

# Folktales from Philippines

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## How the First Head Was Taken

One day the Moon, who was a woman named Kabigat, sat out in the yard making a large copper pot. The copper was still soft and pliable like clay, and the woman squatted on the ground with the heavy pot against her knees while she patted and shaped it.

Now while she was working a son of Cal-chal, the Sun, came by and stopped to watch her mold the form. Against the inside of the jar she pressed a stone, while on the outside with a wooden paddle dripping with water she pounded and slapped until she had worked down the bulges and formed a smooth surface.

The boy was greatly interested in seeing the jar grow larger, more beautiful, and smoother with each stroke, and he stood still for some time. Suddenly the Moon looked up and saw him watching her. Instantly she struck him with her paddle, cutting off his head.

Now the Sun was not near, but he knew as soon as the Moon had cut off his son's head. And hurrying to the spot, he put the boy's head back on, and he was alive again.

Then the Sun said to the Moon, "You cut off my son's head, and because you did this, ever after on the earth people will cut off each other's heads.

## The Man with the Coconuts

One day a man who had been to gather his coconuts loaded his horse heavily with the fruit. On the way home he met a boy whom he asked how long it would take to reach the house.

"If you go slowly," said the boy, looking at the load on the horse, "you will arrive very soon; but if you go fast, it will take you all day."

The man could not believe this strange speech, so he hurried his horse. But the coconuts fell off and he had to stop to pick them up. Then he hurried his horse all the more to make up for lost time, but the coconuts fell off again. Many times he did this, and it was night when he reached home.

## The Boy Who Became a Stone

One day a little boy named Elonen sat out in the yard making a bird snare, and as he worked, a little bird called to him: "Tik-tik-lo-den" (come and catch me).

"I am making a snare for you," said the boy; but the bird continued to call until the snare was finished.

Then Elonen ran and threw the snare over the bird and caught it, and he put it in a jar in his house while he went with the other boys to swim.

While he was away, his grandmother grew hungry, so she ate the bird, and when Elonen returned and found that his bird was gone, he was so sad that he wished he might go away and never come back. He went out into the forest and walked a long distance, until finally he came to a big stone and said: "Stone, open your mouth and eat me." And the stone opened its mouth and swallowed the boy.

When his grandmother missed the boy, she went out and looked everywhere, hoping to find him. Finally she passed near the stone and it cried out: "Here he is." Then the old woman tried to open the stone but she could not, so she called the horses to come and help her. They came and kicked it, but it would not break. Then she called the carabao and they hooked it, but they only broke their horns. She called the chickens, which pecked it, and the thunder, which shook it, but nothing could open it, and she had to go home without the boy.

### **The Reward of Kindness**

In a certain town there once lived a couple who had never had a child. They had been married for nearly five years, and were very anxious for a son. The name of the wife was Clara; and of the man, Philip.

One cloudy night in December, while they were talking by the window of their house, Clara said to her husband that she was going to pray the *novena* [nine consecutive days of praying], so that heaven would give them a child. "I would even let my son serve the devil, if he would but give us a son!"

As her husband was willing that she should pray the *novena*, Clara began the next day her fervent devotions to the Virgin Mary. She went to church every afternoon for nine days. She carried a small prayer book with her, and prayed until six o'clock every evening. At last she finished her *novenario*, but no child was born to them, and the couple was disappointed.

A month had passed, when, to their great happiness, Clara gave birth to a son. The child they nicknamed Idó. Idó was greatly cherished by his parents, for he was their only child; but he did not care much to stay at home. He early began to show a fondness for travelling abroad, and was always to be found in the dense woods on the outskirts of the town.

One afternoon, when the family was gathered together around a small table, talking, a knock was heard at the door.

"Come in!" said Philip.

"No, I just want to talk with your wife," answered a hoarse voice from without.

Clara, trembling, opened the door, and, to her great surprise, she saw standing there a man who looked like a bear.

"A devil, a devil!" she exclaimed.

But the devil pacified her, and said, "Clara, I have come here to get your son you promised me a long time ago. Now that the day has come when your son can be of some service to me, will you deny your promise?"

