Aswang

By Bill Baker
DEDICATION

To my Wife Janet and Mother for motivating me to write; for all their assistance in editing my story. Without your support and nagging this book would have never happened.

To my Lolo and Lola for teaching and instilling in me, our Filipino culture.
Foreword

Sitting in the heart of the Visayas is Bohol, between Cebu to the northwest, Leyte to the northeast and Mindanao to the south across the Mindanao Sea. Bohol is the tenth largest island in the Philippines, with a landmass of 1,574 sq. miles (2,534 square kilometers).

Bohol, an oval shaped island contains 46 towns, one of which is Tagbilaran City, the capital. Because Bohol is surrounded by other islands, it is protected from most of the weather variances that other islands in the Philippines experience. It has moderate rain fall which normally fall's during the months from June to October and is usually warm along the coast lines and cooler in the interior of the island. Although it's considered to be hot during the month of May, this is the best time to visit Bohol. It is the time of festivals and town fiestas.

Every where you turn in Bohol, the beauty of nature abounds. There is no smog or pollution like there is around the major metro areas of the Philippines. If you do see trash laying about I can assure you that it was left by the tourists that visit the areas, not the locals. There is plenty of crystal clear water, both at the white sand shorelines and in the inland lakes, rivers, and caves. An unspoiled tropical paradise like no other, Bohol also has other things, things not seen, evil things that lurk in the night.
The Aswang Pronounced: 'o-s wah-ong’ the most dreaded of supernatural beings in the Philippines. Aswang, a person who can assume other forms like that of a black dog or bat. Flying in the night, with only half of their body, from the torso up, their intestines dangling in search of a meal; their favorite, unborn babies. But, whatever the case; baby, child, man or woman the aswang will suck the blood or eat internal organs by extending a long hollow tongue into the victim, from the heart down to the intestines. When the intended victim is not asleep, the aswang emits a strong odor which will make the victim incapable of moving.
Uncle and Auntie’s House in Calape

The night was like most nights in Bohol. My Auntie Hermenia was in the kitchen washing the dishes we had used for dinner that night. Uncle Dodoy, 10 year old cousin Seth and I were in a section of the house, made mostly from *nipa* [*palm tree that grows out of the mud*], watching a news program called TVPatrol, a nightly ritual. Rain could be heard bouncing off the tin roof of the house and you could feel the cool air slipping past the slits in the *nipa*. It was a welcome coolness but I knew soon enough the rain would stop and the humidity would again rise.

This night I felt restless. You know the feeling, the feeling you get when you feel as though you want to do something but you don’t know what that something is. I decided to retire to the room where I would sleep. From the side of a homemade bamboo book shelf, I retrieved an old pillow made from a rice sack stuffed with duck or chicken feathers and my sleeping mat made from *tikog*, a sedge grass that grows locally. I crawled under the mosquito net and rolled my sleeping mat out onto the floor. Laying down, I listened to the sounds of the house, the TV, the clickity clanks coming from the kitchen, the muffled voices of my family members and the rain as it battered the old tin roof.

I woke at what must have been 11pm or later in the night. The rain had subsided and the only sounds were those of the animals and insects that are active in the night, the distant sounds of the ocean and my cousin’s breathing as he slept next to me. As I lay in the dark listening, I could hear the tik-tik of the rain dripping from the roof to the ground, tik-tik again, tik-tik. Then, nothing. Strange, I thought as I rolled from my side to lay face up on the mat, why would it just stop? I listened more intently as if the tik-tik had softened to a point that my ears could not detect. Suddenly, it felt eerie and I strained even harder listening for the tik-tik. My mind wandered back to my childhood days and the stories my Lola would tell me of aswang. Could the tik-tik be the sound of the aswang? I thought to myself. After all in the stories I was told, it was always late in the night when the aswang would strike making a tik-tik sound just before it stuck its long hallow tongue into its human victim and sucked the blood from their body. I could hear my heart beating in my chest, its beats echoing in my ears… baabump, baabump, baabump. I could feel fear, my chest tighten up and my breathing shallowed. I felt like a child again wanting to cover my face with my hands so I couldn’t see the monsters that might be lurking in my room or looking through the cracks in the nipa hut. The tik-tik sound returned as if it knew that I was listening for it, tik-tik…………………… tik-tik…………………… sounding ever so close.

I reasoned with myself, what are these fears? I’m not a child anymore and aswang is only a child’s myth. It is... right? A myth? I thought. I tried to sleep again but the tik-tik and the shadows that floated across the wall of the room would not let me. I lay sleepless for what seemed a week, wanting the sun to rise or for someone in the house to wake so I would not feel so scared and alone.
Morning came marked by the sounds of roosters crowing, a sound that in past mornings I had hated but now welcomed. Night had passed and I felt somehow I had avoided death at the hand of evil. I felt almost stupid being afraid in the night.

“Why are you up so early?” Auntie asked, as she poured hot water from the kettle into a cup.

“I didn’t sleep well, Auntie. I woke in the night thinking I heard an aswang,” I replied, as I tore open a pack of Nescafe coffee and poured in the cup of hot water.

