The book cover features a central illustration of a cat made of multi-colored yarn, lying on a bed with several books. The background is a vibrant orange with a white, swirling, abstract pattern. A teal oval contains the title and author information.

# ANG AKLATANG (THE CAT LIBRARY) PUSA

—WRITTEN BY—  
EUGENE Y. EVASCO

Winner of  
CANVAS'  
Romeo Forbes  
Children's  
Storywriting  
Competition

Illustrated by Jared C. Yokte



# ANG AKLATANG PUSA

(THE CAT LIBRARY)

Story written by  
Eugene Y. Evasco



Artworks created by  
Jared C. Yokte

Translated into English by Angelo V. Suarez

**E**verything began in the dense thicket of Ms. Salvacion's backyard. Because it was always dark in her home, everyone kept dumping garbage on her lot.

Ms. Salvacion is scared of people. She doesn't notice the garbage dumped on her backyard because she hardly ever comes out. She'd rather engage with books.







One midnight, there was a relentless chorus of meowing in her backyard. Ms. Salvacion was forced to come out. She looked for the source of the noise.

A faint rustling. The movement of dried leaves. When she approached, there they were, four kittens in a shoebox.



She had never been a mom, but out popped her instinct to nurture. All hearts might melt in the kittens' imploring gaze.

That the kittens were black was of no concern to her. It was a popular superstition that they brought bad luck. Hurriedly she took the box and brought it in.







There was where the legend began. News spread that if you needed to get rid of a kitten, just hurl it into the dense backyard in the corner of Pook Palaris. There was a woman there who would take in unwanted pets.

A dark rumor emerged from the incident. Word was Ms. Salvacion peddled *siopao* – soft, delicious steamed buns – in Binondo.



The truth was that Ms. Salvacion had a fondness for the cats. What used to be a bookshelf was now a shelf containing cats. Her closet, her dresser, her cabinet – all became tiny rooms for various kittens. She bought boxes by the bulk when she learned that her pets liked squeezing themselves into them.







Ms. Salvacion was a retired librarian. Because of her knowledge, she thought of a way to arrange her collection of cats. They weren't sorted according to height, like we often do with books.





She grouped them according to age, personality, experience, and distinctive talents. On a page of her catalogue, one could see such notes:

