



# DIWATA

*Demiwata, Engkanto, Lambana*

If you encounter a **diwata**, first observe the herby, sweet smell of wildflowers as it tickles the atmosphere in a thin undercurrent of fog. Like human musk, diwata have a specific scent. Keep your guard up since these dryad spirits are found in numerous environments, from the shaded seclusion of forest borders to the richest mansions in town proper.

If you encounter a diwata late at night, hours after your

neighborhood has gone to sleep, you will be able to notice it metres away. The moonlight might shine off its body, but remember that their skin glows naturally. Its aura may be white, or golden like the edges of a sunny day, or even a rare red like the pink rims of a bloodshot eye. No matter its colour, as it approaches, you will next notice its long, black hair waving eerily in a breeze, but there will be no wind that night.

If you encounter a diwata and they are only steps in front of you, you will notice that its slender body has no ripple of muscle. You will clutch at your own skin when you realize there are no wrinkles on its body, none on its knees nor its elbows. With its plastic doll texture, it will not have a human philtrum above its lip. When its fig-leaf ears twitch, keep your wits about you, because diwata are quick to react. They are young and spry, they do not age beyond adolescence. They are a turbulent race, made up of members who can either cast blessings or curses, and are known to grow sharp teeth when threatened. Always fear for your life.

Because if a diwata encounters a human, it will be hard to tell if the glimmer beneath its tight lips is a smile or a set of fangs.

## NAMES

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**First Names:** Makisig, Maganda, Marangal, Mabait, Magalang, Mahinhin, Matalino

**Nicknames:** Kiko, Kikay, Boy, Baby, Bebot, Lito, Pepet, Totoy

**Family Names:** Tanudtanud, Bulaclac

## TRAITS

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**Ability Score Increase:** Your ability scores each increase by 1.

**Age:** Humans reach adulthood in their late teens and live less than a century.

**Alignment:** You tend toward no particular alignment.

**Size:** Humans vary widely in height and build, from barely 5 feet to well over 6 feet tall. Regardless of your position in that range, your size is Medium.