“Aswang ___?, What aswang?” She questioned with a slight but curious giggle.

I could feel my ears get hot from embarrassment and avoided looking into her eyes. “I heard a tik-tik and remembered Lola telling me that when you hear that sound, it was the aswang looking for someone to suck blood from.”

Auntie laughed, “there are no aswang, that’s just a tale we tell children so they would not go out at night or to make them behave themselves, that’s funny Billy… aswang, kinuwanggol![silly]” She said in Cebuano, as she laughed.

Uncle walked into the kitchen yawning and rubbing his round belly, “what’s the laughing I heard, you woke me.” he said.

Laughing, Auntie replied, “Si Billy, he heard aswang in our house last night.”

“Aswang? Are you crazy?” He asked looking at me as he sat down at the table.

Auntie handed him a cup of Nescafe. As he sipped his coffee he asked, “So Billy, what did this aswang look like?”

“I don’t know Uncle.”

“Huh… so you did not see him?”

“No Uncle.”

“What did he say to you?” He laughed.

“Nothing Uncle, I just heard a tik-tik sound.

“Tik-tik.. buangbuang[crazy] tik-tik ha ha ha..tik-tik” he laughed, “makapatawa yon!”[so funny] almost spilling his coffee.

I sat quietly drinking my coffee, embarrassed, feeling like I wanted to run from the room. “It was just my imagination I guess,” I told them as they both giggled while they talked in Cebuano to each other, obviously about me.
The Wet Market

After washing up, I walked to our front door and slid my feet into my tsinelas [sandals or slippers].

“Billy! Don’t go too far I need you to go with me to the market soon,” Auntie shouted.

“Opo [yes] Auntie!” I yell back as I stepped out the door on the dirt path that led from the front door to the street.

I walked down the street whacking at the air with a bamboo stick I had picked up from the ground thinking about how silly I felt for telling my family about the aswang. As I came to an intersection, I saw Janet the girl from two houses down at the community water well pumping water into her buckets.

“Hi, Janet,” I said.

“Oh Billy! how are you?” she said with a big smile. Janet was a pretty girl whose family had moved to Bohol from the Bicol region. She had fair skin, shoulder length fine hair which was more of a dark brown than the black hair most girls in our barangay had. I guess it was because her father, the local Philippine National Police officer, was half Chinese.

“I’m okay,” I said.

“You don’t look okay. You seem to have such a long face today, not the smiles I’m use to seeing,” she replied as she pumped water from the well into her buckets.

“Oh, I’m just tired, I didn’t sleep well last night” I said. I wasn’t going to tell her about the aswang, as I had already suffered too much humiliation at home.

“Mama told me once, drinking tea made from the leaves of komprey plant helps people sleep. I can ask mama to make you some if you want?”

“No, that’s okay. I’m sure that I’ll sleep better tonight. Let me help you carry the water back to your house.”

“Oh, thank you, Billy,” she said.

We joked as we walked to her house with the buckets of water making fun of each others worn out tsinelas. Janet, not watching where she was going, slipped on a smooth stone in the road still wet from the morning dew and bumped into me, this was not a surprise though as Janet always tended to be a bit clumsy.

“Ay, sorry…” Janet said, with a silly grin on her face.
“Sorry, too,” I replied.

“Sorry 3,” she snapped back.

“What are you sorry for?” I asked,

“Kala mo bobo ako ha! [you think I’m stupid] Sorry 5!” Janet laughed.

“I think you are sick,” I responded.

Janet laughed-- hahahaha! “Sick daw, seven sunod!” We both started laughing and for a few minutes I had forgotten about the aswang.

We turned into the front gate of Janet’s house; her mother was in her garden tending her orchids. Spotting us, she commented, “Janet, you should not let Billy do your chores.”

“It’s okay Tiya Lourdes. I was the one who took her buckets and walked her home,” I said as I touched my forehead with her hand.

“Mano po.”

“Well, thank you, Billy. Did you say thank you to Billy, Janet?”

“Why would I say thank you to him? He’s the one who took my buckets,” she joked, grabbing my arm.


“Mano po.” As he walked out of his front door toward his motorcycle to go to work.

“Maayong buntag, Billy, where are you off to today?”

“My Auntie wants me to go with her to market, Tiyo. I was just helping Janet home with the water.”

“Billy! Billy! Let’s go now!” I heard my Auntie calling.

“Sige, Tiyo, Tiya, Janet, I have to go now.” I said as I ran off toward home.

Auntie had called my Uncle Isko who owns a taxi company to drive us to the wet market in Tagbilaran City south of Calape. Like many, Auntie likes going to the wet market in Tagbilaran because it was close to the main port where fresh fish and produce came in daily. Auntie was getting into the front seat of Uncle Isko’s white taxi as I approached. I opened the back door and got in taking his hand, “mano po” I said.
As we drove, Auntie and Uncle talked. Every time Uncle looked at me in his rear view mirror I cringed, hoping that Auntie had not told him of my aswang. Soon, we were at the market. As we exited the car, Auntie told Uncle to come back for us in 2 hours.

“Wait!” Uncle said, handing some money to Auntie. “Buy some gin, I will play pusoy tonight.”

