woman's town became devil-free, the people went to mass every day, they took holy communion, not as the church ordered them,

but because they felt it their duty to be good and religious. There were no heretics. No bloodshed nor any crime . . . at least until the strange woman died. But she was known to the people who, after all now could gossip knowing that she was ten feet below, as the "Devil's Bride."

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A wise man reflects before he speaks; a fool speaks, and then reflects on what he has uttered.—*Delile*

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A quick and sound judgment, good common sense, kind feeling and an instinctive perception of character, in these are the elements of what is called tact, which has so much to do with acceptability and success in life.

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Speaking much is a sign of vanity; for he that is lavish in words, is a niggard in deeds.

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Life without danger would be like meat without mustard.—*J. B. S. Haldane.*

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The principal products of the Philippines are sugar and politics.—*Roger Babson, Statistician.*

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