**Speed:** Your base walking speed is 30 feet.

**Languages:** You can speak, write, and read Common and an additional language of your choice.

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- CRIEELDA FERNANDEZ -

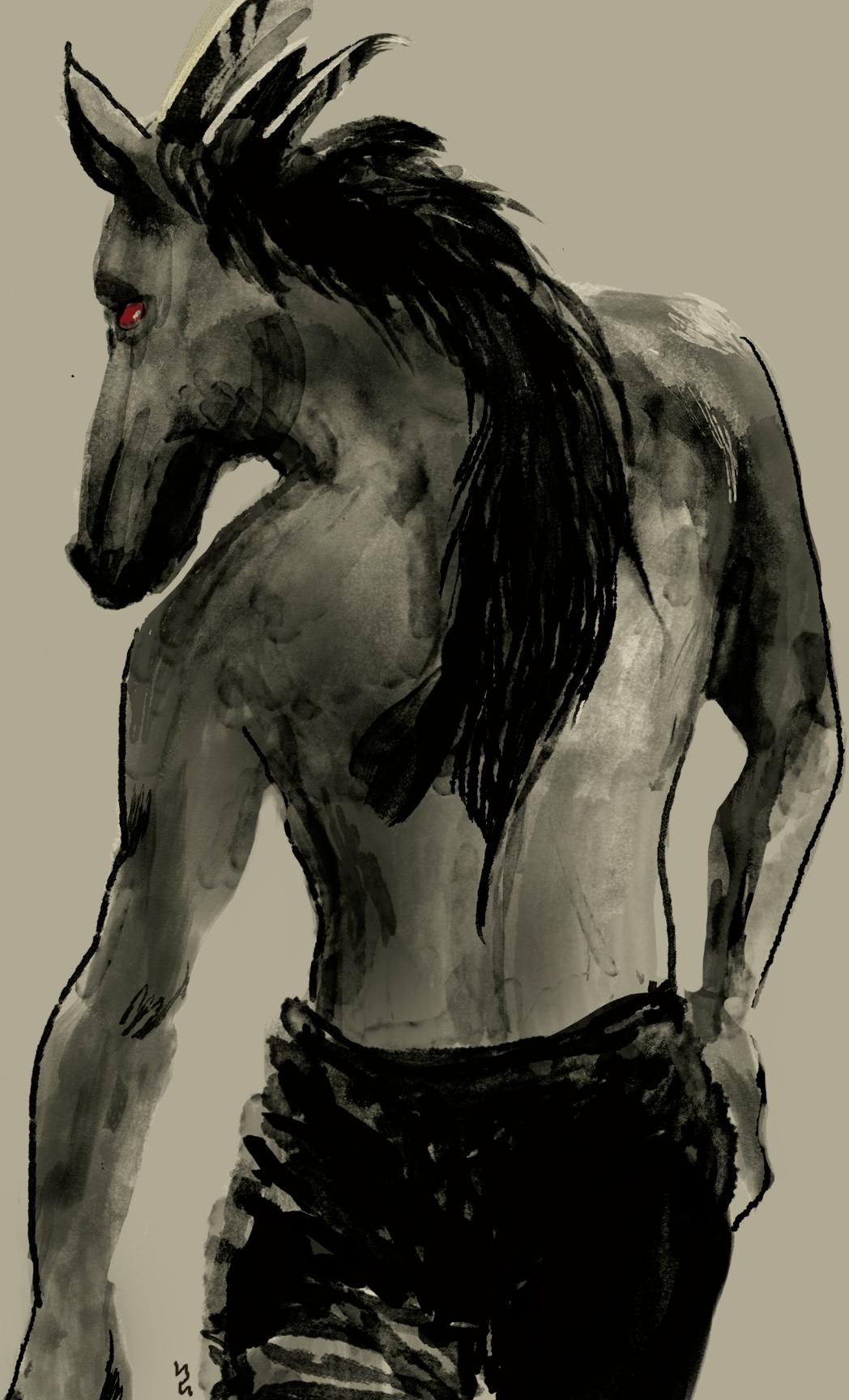
ENG • APRIL 12

MY NAME IS CRIEELDA FERNANDEZ AND THIS IS MY STORY OF HOW MY BEST FRIEND, STELLA ~~IS~~ MACPANTAY, AND I MET MARIA CACAO. WHEN STELLA AND I WERE SIX, OUR FAMILY MOVED TO OUR LAND IN ARGAO, CEBU. MY MAMA TELLS THE BEST STORIES IN THE WHOLE WORLD! SHE TOLD US THE STORY ABOUT MARIA CACAO, THE DIWATA WHO IS THE GUARDIAN OF MOUNT LANTOY. SHE TOLD US ABOUT HOW WHENEVER THE RAIN FLOODS THE RIVER THAT IT WAS MARIA CACAO AND HER HUSBAND, MANGAO, TRAVELING DOWN THE RIVER ON THEIR SHIPS OF GOLD TO TRANSPORT CROPS. EVER SINCE THAT STORY, DIVATAS FASCINATED ME AND STELLA. WE WANTED TO MEET A REAL LIFE DIWATA. A FEW WEEKS LATER AFTER CHURCH, OUR PARENTS LET US EXPLORE ARGAO. WE RAN HOME, MADE FLOWER CROWNS, GOT BEDSHEETS, SOME SNACKS, AND WATER, AND BEGAN OUR JOURNEY TO MOUNT LANTOY.