We entered the market, passing row and rows of vegetables, cascades of colors fill your eyes. As you pass by them, you can smell the freshness of the harvest. Grains of all colors and textures in bins, buckets and barrels sitting side by side. The green of mongo beans offset by the tan color of a grain I can’t identify. All melting into so many varieties and sizes of rice.

I’m mesmerized by area used to sell fish. I stop often to look at the fish, some of which I have never seen before. This too, although smelly, is a colorful place gray and blacks, blues and yellow and silver of course. Auntie seemed to know allot of people at the market and whenever we go, it seems as though she spends as much time shopping as she does visiting her friends. Auntie saw some shrimp she wanted.

“Can I help you? The vendor asked.

“How much is the shrimp?” Auntie asked,

“130 pesos for a kilo,” she responded.

“130 pesos! ang mahal-mahal naman! [too expensive!]”

“Auntie, I’ll just go across the street to get coke,” I said. She nodded to me acknowledging what I told her as she bickered over the price of the shrimp.

The coke store was a store made from old wood boards with two small refrigerators and stacks of crates filled with bottles some empty and some full.

“Gusto kong bumili ng Royal.” I said to the clerk. I couldn’t wait to drink the cold Royal orange soda.

“Kinse pesos [15 pesos],” the clerk said. As I paid him, his helper, a little girl about 10 years old poured the Royal orange soda into a plastic bag, inserted a straw and handed it to me.

I leaned against a wall out of the sun, sipping my soda as I watched people and traffic go by. An old man with long stringy hair who looked dirty and not well kept shuffled down the sidewalk and stared at me with eyes cathartic, but still piercing. He just stared even turning his head as he past keeping those piercing dull eyes on me, he smelled of rot. I looked down at the ground to avoid looking at him. I waited until I thought he had long past and then looked down the street. He was still there at the corner not 60 feet from me.
just standing there, staring at me; cold shivers ran up my spine. Aswang, I thought. I ran across the busy street, a tri-cycle honked his horn at me as he swerved to miss me, angry that I had run in front of him. I looked back to the corner where the old man had been standing and staring at me, but he was gone.

I walked back in the market depositing my now empty soda bag in the garbage. I went into the fruit section looking for Auntie. I could smell the sweetness of pineapple as I walk by the fruit vendors. They were cutting them removing the skin and eyes shaping them with spirals almost as if it were a work of art more than tasty treats to eat. I found Auntie at a vendor, buying a small bunch of latondans, bananas that are not much longer than my finger.

“I’m back, Auntie” I said.

“Oh, good, Billy. Here, take these bags.”

The shopping bags made from old cement sacks with make shift handles dug into my hands as I carried them while we traversed the market. They were full and are somewhat heavy. I’m glad when Auntie tells me we are done, not just because the bags are heavy, but because I can’t help but feel the old man is somewhere staring at me.

Uncle Isko was waiting for us in his taxi and called when he saw us.

“Hoi, Hermenia! Billy!” He called.

We loaded the shopping into the car and drove off for home. Suddenly, Uncle slammed his breaks.

“BULOK! [stupid]” Uncle yelled as he honked his horn. When I looked out the window, I saw that Uncle had slammed on his breaks because the old man I saw earlier had walked in front of his taxi. As Uncle honked his horn again, the old man slowly shuffled away staring at me. I sunk down in my seat so he could not see me.

“Gago. [idiot]” Uncle mumbled as he sped off going around the old man. I wished I was back home in Zamboanga.

We arrived home, unloaded the shopping from the taxi and thanked Uncle for taking us to market. Uncle drove off back toward Tagbilaran in search of fares.
The Old Woman

I was out tending to the ducks and chickens when Auntie called me into the house.

“Billy,” she said. “I forgot to give your Uncle Isko his gin. He will need it tonight for his pusoy game.” She handed me a plastic bag with the gin and three handfuls of calamansi. “Take this to your Uncle’s house, okay?”

“Opò Auntie,” I replied.

Tiyo Isko lived near Calunasan which is northeast from Calape. As I walked, I passed Janet’s house, Janet was busy hanging wet clothes on a clothes line.

“Hi, Janet!” I yelled. She waved hello back but couldn’t say anything because of the clothes-pins she was holding in her mouth.

I walked past the well where just this morning I had helped Janet with the water. A mile or so further down the road, I heard the scrape, scrape, scrape of a woman and her walis tingting, sweeping debris into small piles that she would later pickup and dispose of or burn.

“Good afternoon po,” I called out as I passed. She smiled saying good afternoon.

As I walked past the cemetery, I walked a little faster. After last night, the last place I wanted to look at was the cemetery. It seemed like I had walked all afternoon, it felt that way, I thought, because I didn’t get much sleep, it’s okay I could rest once I got to Uncles.

“Anák!... Billy!” A voice called out. I looked around to see who had called my name. From the doorway of an old house made of wood an old woman said to me, “Billy? You are Billy, right? nephew of Hermenia?”

“Opò” I responded.

“Come here, Billy, I want to talk with you.”

I was ready to make an excuse to avoid talking to this old woman but part of me was curious to know what she wanted. I walked up to her and took her hand bringing it to my forehead to show respect.

