

# MA'AM SER, SAAN PO KAYO?

**A MICRO-RPG ABOUT DRIVING A TAXI IN MANILA  
AT NIGHT, WRITTEN BY PAMMU**



## #1: ANO 'TO? [WHAT'S THIS?]

Being a taxi driver is a tough job already. Being a taxi driver with your third eye wide open and a kind heart makes it even harder. "**Ma'amser, Saan Po Kayo?**" translates (roughly) in English to "Ma'am/sir, where to?".

**This is a 2-4 hour micro-RPG designed for 3-5 players.** It's about bringing passengers where they need to be at night. Pilot a kind-hearted taxi driver who does their round in Metro Manila, the capital city of the Philippines. Have some of your friends play your familiars – spirits or monsters that you helped in the past, and are now trying to pay it forward. This is a city where there are just as many spirits as there are people, and they need help too. Take that wheel, hang some sampaguita on your rearview mirror, fire up Waze. Your passengers are waiting.

## #2: GANITO LANG 'YAN. [IT'S JUST LIKE THIS.]

- ▶ Get some pens or pencils and some paper, a handful of tokens or things that can serve as tokens, and some six-sided dice (d6s).
- ▶ Decide who will GM, who will be the taxi driver, and who will be playing his familiars.

## #3: PAALALA! [REMEMBER!]

- ▶ **Draw a tracker to mark the passage of time in-game on top.** The driver's shift starts at 10:00 PM and ends at 6:00 – the hour when the sun shows up in earnest in the Philippines. **Help your passenger get to where it needs to before sunrise!**
- ▶ **An hour passes two ways: after everyone at the table has acted, OR when you're moving from one destination to another in the city.** Talking doesn't count, though! Road trips are all about the journey, not the destination.
- ▶ **Success/failure is determined by the single highest result. 1-3 is fail, 4-6 is success.**

Beyond that, there are no real rules here! There are no set moves or actions. Ask questions and plot together. Just use the dice to keep things interesting.

Have fun! Get creative! This game isn't about winning. It's about making meaningful Manila Encounters by Night.

## #4: PARA SA GM [FOR THE GM]

- ▶ Pick your mumu (ghost/spirit) for the night. Determine what they are, where the party finds it, where it needs to go, and why.
- ▶ Remember: spirits are always reluctant to reveal their reasons. Ghosts don't fully remember who they are and what happened to them.
- ▶ A good way to run Saan Po Kayo? Is to treat it like it's a mystery game. Figure out obstacles and complications for

the party, whether they're mortal or supernatural. Challenging and fun is best: this is about making a story, not having players run through a dungeon.

- ▶ Keep things light! Avoid serious injury or death. Stick to supernatural and spooky, not horrific.

## #5: PARA KAY KUYA/ATE DRIVER [FOR BIG BROTHER/BIG SISTER DRIVER]

- ▶ **Name your driver!** Give him or her a 1-2 sentence story.
- ▶ **Name your taxi!** When they're not part of a company, taxi drivers in Manila get free reign on what they name their ride. Filipino taxi names can be anything from the names of their favorite kids to Biblical references to pop culture references to – yes – brilliant puns. Examples: Christina, Light of the Lord, Top Gun, Wheels of Fire, Sundo.
- ▶ **Roll two d6s to see how much money you start out with.** Multiply that result by 300 pesos. Helping ghosts/spirits out sometimes costs human money!
- ▶ You can only see and hear ghosts and spirits, but you can fully interact with human beings.

## #6: PARA SA MGA FAMILIARS [FOR THE FAMILIARS]

- ▶ Name them! Figure out what they are. Give them 1-2 sentence stories, including why they're helping kuya/ate driver out.
- ▶ Roll two d6s each. The total are your Blessings. You can give Blessings to your taxi driver to add one dice to the dice pool of your driver, or to another familiar. One Blessing = one extra dice. This is why you needed tokens!
- ▶ You can all see and hear human beings, but you can fully interact with other ghosts and spirits.

# POSSIBLE MUMU & FAMILIARS

**Duende** are like the Filipino equivalent of gnomes. They reputedly have big hats, and dwell in rocks, caves, old trees, unvisited or dark parts of homes, or in anthills/mounds. Always say "Tabi tabi po (Excuse me/pardon me/please move aside, sir)" when you go past their homes and watch where you step, or they'll curse you.

**Kapre** are large, smelly, tobacco-smoking tree giants that usually sit under trees (like balete trees!). Some of them hold magical white stones. They say that if you obtain these stones, they'll grant you a wish.