WE FOUND A CAVE NEAR MOUNT LANTOY AND DECIDED TO REST. STELLA  
AND I FELL ASLEEP BUT A COLD WIND WOKE US. A SHINING,  
TALL FIGURE STOOD AT A DISTANCE. SHE HAD LONG, BLACK HAIR,  
A FLOWER CROWN, AND A BEAUTIFUL, WHITE DRESS. THE FIGURE  
LOOKED ANGRY. WE TRIED TO RUN AWAY, BUT ~~WE~~ WE SOMEHOW  
LOST THE ABILITY TO WALK. THE FIGURE CAME CLOSER AND SAID  
~~WE~~ HER NAME WAS MARIA CACAO. SHE WAS UPSET BECAUSE WE  
WERE TRESPASSING AND DID NOT ASK HER FOR PERMISSION. SHE ~~WE~~  
FELT LIKE CRYING, BUT COULD NOT, SO THE RAIN BECAME HER  
TEARS. WE ~~WE~~ APOLOGIZED AND SHE FORGAVE US BECAUSE  
WE WERE YOUNG AND DID NOT KNOW BETTER. THE RAIN STOPPED  
AND THE SUN SHONE ONCE MORE. SHE REMINDED US TO ASK FOR  
PERMISSION FROM ANY DIVATA WHEN WE ENTER FORESTS OR ANY  
NATURE AREA IN ORDER TO NOT ANGER THE DIVATA OR GET BAD LUCK.

TO THIS DAY, STELLA AND I ALWAYS ASK FOR PERMISSION FROM  
THE DIVATAS BEFORE WE ENTER ANY NATURE AREA.

I HOPE YOU ASK FOR PERMISSION TOO.



# TIKBALANG

*Tibalang, Tigbalan, Tikbalan*

In an effort to concisely describe a tikbalang some have called it the ‘reverse-centaur’. But this coy Greek-based token fails to encapsulate the skulking horror of the creature. The tikbalang indeed is most easily identified by its human body and horse head, but their presence is so shocking that it is known to cause insanity among the unfortunate that look upon them.

They tower over humans, their height the same as if a

horse stood straight on its two hind legs. Their limbs, lean and roped with muscle from their shoulders to their slender fingers, are long and drape down past their knees. Their human-like bodies are carpeted with coarse dark hair that have been compared to that of an American bison. Their lips are curved so high that their teeth always remain exposed and depending on the type of tikbalang their teeth can be marbled-white lining their gums or sharpened to a sinister point stained red and yellow from blood. Because of the hardened skin plating their shoulders and neck, some have gained acclaim as warriors and guard the entrances to elemental kingdoms deep in the forest. Of course there are others of this race that skulk among the low **Balete** branches, their hind legs squatting into a 'V' and eyes darting in the darkness watching and waiting for prey.

One of the most significant variations of their make-up is the mane. Some tikbalang, most notably the warrior breed, develop hardened spines which trail down its back. Out of these spines are three prominent ones, which if they are obtained, can emanate similar esoteric energy of an **anting-anting** (talisman). Other tikbalang do not have hardened manes, but instead thick finger-like hairs running down its mane that behave and look like wriggling worms. Legend has it that the properties

of these worms, when ingested, can make a person experience hallucinations and with enough exposure become ‘one’ with the tikbalang. Because of this, newer more experimental drugs in the market have adopted the nickname ‘tik-tiks’ and are even modeled to look like the tikbalang’s worms. Some are known to resemble them too closely.

As uncomfortable as I was, I began to feel my body synch with my surroundings. My heart had slowed to the buzzing of the flickering porch light above us in our corner behind the **sari-sari** store. The invisible cicadas droned in torrents somewhere in the pitch black night which surrounded us. *Click-click*. The rickety electric fan sputtered, its edges caked with black mold. *Click-click*. The squirming worms in the clear tupperware tapped the lid. The man held it towards me, his fingers fanning outwards, and his gummy smile stretching like the glossy rolls of cash stuffed underneath his belt. We called him the Tiki Man. His fingernails dug underneath the lid of the tupperware until it released with a pop and revealed the worms pulsating in their layered skin, which was a disease-shade yellow.