“Mano po.”

“Come in,” she said as she motioned with her hand. “My name is Viola. I’ve known your Tiya since she was a little girl. You can call me Lola Viola.”
Lola Voila was an old woman whose body was bent with age; her silver hair pulled back in a bun, and was dressed in a faded blue and white bestida. She steadied herself with a cane as she motioned me to sit at a small table just off the entrance of her kitchen.

‘Are you hungry?’ She asked.

“Hindi hò [no], Lola,” I responded. “What is it you wanted to talk to me about, Lola?” I asked.

“Today at the market Billy, I heard your Tiya Hermenia telling your Tiya Gigi that you said you heard an aswang last night.”

I started to feel ill, now I understand why everyone had been staring and smiling at me when I was at the market with Auntie. I could feel my face get warm from embarrassment.

“Lola,” I said, “I think that I only had an active imagination last night.”

“No!” She responded. “Aswang is real and you must protect yourself! I’ll tell you a story I have not talked about for many years of what happened to me when I was young and pregnant with my first child.”

“It was a hot night in May, to make things worse I was 7 months pregnant. I couldn’t take the heat so I went outside to sit in the bahay kubo [gazebo] in the garden. My mother warned me not to go outside at night because of the aswang. Like your Tiya, I didn’t believe in aswang and ignored her warnings. I fell asleep in the bahay kubo and was awaken by a sharp pain, when I opened my eyes there above me hanging from the roof was an aswang. I couldn’t move, it was like I was paralyzed, there was a horrible smell. Its long tongue was under my dress, he was eating my un-born baby. I was helpless to do anything, I couldn’t scream or yell. I laid there crying but without sound. I heard a scream. It was my mother. She saw the aswang and yelled for my Kuya Ding, “ASWANG! Ding Hurry! It’s attacking your sister! ASWANG!” She yelled for my Kuya. He came running with his rifle but it was too late the aswang had flew way, he had killed and eaten my unborn baby.

She sat still for awhile, quiet, wiping tears from her eyes. She rose from her chair and walked over to a cabinet. Steadying herself with her cane, she opened the cabinet door and took a bottle out and came back to the table.

“Here is bottle of a coconut oil mixed with stems dalupang, root of sudusudu and bark of santor. When an aswang is near, the oil will bubble and boil. Use this to know when the aswang is near you. Keep this with you all the time, Billy. If you heard the aswang, he is after you.”

“But why?” I asked. “Why does the aswang want me?”
“I don’t know,” she said. “But you need to be careful, the aswang is tricky.”

Stuffing the bottle into the pocket of my shorts, I said, “Sorry Lola, it’s getting late and I have to go to my Tiyo Isko’s place.”

“Okay, but one more thing, Billy, you put ahos [garlic] in the doorway of your room, close your window at night and hang ahos on it so the aswang can’t open it.”

“Yes, Lola.” I said.

“Say hello to your Tiya Hermenia for me.

As I walked toward Tiyo’s house again, I heard her shout, “Pray, Billy, you pray to Mother Mary.”
Uncle Iskos House

Entering Tiyo’s, house I saw Juanita, Tiyo Isko’s daughter, sitting reading a book.

“Hi, Juanita,” I said.

“Hi, Billy, what are you doing here?”

“Auntie told me to bring this to Tiyo Isko.”

I held out the bag showing her the gin and calamansi. “Gin?” She said.

“Tiyo had Auntie buy it when we went to the market today. He said he was playing pusoy tonight.”

“Pusoy! again?” She frowned. “Mama,” she called. “Billy is here.”

“Hi Tiya, Auntie told me to bring you this,” I said as I handed her the bag, “It’s gin and calamansi.”

“Thank you, Billy, that was such a long walk. You must be hungry. You stay for dinner. I’m making pork sinagang.”

“I better not, Auntie might be expecting me home.”

I didn’t want to stay not because my Auntie might be expecting me but because it would be night soon and I didn’t want to walk home in the dark.

“You never mind your Auntie, Billy, I will call her and let her know you will eat dinner with us. Besides, I’m cooking plenty. Your Uncle will have his friends over for pusoy.”

“Okay, Tiya,” I said, knowing that I could never win.

I went into the kitchen with Tiya and Juanita, as I sat at the table breaking the Sitaw into small pieces for the Sinagang.

I asked, “Tiya have you seen aswang?”

“Aswang?” She said with a questioning face.

“No, I’ve not seen an aswang but some I know, have told me of personal accounts and stories they heard from their friends and relatives. Why do you ask about aswang?”

“Oh, nothing, Tiya. I was just wondering about it, but you do believe in aswang, Tiya, right?”
“I don’t know, Billy. Sometimes I would wonder.”

“There was a story in the news the other day about two boys who were attacked by an aswang,” Juanita said.


“Well” Juanita said, retelling the story she heard. “Two boys, 16 and 14, who live in the barangay of Cabuling in Tantangan were sleeping in a small makeshift hut near their rice field. The 16 year old and his younger brother were guarding their farm ducks. The 16 year old heard a tik-tik-tik sound outside their makeshift hut.