Clara could make no reply at first. She merely called her son; and when he came, she said to the devil, "Here is my son. Take him, since he is yours."

Idó, who was at this time about seventeen years old, was not frightened by the devil.

"Come," said the devil, "and be my follower!"

At first Idó refused. But he finally consented to go, because of his mother's promise.

The devil now took Idó to his cave, far away outside the town. He tried in many ways to tempt Idó, but was unable to do so, because Idó was a youth of strong character. Finally the devil decided to exchange clothes with him. Idó was obliged to put on the bear-like clothes of the devil and to give him his own soldier suit.

Then the devil produced a large bag full of money, and said to Idó, "Take this money and go traveling about the world for seven years. If you live to the end of that time, and spend this money only in doing good, I will set you free. If, however, you spend the money extravagantly, you will have to go to hell with me." When he had said these words, he disappeared.

Idó now began his wanderings from town to town. Whenever people saw him, they were afraid of him, and would refuse to give him shelter; but Idó would give them money from his bag, and then they would gather about him and be kind to him.

After many years he happened to come to a town where he saw an old woman summoned before a court of justice. She was accused of owing a sum of money, but was unable to pay her debt and the fine imposed on her.

When Idó paid her fine for her and thus released her from prison, the woman could hardly express her gratitude. As most of the other people about were afraid of Idó and he had no place to sleep, this woman decided to take him home with her.

Now, this old woman had three daughters. When she reached home with the bear-like man, she called her eldest daughter, and said, "Now, my daughter, here is a man who delivered me from prison. As I can do nothing to reward him for his great kindness, I want you to take him for your husband."

The daughter replied, "Mother, why have you brought this ugly man here? No, I cannot marry him. I can find a better husband."

On hearing this harsh reply, the mother could not say a word. She called her second daughter, and explained her wishes to her; but the younger daughter refused, just as her sister had refused, and she made fun of the man.

The mother was very much disappointed, but she was unable to persuade her daughters to marry her benefactor. Finally she determined to try her youngest daughter. When the daughter heard her mother's request, she said, "Mother, if to have me marry this man is the only way by which you can repay him for his kindness, I'll gladly marry him."

The mother was very much pleased, but the two older daughters were very angry with their sister. The mother told the man of the decision of her youngest daughter, and a contract was signed between them. But before they were married, the bear-like man asked permission from the girl to be absent for one more year to finish his duty. She consented to his going, and gave him half her ring as a memento.

At the end of the year, which was the last of his seven years' wandering, the bear-like man went to the devil, and told him that he had finished his duty.

The devil said, "You have beaten me. Now that you have performed your seven years' wandering, and have spent the money honestly, let us exchange clothes again!"

So the man received back his soldier-like suit, which made him look like a knight, and the devil took back his bearskin.

Then the man returned to Clara's house. When his arrival was announced to the family, the two older daughters dressed themselves in their best, for they thought that he was a suitor come to see them. But when the man showed the ring and asked for the hand of Clara's youngest daughter, the two nearly died with vexation, while the youngest daughter was very happy.

### **Igorot**

Once upon a time, when the world was flat and there were no mountains, there lived two brothers, sons of Lumawig, the Great Spirit. The brothers were fond of hunting, and since no mountains had formed there was no good place to catch wild pig and deer, and the older brother said, "Let us cause water to flow over all the world and cover it, and then mountains will rise up."

So they caused water to flow over all the earth, and when it was covered they took the head-basket [a bamboo basket, in which the heads of victims are kept prior to the head-taking celebration] of the town and set it for a trap. The brothers were very much pleased when they went to look at their trap, for they had caught not only many wild pigs and deer, but also many people.

Now Lumawig looked down from his place in the sky and saw that his sons had flooded the earth and that in all the world there was just one spot which was not covered. And he saw that all the people in the world had been drowned except one brother and sister who lived in Pokis.

Then Lumawig descended, and he called to the boy and girl, saying, "Oh, you are still alive."

"Yes," answered the boy, "we are still alive, but we are very cold."