I had done this before, but every time the sweat prickled underneath my arm, and my back stuck to the white plastic chair. One of its flimsy legs bent as I leaned in. I picked the worm at the top and felt it wriggle between my lips until my teeth pushed down against it, building tension until it popped. The Tiki Man's queasy smile was the last thing I saw before my vision turned into blackness.

First, my skin itched where coarse hair appeared, and

my mouth felt all of a sudden too large and teeth sprouted for miles around my jaw. My ears and eyes burned as my senses shifted. The world was too intense, the Tiki Man's sari-sari store had disappeared, and the colors of the night sky pulsed between the leaves. I watched shiny, black ants crawl up and down the twigs next to me, as the body I was in blinked away flies with its thick, horse lashes.

I had been warned if I did this too often at a certain point you would forget yourself, becoming one with the tikbalang, and find yourself in a trip you wouldn't return from. But I felt as if sugar had been laced beneath my skin, and tendrils of gas-like pain tightened in my stomach. The creature's body within mine twisted into a crouch and the muscular limbs heaved in the moonlight.

*Click-click.* In the distance I was drawn to a sound almost drowned in the swarm of cicadas. With my heightened vision I saw a bright corner with two figures. One of them was counting coins and the other slumped against his chair asleep. My stomach growled. My body knew I had human flesh before, but I couldn't seem to recall the taste. Perhaps tonight it was time to remind myself.



# MAMBABARANG

*Haplit, Paktol, Anyare*

The **mambabarang** is a powerful shaman who has the ability to cast hexes and summon insects to infest the bodies of those they have cursed, leading to an agonizing death. The insects — consisting of spiders, centipedes, cockroaches, and carnivorous beetles — are believed to be small, vindictive spirits the mambabarang captured. In different versions of the lore, the mambabarang is said to be equipped with either a jar or a bamboo stick in which the insects are held and fed ginger root.

Depending on the mambabarang, they can either whisper instructions to the insects or perform a ritual. This ritual begins with a strand of the victim's hair or a personal belonging attached to a doll. The mambabarang will place the doll into the jar/bamboo stick and recite an incantation to have the insects burrow through and devour the doll. The intended victim will then begin to experience pain and suffer the same fate.

Telltale signs that a spell has been placed on you are large, painful boils appearing on the surface of your skin. If left untreated by means of powerful **mangagamot** (blessed medicine) or by another mambabarang or **albularyo** (witch doctor) who can lift the curse, the insects will eventually burrow out of your boils and orifices until your body is riddled and consumed.

In various parts of rural provinces, communities exclusively depend on the mambabarang or albularyo for treatment of their conditions. And although they possess the same abilities as an albularyo who cleanse and heal, the mambabarang can choose to use black magic strictly for malevolence. Local Filipinos began abusing the spells, which were originally used as defensive measures against the oppressive Spaniards during the Spanish Colonial Era. The mambabarang

started accepting payment in exchange for their powers, which were used as means of revenge or ill will towards their own men.



# ASWANG

*Bal-Bal, Abuak*

“**Salamat**, Kuya Pail! I’ll pay back my **utang** in the afternoon.”

Tita L brought in the fresh **galunggong** from the fish monger, Raphael, and placed it on the counter. Raphael has been selling fish along the **barangay** road as long as anybody could remember. Tita thought to herself as she slipped the knife into the flesh, pulling it gently along the bones. Tita keeps this same knife at arms reach as

she sleeps to cut the tongue of the **aswang** in case one comes during the night. But aswangs come in many forms.

When Tita came to serve her infant Angelo **lugaw**, she found that his fever became worse. Together they went to the **manghihilot**.

“An aswang is coming for him,” the manghihilot said, having seen this many times before. “Only a mother can defend her child against an aswang. At midnight, stay in your living room. If you see a cat or dog, kill it with this enchanted bamboo.”