The boy said he saw the aswang and it was disguised as a big black dog with red, glowering eyes about three feet-high. It was about to bite the neck of his younger brother. When he saw it, he grabbed their single shot rifle and shot at the aswang. The aswang fled into the dark and was never found.”

“They never found it?” I asked, just making sure I heard her right.


“Why, are you scared of aswang?” Juanita laughed, “wuuuuuu, aswang’s going to get you!” Juanita played showing her teeth and forming her hand into claws.

“That’s enough,” Tiya said looking at Juanita.

“Anyhow, Billy,” Tiya said, “There are no aswang here in our area.”

“Yes, there are, Tiya,” I thought to myself.

Tiyo Isko arrived home from work.

“Billy?” He said surprised to see me.

“Hello, Tiyo, you forgot your gin.”

“Oh, you brought it?”

“Yes, he did,” responded Tiya with a smile, “he will be having dinner with us” she said as she set out the rice and Juanita set the table.

“Good. You should stay for pusoy,”

“That’s okay, Tiyo. I will need to go home soon.”
I knew that if I stayed I will still have to walk home because Tiyo would have drank too much to drive and I would be walking even later in the night.

“When will you go back to Zamboanga, Billy?” Tiyo asked while we ate.

“Nanay [mother] said I should come home Saturday. Tiyo.”

Today was Monday and I had already been in Bohol doing errands for my nanay for the past week.

“Have you already tended to you nanay’s land?”

“Opò, Tiyo I collected the rice from the farmers and will carry it back with me.”

“Have your Tiya Hermenia call me and I will come fetch you and take you and your rice to the ferry.”

“Oh, thank you, Tiyo,” I responded.

I could not wait to go home to Zamboanga. I had had enough of aswang to last awhile.

Tiyo’s friends started arriving and I said my goodbyes, thanking Tiya for dinner.

“Why don’t you stay for pusooy” Tiyo asked again, “I will take you home later.”

“Thank you, Tiyo,” I said. “But I have to get up early tomorrow,” I said as I waved and walked out into the night.
The Walk Home

Walking out into the night felt like I was walking into an area of Mindanao where you knew the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) or the so-called Jemaah Islamiya (JI) terrorist might be operating and where you needed to be wary of everything and everyone around. It was an un-easy feeling and I just wanted to get back to my Auntie’s house. There are no street lamps on the road between Tiyo Isko’s house and Auntie’s. “I’m glad there is a bright moon tonight,” I thought, “I could at least see the road.”

The night was warm and humid as often it is this time of year. The road moist from a shower usually heavy but short lived, common this time of year. There were a few clouds in the night sky which would at times cross in front of the moon for short intervals. As I walked further and further out of town, the drunken voice of a karaoke singer singing an obscure Barry Manilow song, people’s laughter and baby cries faded, replaced by the sounds of hundreds of frogs forming a chorus chirping, buurrum, buurrum, buurrum, buurrum, almost deafening at times on the road that borders one of the many rice fields. Soon, even the sounds of frogs were gone, melting into the sounds of the jungle that now surrounded me.

The sound of insects buzzing like an electric razor gone crazy. Night birds squawking and the screech of unggoys [monkeys], all making eerie sounds in the night. I jumped violently, startled from my reverie as a large fruit bat swooped and darted not far from me. “Better hurry,” I thought, “it’s late and I’m so very tired from the sleep I lost the night before.”

Before I realized it, I could see a clearing in the jungle just ahead, a sense of relief came over me. My relief was short lived, as more and more of the jungle opened into the clearing ahead where I could see crosses and grave markers cloaked in a fog lingering just above the ground; the clearing was that of the cemetery that I had past earlier that day. I couldn’t help but feel even more uneasy. It was then that I noticed the eerie silence, no bird or bugs, no unggoys or even a lone frog croaking. Nothing like an empty room void of sound. The only sounds I could hear were the sounds of my own footsteps and the flip-flop, flip-flop of my tsinelas, each step echoing like I was walking through a long hallway.

As I came to the cemetery, I walked a little faster as I did on my way to Tiyo Isko’s.

“Pissst,” I heard a voice call out

“Pissssssssst…” the voice called louder and harder.

I looked, and to the left of me in the graveyard, behind a head stone stood the old man I had seen in Tagbilaran.

“Pssst,” he called
“Hoy, dong! hali paduol sa ako kay naa koy importanting isolte sa imo” [Come here young boy, I’ve something important to tell you, so important], he called out in a raspy shaky voice. The kind of voice you hear from an old sick person with a hoarse smokers voice.

“Sorry, po, I must go home. I’m late.” I replied.

“Hoy dong! hali paduol sa ako kay naa koy importanting isolte sa imo” He repeated this time in a demanding and angry voice.

“Sorry po!” I yelled as I hurried my pace still looking at him.

He moved toward me coming out from behind the head stone.

“COME HERE!!! “ he screamed.

He was coming at me but he had no legs!, He was floating in the air, flying, his intestines were hanging from his torso dragging along behind him like the tail of a kite in the wind. I ran faster.

“Dili ka makalayo sa ako. Ako ka!” [You can’t get away, you’re mine!!!!] he screamed laughing, horrid evil laugh “Ehehehehehee… “.