*Miming, 3 months, black and affectionate*

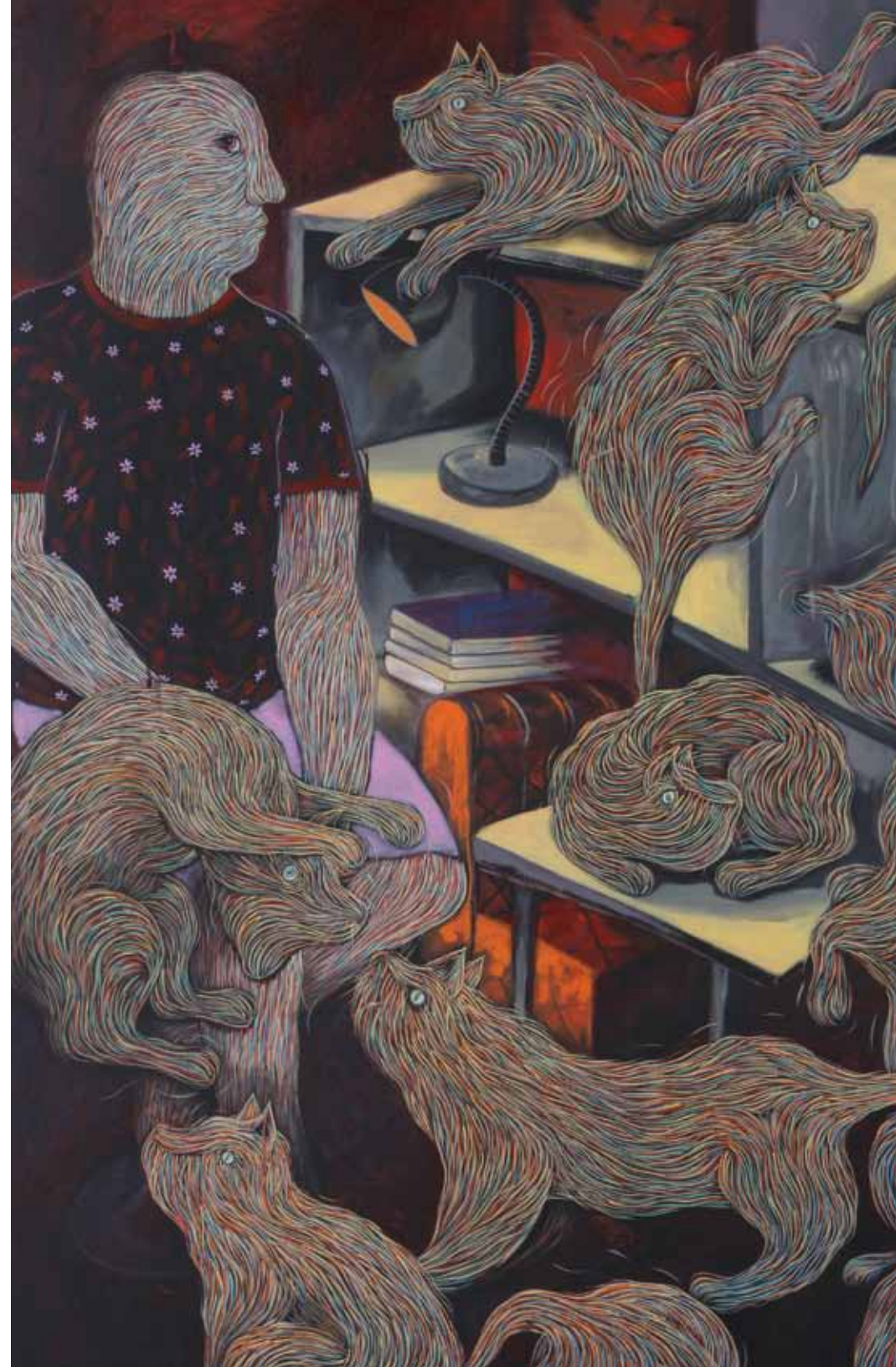
*Bola-Bola, 2 years, painter, dancer*

*Dusk, 6 (?) years, blind but sharp*

*Surge, 7 months, always sleepy but not lazy*

*Orange, 2 weeks, singer*

*Jinky, 8 months, one leg limp*

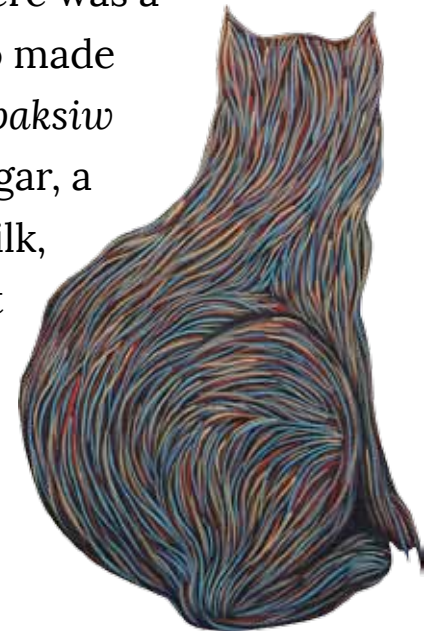






Not long after, Ms. Salvacion turned her home into a Cat Library. Whoever wanted to borrow a “book” was welcome. Some cats were for “Room Use Only.” These were her secret favorites.

There were cats that could be borrowed for days, weeks, or months, depending on the borrower’s needs. There was a penalty for those who made late returns: a pot of *paksiw* or fish stewed in vinegar, a vaccine, a bottle of milk, a ball of yarn (the sort for knitting), or even scratching posts.

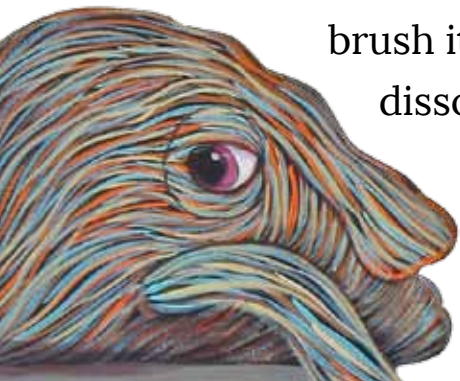




Upon the opening of the Cat Library, Ms. Salvacion let anyone find the cat that suited them. She had faith that each cat had a human match.

Among the first to visit the Cat Library was Mr. Hernandez, owner of By The Sea Seafood Restaurant. He thought of borrowing seven (because it was a lucky number) cats to repel rats and to invite good luck.

By afternoon's end, he borrowed eleven multicolored cats. "They're a cure for whoever has a fish bone stuck in their throat," Ms. Salvacion advised. "Just take their foot and brush it against your neck to dissolve the fish bone."







The following week, a family came to the Cat Library for a visit. They were looking for a new family member. After a few hours, they picked Wolfie. She was in a corner, moving only to yawn or stretch.

“Why would we borrow a cat nearing the end of its life?” wondered the child.