At midnight that night, Tita’s hair was standing like something was watching her.

*TICK-TICK-TICK*

She did as the manghihilot said and snuck downstairs, leaving her little angel with his Lola.

*TICK-TICK-TICK*

Upstairs, Lola wielding a knife and is shouting curses at all those rumoured to be the aswang. “Leave my **apo** alone! I’ll have your head!”

*TICK-TICK-TICK*

Downstairs, Tita bravely looks into the crawlspace between the sand and her home. A black chicken is seen running away. The ticking stops. The family sleeps peacefully together.

At dawn the next morning, Tita L can feel that someone is watching her. She awakes with a start and sees Raphael standing in her window. “I have come for my utang,” the old man says. Tita L pays her due and Raphael continues on his way to the market to buy fish for the day.

Raphael was often spotted around homes in the night. His alibi was always he was collecting utang. But often when the family awoke the next day, their infant child would be dead.

“I knew he was an aswang, but you can’t go around accusing people like that!” Tita L admitted later in life.



# BUNGISNGIS

You find yourself deep in a lush forest after a long day of plowing the fields with Pedro, your loving **kalabaw**, under the hot Bataan sun. Famished, you start a small fire and fry yourself some chicken.

All of a sudden, you hear a distinct laugh. “Well, friend,” it cackles. “I see that you’ve prepared food for me.”

Astonished, you struggle to piece together the vaguely

human shape in front of you. Teeth as large as boulders peeking from underneath lips so wide the rest of its face disappears. Long tusks protruding from the side of its cavernous mouth like an elephant. One eye peeking from the middle of its forehead, watchful.

It straightens, tall as a church.

You gulp and keep still.

“Don’t mind if I do.” Broad hands grasp at the chicken but stop short of clutching it completely. It blinks, frowns, and shakes its head. “*Naks naman.*”

Its ears perk up. You hear faint screeching in the distance. Is that a monkey?

The eye widens. A small river of sweat drips from its forehead.

You take a tentative breath, scanning around you. You hear a grunt to your left, sense a blur of movement. Wait, is that—

Pedro!