I ran as fast as I could, loosing my tsinelas somewhere along the way. I could hear something running behind me, I heard a growl and when I looked I saw a large dog with glowing red eyes chasing me.

“Ako ka! Ako ka! Ako ka!” [You’re Mine!, You’re Mine!, You’re Mine!] the dog growled has he snapped at my feet trying to stop me.

I began now to lose my mind and to scream and cry out HELP, HELP, ASWANG!!!!! Knowing full well no one would hear me. I ran like I had never run before. I ran for my life. Just then a car came driving down the road, its lights shining in my eyes. I waved my arms franticly, “Stop, stop, please, stop!” I yelled.

The car slowed and came to a stop, it was only then I looked behind me, the dog had vanished as if it were never there. The driver hanging out his window said, “Boy, what’s wrong.”

Bending over out of breath, I panted “aswang, aswang!” while pointing to the dark.

The driver got out of his car with flashlight and searched the area. I remembered that bottle Lola Viola gave me, I pulled it from my pocket, shaking with fear. I looked at it in the headlamp of the car, the aswang had gone, the oil was not bubbling or boiling. “Thank God!” I thought.
“I see no aswang,” the driver said.

Retelling my story the driver looked at me, my feet were cut and bloody from running bare foot, he could see I could hardly walk.

“What is your name? he inquired.

“Billy.”

“Do you live near here, Billy?”

“Yes, in Calape.”

“Well, why don’t I give you a ride home.”

“Thank you Sir,” I said.

He handed me a rag to wipe my feet and I got into his car. He turned his car around and drove me to Auntie’s house.
Safe at Home

“Here it is, Sir,” I said as we came up to the house.

“Are you okay, Billy?”

“Yes, Sir.”

“Clean your feet, Billy, so they don’t get infected, and don’t be out so late anymore.”

As I went down from the car I said, “Salamat po.”

As I limped to the house, I watched as the tail lights of his car disappeared into the night, thankful that he had come along when he did.

“Oh, my God! what happened to you?” Auntie asked when I came in the house.

“I got chased by a big dog on my way back from Tiyo’s house. I lost my tsinelas while I was running so my feet got cut.”

“Come into the kitchen so I can tend to your feet, Billy.”

Auntie handed me a glass of water and began to fix my feet.

Uncle asked, “Why did the dog chase you?”

“I don’t know, Uncle. I was walking past the cemetery and suddenly a dog started growling and running after me. So, I ran. The man who drove me home saw me running and stopped to see if I was okay. I guess he scared the dog away because it was gone when he looked for it.”

I didn’t want to tell Auntie and Uncle that I was chased by an aswang. They would not have believed me and would have been angry that I would be acting like a sacred little boy.

“Well, it’s lucky that driver happened by. What’s his name so I can thank him?”

“I don’t know Uncle, I forgot to ask.”

“Your Tiyo Isko should have driven you home,” he said in concerned upset tone.

“Did you eat, Billy?” Auntie asked.

“Opò Auntie, at Tiyo Isko’s.”

“You should wash-up and rest now, Billy.”
“Opò Auntie.”

After Auntie and Uncle retired for the night, I snuck into the kitchen and collected several garlic heads. I did as Lola Viola instructed, I place garlic in my doorway and tied it to the doors of the window and even though it was hot I shut and locked the window. I laid down under the mosquito net as I did every night. I placed the bottle of oil and herbs Lola Viola gave me next to my head at an angle where I could see if it began to bubble and boil, a sign that aswang was near.

I could not sleep. No, I would not sleep. I was sure I would die if I slept, if I gave into my fatigue. With every creek and snap I heard in the house I would tremble, I could even hear the rustle of the coconut trees branches dancing in the wind. Minutes seemed like hours. Hours like days. I wished this night would end. I struggled, slapping myself at times to stay awake. I heard a slight gurgle; I looked at the bottle of oil and herb. “Oh, god! My god, it’s boiling! The aswang is near! Fear struck every bone in my body. “Mother Mary, save me, please,” I prayed. I started to say the Lord’s Prayer; “Our Father, who art in heaven hallowed, be thy Name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven, giv…” Then it started:-- tik-tik tik-tik tik-tik I could hear something first walking back and fourth looking for a way in through the nipa, then on the roof picking at the tin as if to make a hole. I lay frozen thinking if I made no sound it would think I was not there. It was again outside the nipa, I heard it stop and sniff as if it was a police dog looking for drugs…. In a hushed raspy voice it said:


After awhile, the sounds would stop and I would hear nothing but the beat of my own heart. Just when I would think it was over, it would start again: the boiling oil, the scratching at the nipa and the old man repeating in a whispered wheezing voice:

“Ako ka... tik-tik, Ako ka... tik-tik, Ako ka... tik-tik” over and over.

Thank God Lola Viola told me about the garlic! It was my only salvation, my only hope against this evil. Why did it want me? Why? . I told myself that if I live till morning I was taking the ferry home to Zamboanga and nothing could ever make me come back again.