Ms. Salvacion was hurt by what she heard. Is one really so worthless when you’re past a certain age?

The parent scolded the child. “She needs us even more so she can be with a family in the twilight of her life.” The child thought it curious, but her mind was enlightened all the same.



One afternoon, in came a painter. Bearing his tools, he went to the Cat Library, looking for inspiration. “I will create a masterpiece,” he promised himself.

Upon laying his things down, a rowdy feline dipped itself in his cans of paint, danced ballet on the canvas, and marked its signature with its claws.

He was surprised by what he had witnessed. The pictures made were dirty, slapdash, disorderly – but they possessed a beauty. “Ah, art!” he shouted, like he discovered an expensive gem.







The painter borrowed Bola-Bola, the cat. Ms. Salvacion knew the cat would never be brought back. In all her decades of being a librarian, she knew well the faces of those who never returned what they had borrowed.

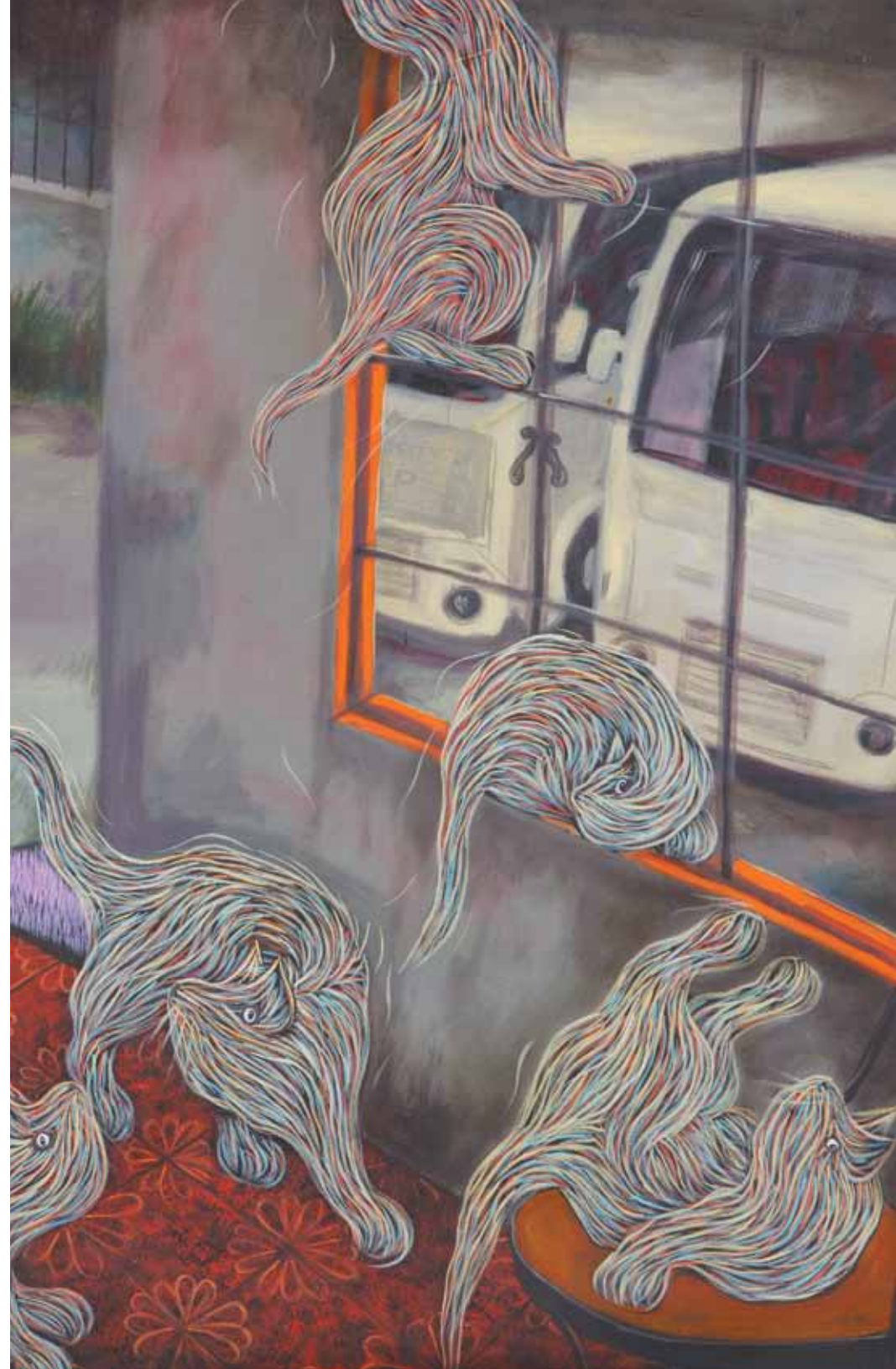




The Cat Library's reputation spread in Pook Palaris and nearby areas. There was even a day when two busloads of students came over to learn the value of saving *pusakals* – shorthand for “*pusang kalye*” or street cats.

