



## The Golden Image of Sri Visaya

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(Continued from November Issue)

**N**EXT day the men and boys, including Pablo, sallied forth to slay the mighty monster. They were armed with spears and bolos and carried the strong net of rattan.

The day before they had sent a scout to follow the trail left by the great heavy snake. He had found that it led to a cave at the base of a cliff.

They hiked steadily for almost three hours before they reached the cliff. Then they rested, so that they would be fresh and alert. They drank from a small stream, and sprawled on the ground. Some of them took a few puffs at rudely rolled tobacco leaves, which, for lack of pockets, they carried behind their ears. Pablo's matches were a great help to them in this instance, for they usually made fire by striking flint and steel together, sometimes by rubbing one piece of dry bamboo in a notch made in a second piece of bamboo.

When they were rested they noiselessly approached the entrance to the cave. They were all tense as they stooped at the entrance and peered into the dark interior. There they could see the dim outline of the slimy looking monster as it lay coiled in the darkness.

The men holding the net approached the python quickly, but quietly. Just as they held the net above it, it raised its head sluggishly from its coils. But it was too late. The net fell over it, and the edges of it were drawn quickly together under the python by a strong cord which closed the net just as a bag is closed by a string.

Inclosed by the net, the python was powerless; and its torpid attempts to uncoil and wrap itself around its assailants were doomed to failure. The Negritos thrust their bolos through the interstices of the net and cut the python into pieces. Of course, cutting off its head was sufficient to kill it, but not to stop at once the writhing of the long body. The headless body could, if free, easily loop itself around a man and crush him to death.

The net was then removed, and each member of the party shouldered a heavy section of the huge python to carry back to the settlement. The Negritos were in high spirits, and talked and laughed on their homeward trek in happy anticipation of the feast ahead of them. Pablo had never before seen such jolly, carefree people as these small blacks.

Meanwhile, the women had not been idle. They had hunted in the forest for wild camotes, which they dug up with sticks or pieces of bamboo.



Thanks to this gift of the forest they would not have to use any of their scanty supply of corn today. They had cut the growing bud from the top of two or three palm trees. These were sweet, tender, and crisp, and could be eaten raw. They *should* be good, for their removal causes the death of the tree. The women had also found snails in the bottom of

a stream, and had some green stuff, or *gulay* on hand ready to cook when the hunters should return.

When they heard the men returning, they ran out to meet them, and uttered loud exclamations of delight at the size of the python that had been killed.

They took the meat from the men and carried it the short distance to camp. Then they cut part of it into thin strips and hung it up to dry, and the rest of it they roasted over their little open fires.

One old woman took a few little pieces of the python and laid them on a leaf on the ground just beyond the settlement. These were for the *diwata*, or spirits. And she made them a short speech thanking them for the successful hunt and asking them for more such good fortune.

Soon the feasting began and lasted the rest of the day. Huge quantities of food disappeared: for primitive people leading the hand-to-mouth existence of the Negritos have the *camél's* philosophy of food. Often they had very little food, or none at all; and, on the other hand, when there was plenty, they ate an astonishing amount.

Again there was singing and dancing. They sang the same song as they had the previous night; and then one man sang a love song, repeating it several times. Pablo asked for another song, but the Negritos said that they did not know any others.

When darkness closed in, everyone was sleepy, and soon the encampment was dark and silent.

Next morning, as soon as Pablo and Ulan had had breakfast, they made their farewells—Pablo thanking his hosts for their hospitality—and started on their way to the stream of the shining substance.

All morning they followed tiny paths and clambored up and down stream beds. A little after noon they stopped to rest and eat a few pieces of cooked camote and roasted python that they had brought along. The last stream bed up which they had climbed was dry at this season of the year. They were on a ridge, and the chances were that they would have to descend a long way before finding any more water. It was an unusually hot day, and Pablo was thirstier than he had ever been in all his life. But no water was to be seen, so he accepted the situation fatalistically, and said nothing about it.

But when they had rested only a moment, Ulan jumped up. "I'm thirsty. Aren't you?" he said, and began walking around looking for something.

"Here it is!" he called. "Come here and drink."

He had found a vine, which he cut into sections. From each section, as soon as it was cut, flowed clear, cool water. The boys threw back their heads and

## To MOTHER



There's a melody sung through years,  
A rhapsody found on mortal lips,  
A chansonette of love and joy  
My mother! My mother!

There's a story that fills the heart,  
Told and re-told through ages past,  
There's a tale of which none tires,  
My mother! My mother!

A picture hangs on every wall,  
Of gray hair and wrinkled brows,  
Though webbed with years 'tis loved by all  
My mother! My mother!

Dear mother, you're a deathless song,  
A never to-be forgotten lore,  
An image worshipped by the throng—  
Ah—most loved and blessed of all!

—Lulu de la Paz

caught in their open mouths the water as it descended from the pieces of vine which they held above them. They drank huge quantities of this miraculous water, and Pablo's admiration for Ulan mounted still higher.

(To be continued)