“Ako ka... tik-tik, Ako ka... tik-tik, Ako ka... tik-tik”
Going Home to Zamboanga

At first light of day and when I was sure it was safe, I retrieved the garlic to put it back in Auntie’s kitchen before it was missed. I wanted no questions as to why it was scattered around the room I had been staying in. I packed up my things and readied myself to leave. Walking outside half holding my breath, I pulled the bottle of oil out of my pocket and checked it. To my relief, it was normal. After putting on my rubber shoes, I walked to Manong Ariel’s house to secure a ride to the Superferry. Manong Ariel lived 12 houses away and owned his own tricycle. Every morning he would drive to Tagbilaran in search of fares. I would ask him to take me with him today and drop me and nanay’s rice to the Superferry.

It was still early as I knocked on the door. Ariel’s Lola answered.

“Morning po Lola, could I speak with Manong Ariel, please?”

“Ariel! the door!” Lola called.

Manong Ariel was still getting ready, so it took him awhile to get to the door.

“Manong Ariel, I need to go to the Superferry. Can you bring me on your way to the city?”

“Okay, Billy,” he said. “I’ll leave in one hour.”

“Thank you, Manong, I’ll be here,” I replied.

Back at the house, Auntie was up cooking.

“Auntie,” I said, “I’ll be going home to Zamboanga today”

“Today?” She questioned. “I thought you would leave Saturday?”

“Oh, yes, Auntie, but I remembered I needed to take care of some things.”

“What things?” Auntie ask.

I searched for an excuse to leave in my mind.

“Things to do before I leave for school. I’ll have to earn money for books and school clothes.

“Why don’t you eat first?” Auntie said.

“I can’t Auntie, Manong Ariel is waiting for me. He will give me a ride to the city.”
“Okay, well here, take these fruits to eat on the ferry.”

Auntie put a bunch of latondans and some seriguelas in an old cloth and handed it to me.

“Thank you po,” I said.

“Tell Uncle and Seth I said thank you and good-bye,” as I kissed her on the cheek.

“Be careful, Billy, and say hello to your mama for me.”

“Opò…”

I had to make three trips between Uncle’s house and Manong Ariel’s house to carry the rice and my belongings to his tricycle. By the time Manong Ariel was ready to leave, I had everything in the tricycle and was waiting for him in the side car.

“Wow, you are here already! Good!” Manong said, surprised I was there.

I was so tired and wanted to sleep. The cool morning air on the drive to Tagbilaran felt good on my face and kept me awake during the trip. I could sleep on the ferry, it would be such a good sleep. A 6 hour trip home, nothing to worry about once on the ferry. I thought.

We soon arrived at the Superferry and Manong Ariel helped me unload my stuff.

“Thank you, Manong,” I said, as I shook his hand.

“Have a safe trip home, Billy.”

I watched as he started his tricycle and sped off.

At the Superferry ticket counter, I asked for a ticket for the next ferry from Tagbilaran – Dipolog.

“I’m sorry, Sir, we don’t have that ferry until 6:45AM tomorrow”

“6:45AM. Tomorrow?” I said.

“Yes, Sir.”

“Do you have anything to Mindanao near to Zamboanga City for today?”

“No sir,” she replied “only tomorrow, Wednesday 6:45AM.”

“Thank you,” I said, wondering what to do.
I ran to Ocean Jet and then to Sulpicio Lines no one had any or they had just departed for Mindanao. I was stuck, I felt like braking down. I sat on my sacks of rice just thinking to myself, “What to do, what to do.” I rubbed the tears from my eyes and hailed a tricycle over.

“Calape, please.” I said to the driver as I loaded the rice and my belongings into the tricycle.
I was distraught over the fact that I would not be able to go home that day. “Another night,” I thought, “Oh no, another night.” I sat in the tricycle looking at the floor paying no mind as to where I was being driven. Fear, a panicked fear set in. Where could I go? What could I do? No matter what, the aswang could find me, no matter where on the island I might go. “No,” I thought, “I better just stay at Auntie’s house tonight.” At least there I know I could fend off the aswang.

“Sir, Sir,” the driver said shaking me out of my dazed state.


“Just down the street,” as I pointed. There, in the front of the house, was Auntie as the tricycle pulled up.

“Why are you back, Billy?”

“No ferry until tomorrow, Auntie.”

“Oh, I see. So you’ll stay another night?”

“Yes, Auntie, is that okay?

“Is that okay?” she repeated. “What kind of question is that, of course it’s okay.”

The heat added to my weariness. I wanted to sleep badly but was afraid to. If I did, I might not wake before it was dark. I sat like a zombie in the living room with the fan moving too and fro attempting a cool-down.

“Billy, you look terrible.” Auntie said, “It looks like you have not slept all night. You have dark eyes and bags under them. Why don’t you take a rest?”

“I’m fine, Auntie. I’m just upset there is no ferry. I’ll be okay in a while.”

I went outside to sit under the shade of a guava tree. The day seemed hotter then most maybe because I was sleepy. I watched as people went about their day walking past our house. My mind was float off thinking of things, things I would forget almost as rapidly as they came. Auntie called me to lunch. I sat at the table in a daze.

“Billy, why don’t you sleep?” Auntie insisted.