There was also that time when an office asked for 21 cats to entertain their bored and restless employees. They perked up when the cats surprised them with play and affection.

The students of Cruz Na Daan Elementary School developed a fondness for books because they kept reading stories to the Library cats.

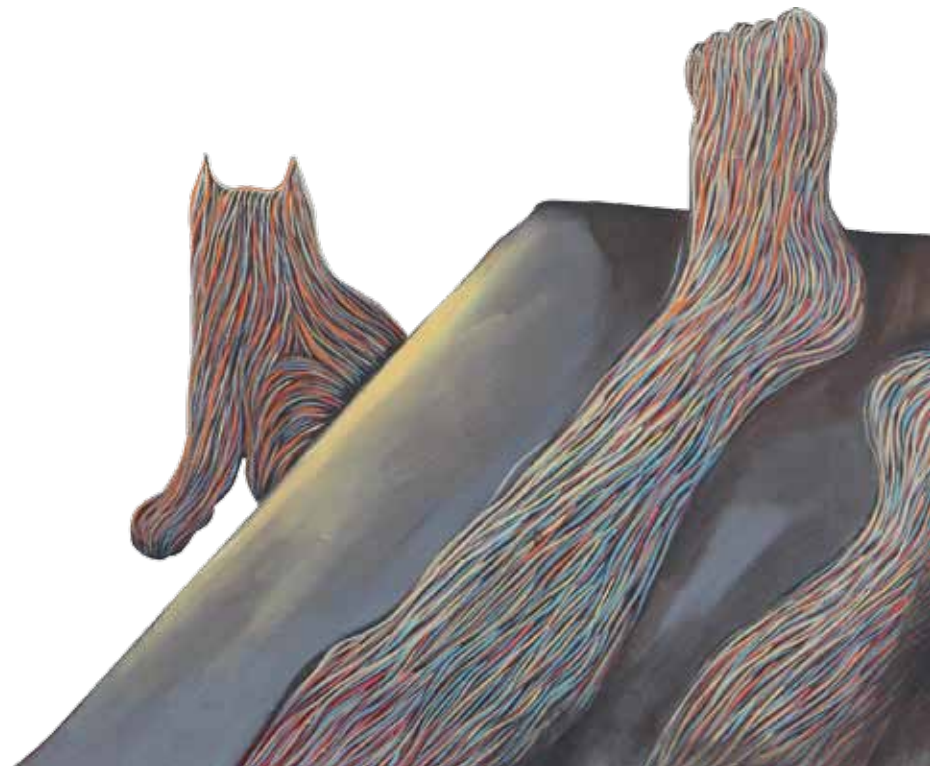






The recovery of the sick at Santa Elena Municipal Hospital was sped up when a nurse argued that a cat could help their patients.

One could hear the calm prrrrrrrrr of a cat hugging various people in recovery.





But the best thing to ever occur at the Cat Library was when the Lumad child Ugjab, from a community indigenous to Mindanao, met the ferocious cat named Surge. They had both been vagrants in the streets. Fellow orphans, they were no strangers to cruelty and violence. Now they've found a new home, a new family to care for them. Now they've found each other.

Surge's ferocity gradually diminished with the child's every caress. They spoke with each other for hours, like they've been buddies for so long.

"She's been waiting for you for a long time," whispered Ms. Salvacion to Ugjab.







Ms. Salvacion's backyard was no longer a dump. Neither was it a giant bin for discarded kittens. Many borrowed cats may not have been returned, but our beloved librarian was happy nonetheless.

In whatever scratch of fate, she knew that the cats she had saved, in turn, would save whoever was also in need.





**EUGENE Y. EVASCO** is a writer, editor, translator, and scholar of children's books. He currently teaches Creative Writing in the College of Arts and Literature at the University of the Philippines in Diliman. He is the author of award-winning books *Ang Nag-iisa at Natatanging si Onyok*, *Anina ng mga Alon*, *Ang Sampung Bukitkit*, *Mga Pilat sa Pilak: Mga Personal na Sanaysay*, *at May Tiyanak sa Loob ng Aking Bag: Mga Tulang Pambata*. He translated E.B. White's *Charlotte's Web* to Filipino. In 2014, he won at the UP Gawad ng Natatanging Publikasyon sa Filipino (Creative Writing Category). In 2009, he was inducted into the Carlos Palanca Memorial Award for Literature Hall of Fame and he is currently a Fellow of the Likhaan: UP Institute of Creative Writing. In 2016, he became a Research Fellow at the International Youth Library in Munich, Germany.