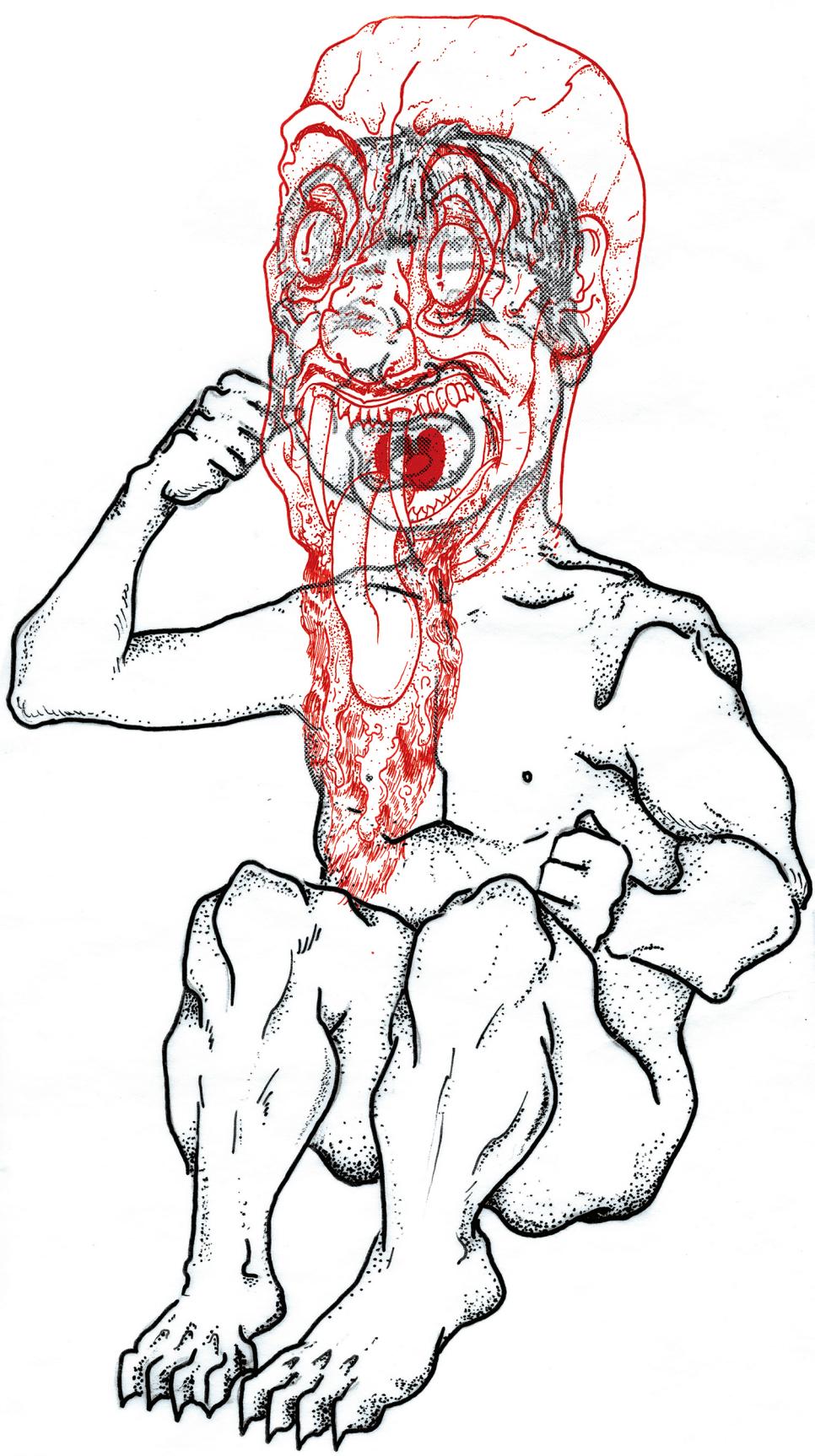
In a display of brute strength, you watch the creature

throw the poor kalabaw knee-deep into what looks to be a pool of mud in the direction of the noise.

You brace yourself. Are you going to be next? Fortunately for you, the creature seems to have retreated in a panic.

Mentally, you prepare yourself for a scolding. You're going to be home late. That mud pool has to be at least three fields away.

*Basta, bahala na.* You release the breath you didn't realize you were holding. You've just survived an encounter with a **bungisngis**.



# TIYANAK

*Patianak, Impakto, Muntianak*

The **tiyanak** is a diminutive trickster goblin that usually makes an appearance at nighttime. Under the guise of a highly distressed newborn human, the tiyanak lures travellers off the beaten path into the woods with its realistic child-like squalling. Its true form is not much better — very small, very bald, with pointed ears, horns, claws, and razor sharp teeth.

The tiyanak is ruled by its delight in human humiliation

and its desire to be cruel. However, this philosophy becomes rather understandable, when one considers the questionable pre-colonial practice of leaving infants who were born with physical disabilities to die in the woods alone, where their defiant wailing granted them unmitigated strength and power.

The specific origins of the tiyanak are uncertain. Some point to the Mandaya tribe in Mindanao, who called the creature **patianak** (lord child), a semi-benevolent creature not unlike the Tagalogs' **nuno sa punso**. As the myth travelled north to the Tagalogs and Bikolanos, so did its level of malevolence. Conversely, some attribute the existence of the vengeful tiyanak as the consequence of abortion or as the spirits of infants who died before being baptized. While unconfirmed, field researcher, S. Quinto, a survivor of a (potential) tiyanak interaction, would like to point out that many of these stories arose after the introduction of Spanish colonization and Catholicism to the Philippines.