“Yes, I will, Auntie. In a while,” I said just to appease her.

She just shook her head making a tisking sound as a sign of her disapproval.
“Thank you for lunch, Auntie,” I said as I started to do the dishes.

“Billy, leave those and GO REST NOW…”

“Opò Auntie, I’ll just rest outside on the bench.”

So sleepy, I thought, as I sat on a bamboo bench at the front of the house that faced the street. Eating had made things worse, my eyes where heavy and I would catch myself falling asleep as if falling slowly from the sky. I would wake with a jerk. “Stay awake!” I would say out loud in a whispered voice. Finally, after dozing off several times, I gave into my body. “I have to sleep,” I rationalized, “aswang won’t come for me in the day when everyone is awake.”

I walked into the house. Auntie was busy folding the cloths she had taken off the line while she watched TV.

“Auntie, I’ll take a rest now, can you wake me a 4PM?”

“Yes, Billy, I will,” she replied.

“Don’t forget, Auntie, okay? It’s important.”

“Shush,” she said “you sleep now.”

I awoke. I was hot and sticky. I tried to open my eyes, but they felt heavy almost glued shut….. I could smell a pungent odor, a smell like something had died. A smell so thick I found it hard to breathe. That’s when I heard it,… tik-tik tik-tik tik-tik. My brain screamed ASWANG!!!!!!!!!!!! Auntie had forgotten to wake me and now it was night. I panicked! Struggling to move! But I couldn’t! Suddenly, my eyes snapped wide open! Fear, like shock waves, trembled through my body. My brain screamed again, ASWANG!!!!!!!!!!! He.. he.. he.. was HERE!!! hanging over me like a giant bat with its wings wrapped around him. His eyes glowed red in the darkness of the room. tik-tik-tik-tik-tik -- that sound! I was frozen! I couldn’t move my body! It felt as if I was being held down by evil spirits. I struggled, trying to force my mind to make my body move. tik-tik tik-tik tik-tik.. I tried to cry out: “HELP!!!!!!!!!!!” But my lips wouldn’t open; tears ran down my face as I cried mumbling: “Helllllll!” Slowly, the aswang opened its wings; using his long claw like fingernail to rip through the mosquito net that hung around me. His long hallow tongue unrolled like a butterflies proboscis ready to feed, tik-tik-tik,

“Ako ka, ako ka.” The aswang chanted as the tongue moved slowly toward me.

I could feel its cold sticky tongue as it slowly slid past rubbing my cheek and down my chest, HELP!!!!!! HELP!!!!!! I tried to cry out, but NOTHING! I felt a sharp pain as he pushed his tongue deep inside me just below my ribs, I could feel the life being sucked out of me, tik-tik-tik-tik-tik.
“This can’t be real,” I thought, “it’s not real, not real… wake-up!… wake-up!… wake-up!”

The End
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cebuano</th>
<th>English or Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bahay kubo</td>
<td>Gazebo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barangay</td>
<td>Village</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buangbuang</td>
<td>Crazy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bulok</td>
<td>Stupid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calamansi</td>
<td>Citrus fruit like a lime</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dalupang</td>
<td>A branched shrub</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gago</td>
<td>Idiot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hindi ho</td>
<td>No Thank you</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kinuwanggol</td>
<td>Silly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Komprey</td>
<td>A tree; the leaves &amp; bark used as medicine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kuya</td>
<td>Older Brother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lola</td>
<td>Grandmother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Makapatawa yon</td>
<td>So Funny</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mano Po</td>
<td>Take the older person's right hand with your right hand, and move it to your own forehead. To show respect.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manong</td>
<td>Older male friend</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nipa</td>
<td>palm tree that grows out of the mud</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opô</td>
<td>(respectively) Yes, sir/ma'am</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Po</td>
<td>respect or politeness, sir/ma'am</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pork Sinagang</td>
<td>Pork soup made with sour tamarind</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pusoy</td>
<td>A card game</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salamat Po</td>
<td>Thank you</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Santor</td>
<td>Tree growing up to 20 meters high</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sudusudu</td>
<td>cactus-like plant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tikog</td>
<td>Sedge grass</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tiyo</td>
<td>Uncle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tiya</td>
<td>Aunt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tri-cycle</td>
<td>Motor Cycle with a sidecar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tsinelas</td>
<td>Sandals or slippers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unggoy</td>
<td>Monkey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walis Tinting</td>
<td>Broom made from coconut mid-ribs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Bill Baker was born in the United States of America, raised most of his life in San Francisco, California.

After high school he joined the United States Navy Seabee's for 6 years (2 years active and 4 years reserve) as a Constriction Mechanic, then spent 2 years in the United States 820th Army Corp's of Engineers as a reservist.

Currently, he and his family live and work in San Diego, California where he is a Sr. Systems Engineer for a company that specializes in the Defense industry.

His father is Anglo-American and mother Filipino. The biggest influences in his life were that of his Lolo and Lola who came from the island of Bohol, which is known for the Chocolate Hills, wonderful white sand beaches and as having the best dive sites in the Philippines and the two people he give’s credit for raising him and instilling in him, pride in the Filipino heritage.

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