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**JARED C. YOKTE** is a painter and sculptor with a degree in Fine Arts from the University of Northern Philippines Vigan. He wishes to do further studies in Fine Arts and Design at the Philippine Women's University. He has received several awards including the Luzon Jurors' Choice Award in the Philippine Art Awards 2014 and Grand Winner at ArtPetron 2009. He has also held five solo exhibitions. Yokte currently lives in Tarlac with his beautiful wife and child, and their cat Resi who now has nine kittens.







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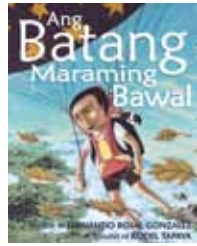
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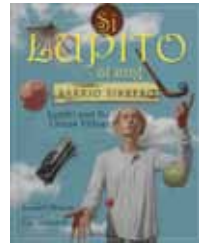
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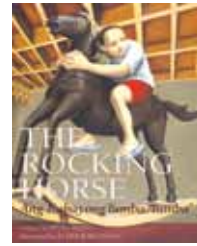
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Adapted from "The Man Who Planted Trees" by Jean Giono  
Adaptation by Angie Rivera  
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**ANG BATANG MARAMING BAWAL**  
Story by Fernando Rosal Gonzalez  
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Story by Rowald Almazar  
Art by José John Santos III



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Story by Becky Bravo  
Art by Elmer Borlongan



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Art by Anthony Palomo



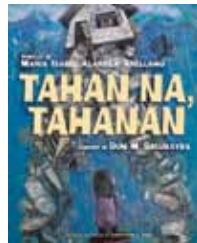
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**THE BOY WHO TOUCHED HEAVEN**  
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Art by Sergio Bumatay III



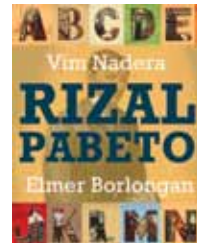
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Art by Don M. Salubayba



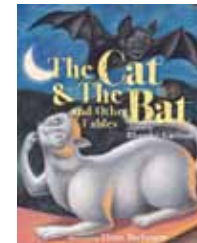
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Artworks by Roel Obemio



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Poems by Vim Nadera  
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Artworks by Joy Mallari



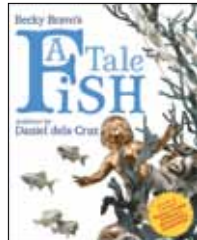
**THE CAT & THE BAT AND OTHER FABLES**  
Adapted by Rhandee Garlitos  
Art by Elmer Borlongan



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Story by Kate Osias  
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Story by Francesca Nicole Chan Torres  
Art by Liv Romualdez Vinluan



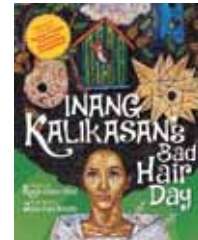
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Art by Daniel dela Cruz



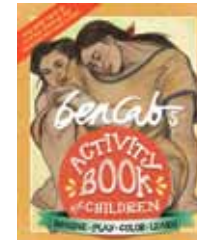
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Artworks by Jon Jaylo



**MY BIG SISTER CAN SEE DRAGONS**  
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Artworks by Liza Flores



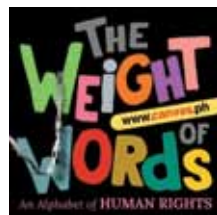
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Stories by Rhandee Garlitos and Annette Ferrer  
Art by Sergio Bumatay III



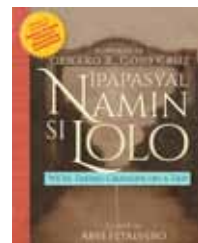
**PANYAAN: THREE TALES OF THE TAGBANUA**  
Edited by Annette Ferrer  
Art by various artists



**KARAPAT DAPAT**  
Written by May Tobias-Papa  
Art by I.N.K.



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Stories by Daniel Palma and Gigo Alampay  
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**IPAPASYAL NAMIN SI LOLO**  
Story by Genaro Gojo Cruz  
Art by Arvi Fetalvero



**MAMITA'S GARDEN**  
Art by Pam Yan-Santos  
Text by Nicolas Gabriel Garcia



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ISBN 978-971-9689-09-6



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