



The Golden Image of Sri Visaya

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(Continued from September Issue)

NOT more than five yards away from him stood a short black boy with kinky hair. His white teeth showed in a broad smile, but Pablo saw at a glance that he held a bow and arrow in such a way that he could aim and shoot instantly.

Pablo was so frightened that his heart almost stopped beating. If he ever got home again, he would stay there! He did not know what to do. With the Negrito boy so near it was impossible for him to get up and run away—to try to do so might be a signal for the boy to shoot. And, even if he could get started, he realized that he would have no chance to escape from the Negrito, to whom the forest was more familiar than the multiplication table was to him.

But the Negrito boy was not slow in noticing Pablo's expression of fear. He dropped his bow and arrow into an easier position and laughed as though the whole situation were a huge joke.

"Don't be afraid," he said. "I won't shoot you. But what are you doing here? People like you never come here. All this forest belongs to my folks, and all the things to eat in it belong to us. But, if you are hungry, I will give you something to eat." And again he laughed.

Pablo heaved a deep breath of relief—fortune was smiling on him, after all, in what had seemed his darkest moment.

"Thank you," he said. "You are very kind. To tell you the truth, I'm terribly hungry. I haven't had a bite since yesterday noon, and nothing but a green coconut then."

"We can soon find something," his new friend replied, picking up from the ground a wild chicken he had already shot that morning. "Suppose you clean this chicken and make a fire while I look around a little."

The boy started away, stepping lightly and noiselessly through the forest, and Pablo set to work

with the help of his bolo to clean, skin, and cut up the chicken. Then he made a fire and put the chicken and some water in his can over the fire to boil.

Surely this was a good and very interesting world to live in. It was even pleasant to be hungry now that he knew he would soon have something to eat. And this boy with the kinky hair who had frightened him so—what a good scout he seemed to be! It would be fun to get acquainted with him.

Scarcely had Pablo put the chicken on to cook when the boy returned carrying a huge wild camote all rough and covered with little roots like coarse hair. He cut this into pieces and removed the can of chicken from the fire while he buried them in the ashes, then replaced the can.

Up to this time the two boys had been too busy to do much talking, but now, having collected a little pile of fuel, they sat down and proceeded to get acquainted. Each of them was a great curiosity to the other. Once or twice in his life Pablo had seen Negritos in his town; but they had worn clothes—ragged ones, indeed—and Pablo had never so much as spoken to one of them.

Now this boy wore nothing at all except for a belt of braided rattan and a loin cloth made of the soft inner bark of a tree. In his belt was thrust a bolo—the same kind Pablo had brought with him. On the other hand, the Negrito lad had never seen a boy like Pablo, and was equally curious about him.

At first they were both a trifle shy and ill at ease with each other, but within a few minutes they began to feel perfectly at home.

The Negrito boy said his name was Ulan. Rain. "Because," he said, "it rained very hard the night I was born." He lived in the little settlement that Pablo had passed through the day before.

Pablo told him about his home with all the cousins and uncles and aunts, and his father's salary cut and the depression—though I am afraid Ulan did not understand salary cuts and depressions very well—and about his coming into the interior in quest of gold and about his getting lost and finding his corn all eaten and scattered by the monkeys.



Ulan listened sympathetically, even when he did not understand; and Pablo finally told him that, if he would help him to find gold, they could each share equally in all the wealth that would come from it.

Ulan thought he had never seen any gold, but suggested that after breakfast they might return to the settlement or camp where he lived and ask the old ones if they knew where gold might be found.

At first Pablo had a little difficulty in understanding Ulan. He spoke Visayan, the language Pablo always spoke at home and with his playmates. But Ulan pronounced some of the words a little differently, and occasionally used a word that was strange to Pablo. Soon, however, each grew used to the pronunciation of the other, and there were few words to be explained.*

It took a long time for the yams to cook, and before the boys raked them out of the ashes they had come down to such details as Pablo's clothes

* So far as is known the only place in the world where pygmies or Negritos have a language of their own is the Andaman Islands. Elsewhere they speak the languages of their nearest neighbors.

and the marks that had been burned on Ulan's arms. Ulan was particularly delighted with the institution of pockets. What a convenience! He had always had to carry things in his hand or in a basket, or if they were small enough, stick them in his ear. Otherwise—except that they looked nice—he did not think he would like clothes. They would always be catching on the branches and making such a noise you could never get near enough to an animal to shoot it. It would be fine to have the pockets without the clothes!

The marks on his arms were burned there, he said, to cure him of a fever.

"Did it really cure your fever?" asked Pablo.

"Why, yes, of course it did," replied Ulan, "and it was a very bad fever, too."

Then he took a bunch of leaves to use as a holder, lifted the can of chicken from the fire, and raked out the pieces of camote. Using their ever useful bolos, they speared pieces of chicken from the steaming soup and laid them on leaves until they cooled enough to be eaten. Thereupon they feasted heartily, and were entirely too busy to indulge in further conversation.

After that they picked up the pieces of camote that were left and started for the Negrito encampment.

When they were about half way, they heard, some distance to their right, a horrible squealing and thrashing about. For the second time that morning Pablo was frightened, but being with Ulan gave him a feeling of safety. This forest was Ulan's home—he would know what to do.

He motioned Pablo to follow him, then plunged noiselessly into the forest on their right. Pablo tried to walk quietly, but he did not succeed very well. His new friend was annoyed with him, and motioned him to be more careful.

Now the frightful squealing was very near them, and they walked more carefully than ever.

Ulan carefully pulled aside some vines that hung from the branch of a tree and motioned Pablo to approach and look through the tiny opening.

(To be continued)

Answers to questions on "This Earth of Ours":

1. planet.
2. studying bones and stones under the ground.
3. outer part.
4. a mixture of broken rock and decayed matter.