**Tikbalang** are bipedal creatures with a humanoid body and a horse's head. They have sharp manes with three thick, spine-like hairs. If you wish to tame a tikbalang and have them as your servant, you must leap on to them, hold on for dear life, and pluck these hairs before they eat you.

**Manananggal** are female night flyers who are capable of bisecting their bodies. The upper half sprouts large, bat-like wings and allow them to fly off in search of victims. They use their elongated tongues to suck the hearts of fetuses from the wombs of pregnant women.

**Tiyanaks** are vampiric creatures who take the form of toddlers or babies. Their cries lure their new victims to them. It is said they come from the spirits of aborted babies.

**Diwata** is a bit of a catch-all term for Filipino fairies, or supernatural creatures of ethereal beauty who enchant people,

steal children, and very occasionally grant wishes or favors to humans they fancy.

**Aswang** is an umbrella term for monsters in Filipino folklore. They can reputedly shapeshift (often into dogs or pigs), and they eat viscera. It is said that aswang are cursed with eternal hunger, and must pass this affliction down to another through the passing of a black chick.

## NEED REFERENCES ON PINOY FOLKLORE?

**MELOREDrama** (@meloredramapod on Twitter) as hosted by **Juabe Inciong** (@misterjuaber on Twitter, also found on Itch.io at <https://misterjuaber.itch.io/>) and **Denice de Guzman** (@angmgatuhod on Twitter) is a bi-weekly podcast about the creatures of Philippine mythology, and of Philippine legends, folklore, and beliefs. Support them on Patreon: <https://www.patreon.com/meloredrama/posts>

**THE ASWANG PROJECT** is a massive website that churns out articles on Philippine folklore and mythology: <https://www.aswangproject.com/>

**#ManilaEncounters** is a Twitter hashtag started by BJ Recio (@Nosfecatu). It started as a thought exercise for tabletop roleplayers, and soon became micro-fiction exploring the spookier side of Metro Manila and beyond. Many of the tweets are based on urban legends. Some are personal encounters with the strange. **Manila Encounters is also available as a zine!** Consider Dming BJ on Twitter if you wish to inquire on prices and shipping of a physical copy.

The works of the late **DAMIANA L. EUGENIO** are the most comprehensive compilations of all things Filipino myth, legend, folktale, and then some out there. Some are available on Amazon for the international market.

The works of the late **MAXIMO D. RAMOS** are also as comprehensive in scale as Eugenio's. Similarly available on Amazon for the international market.

**"101 KAGILA-GILALAS NA NILALANG"** by EDGAR CALABIA SAMAR is yet another book that introduces creatures of Philippine myth to readers. Available on Amazon for the international market.



## SOME TALES FROM MANILA

In Quezon City, the **11<sup>th</sup> World Scout Jamboree – the Scout's Circle** – commemorates the casualties of the United Arab Airlines Flight 869 Crash of 1963. The streets in that area are all named for these boy scouts and the teachers who were with them. Some locals like to believe their spirits guard those streets.

**Balete Drive in the New Manila area** is said to be the most haunted street in the Metro. There's a white lady that roams there, weeping endlessly.

**The Cultural Center of the Philippines along Roxas Boulevard** is effectively a mass grave. Rather than save some workers who were mired in wet concrete there, the Marcos Regime ordered that they be covered up with MORE concrete so that they could make the deadline – effectively burying them all alive.

**The Fairview area down Commonwealth Avenue** was – still might be? – a popular spot for salvage victims. Salvaging is the extrajudicial killing or summary execution of criminals and subversive elements.

**The Greenhills area** is, according to Feng Shui principles, the Belly of the Dragon. This may explain the constant fight for properties and space down there – among other things, anyway.

Several different properties all throughout the city were once

graveyards, or prisons, or other distressed areas. **Starmall along EDSA**, for example, used to be a cemetery. Nobody bothered exhuming the bodies and burying them elsewhere.

**Intramuros and other areas of Manila** saw the worst of both the Spanish Occupation and World War II. WWII was particularly bad, since the city was completely shelled out by bombs and artillery. We'll leave it at that.



## SALAMAT PO! [THANK YOU]

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PAMELA PUNZALAN.

Editor-in-Chief of **Play Without Apology**

([playwithoutapology.com](http://playwithoutapology.com) / @PWOAcom on Twitter).

Apparently a Geek Community Mom™.

Sometimes a game designer, always aggressively queer.



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[pam.punzalan@gmail.com](mailto:pam.punzalan@gmail.com)