



Full Text

MANGITA AND LARINA

Brought to you by Areté at Ateneo Basic Education, *Mangita and Larina* is from the book, *Philippine Folklore Stories*, written by John Maurice Miller, and will be read to us by Barbara B. Ramirez.

A tale told in the lake district of Luzon. During the rainy season the waters of the Laguna de Bai rise and detach from the banks a peculiar vegetation that resembles lettuce. These plants, which float for months down the Pasig River, gave rise, no doubt, to the story.

Many years ago, there lived on the banks of the Laguna de Bai a poor fisherman whose wife had died, leaving him two beautiful daughters named Mangita and Larina.

Mangita had dark skin and hair as black. She was as good as she was beautiful, and was loved by all for her kindness. She helped her father mend the nets and make the torches to fish with at night, and her bright smile lit up the little nipa house like a ray of sunshine.

Larina was fair and had long golden hair of which she was very proud. She was different from her sister, and never helped with the work, but spent the day combing her hair and catching butterflies. She would catch a pretty butterfly, cruelly stick a pin through it, and fasten it in her hair. Then she would go down to the lake to see her reflection in the clear water, and would laugh to see the poor butterfly struggling in pain. The people disliked her for her cruelty, but they loved Mangita very much. This made Larina jealous, and the more Mangita was loved, the more her sister thought evil of her.

One day a poor old woman came to the nipa house and begged for a little rice to put in her bowl. Mangita was mending a net and Larina was combing her hair in the doorway. When Larina saw the old woman she spoke mockingly to her and gave her a push that made her fall and cut her head on a sharp rock; but Mangita sprang to help her, washed the blood away from her head, and filled her bowl with rice from the jar in the kitchen.

The poor woman thanked her and promised never to forget her kindness, but to her sister she spoke not a word. Larina did not care, however, but laughed at her and mocked her as she painfully made her way again down the road. When she had gone Mangita took Larina to task for her cruel treatment of a stranger; but, instead of doing any good, it only caused Larina to hate her sister all the more.

Sometime afterwards the poor fisherman died. He had gone to the big city down the river to sell his fish, and had been attacked with a terrible sickness that was raging there.

The girls were now alone in the world.

Mangita carved pretty shells and earned enough to buy food, but, though she begged Larina to try to help, her sister would only idle away the time.

The terrible sickness now swept everywhere and poor Mangita, too, fell ill. She asked Larina to nurse her, but the latter was jealous of her and would do nothing to ease her pain. Mangita grew worse and worse, but finally, when it seemed as if she would soon die, the door opened and the old woman to whom she had been so kind came into the room. She had a bag of seeds in her hand, and taking one she gave it to Mangita, who soon showed signs of being better, but was so weak that she could not give thanks.

The old woman then gave the bag to Larina and told her to give a seed to her sister every hour until she returned. She then went away and left the girls alone.

Larina watched her sister, but did not give her a single seed. Instead, she hid them in her own long hair and paid no attention to Mangita's moans of pain. The poor girl's cries grew weaker and weaker, but not a seed would her cruel sister give her. In fact, Larina was so jealous that she wished her sister to die.

When at last the old woman returned, poor Mangita was at the point of death. The visitor bent over the sick girl and then asked her sister if she had given Mangita the seeds. Larina showed her the empty bag and said she had given them as directed. The old woman searched the house, but of course could not find the seeds. She then asked Larina again if she had given them to Mangita. Again, the cruel girl said that she had done so.

Suddenly the room was filled with a blinding light, and when Larina could see once more, in place of the old woman stood a beautiful fairy holding the now well Mangita in her arms.

The beautiful fairy pointed to Larina and said, "I am the poor woman who asked for rice. I wished to know your hearts. You were cruel and Mangita was kind, so she shall live with me in my island home in the lake. As for you, because you tried to do evil to your good sister, you shall sit at the bottom of the lake forever, combing out the seeds you have hidden in your hair." Then, she clapped her hands and a number of elves appeared and carried the struggling Larina away.

"Come," said the fairy to Mangita, and she carried her to her beautiful home, where she lives in peace and happiness.

As for Larina, she sits at the bottom of the lake and combs her hair. As she combs a seed out, another comes in, and every seed that is combed out becomes a green plant that floats out of the lake and down the Pasig.

And to this day people can see those green plants, and know that Larina is being punished for her wickedness.

Source: *Mangita and Larina. Philippine Folklore Stories*. John Maurice Miller. 2004 (Ebook). Project Gutenberg

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