So Lumawig commanded his dog and deer to get fire for the boy and girl. The dog and the deer swam quickly away, but though Lumawig waited a long time they did not return, and all the time the boy and girl were growing colder.

Finally Lumawig himself went after the dog and the deer, and when he reached them he said, "Why are you so long in bringing the fire to Pokis? Get ready and come quickly while I watch you, for the boy and girl are very cold."

Then the dog and the deer took the fire and started to swim through the flood, but when they had gone only a little way, the fire was put out.

Lumawig commanded them to get more fire and they did so, but they swam only a little way again when that of the deer went out, and that of the dog would have been extinguished also had not Lumawig gone quickly to him and taken it.

As soon as Lumawig reached Pokis he built a big fire which warmed the brother and sister; and the water evaporated so that the world was as it was before, except that now there were mountains. The brother and sister married and had children, and thus there came to be many people on the earth.

### **The Presidente Who Had Horns**

Once there was a presidente [headman of a town] who was very unjust to his people, and one day he became so angry that he wished he had horns so that he might frighten them. No sooner had he made this rash wish, than horns began to grow on his head.

He sent for a barber who came to his house to cut his hair, and as he worked the presidente asked, "What do you see on my head?"

"I see nothing," answered the barber; for although he could see the horns plainly, he was afraid to say so. Soon, however, the presidente put up his hands and felt the horns, and then when he inquired again the barber told him that he had two horns.

"If you tell anyone what you have seen, you shall be hanged," said the presidente as the barber started away, and he was greatly frightened.

When he reached home, the barber did not intend to tell anyone, for he was afraid; but as he thought of his secret more and more, the desire to tell someone became so strong that he knew he could not keep it. Finally he went to the field and dug a hole under some bamboo, and when the hole was large enough he crawled in and whispered that the presidente had horns. He then climbed out, filled up the hole, and went home.

By and by some people came along the road on their way to market, and as they passed the bamboo they stopped in amazement, for surely a voice came from the trees, and it said that the presidente had horns. These people hastened to market and told what they had heard, and the people there went to the bamboo to listen to the strange voice. They informed others, and soon the news had spread all over the town. The councilmen were told, and they, too, went to the bamboo. When they had heard the voice, they ran to the house of the presidente. But his wife said that he was ill and they could not see him.

By this time the horns had grown until they were one foot in length, and the presidente was so ashamed that he bade his wife tell the people that he could not talk. She told this to the councilmen when they came on the following day, but they replied that they must see him, for they had heard that he had horns, and if this were true he had no right to govern the people.

She refused to let them in, so they broke down the door. They saw the horns of the head of the presidente and killed him. For, they said, he was no better than an animal.

### **Juan Wearing a Moneky's Skin**

Once upon a time there was a couple which was at first childless. The father was very anxious to have a son to inherit his property, so he went to the church daily, and prayed God to give him a child, but in vain.

One day, in his great disappointment, the man exclaimed without thinking, "O great God! Let me have a son, even if it is in the form of a monkey!" And only a few days later his wife gave birth to a monkey.

The father was so much mortified that he wanted to kill his son; but finally his better reason prevailed, and he spared the child. He said to himself, "It is my fault, I know; but I uttered that invocation without thinking."

So instead of putting the monkey to death, the couple just hid it from visitors; and whenever anyone asked for the child, they merely answered, "Oh, he died long ago."

The time came when the monkey grew to be old enough to marry. He went to his father, and said, "Give me your blessing, father! for I am going away to look for a wife."

The father was only too glad to be freed from this obnoxious son, so he immediately gave him his blessing. Before letting him go, however, the father said to the monkey, "You must never come back again to our house."

"Very well, I will not," said the monkey.

The monkey then left his father's house, and went to find his fortune. One night he dreamed that there was a castle in the midst of the sea, and that in this castle dwelt a princess of unspeakable beauty. The princess had been put there so that no one might discover her existence. The monkey, who had been baptized two days after his birth and was named Juan, immediately repaired to the palace of the king. There he posted a letter which read as follows: "I, Juan, know that your majesty has a daughter."

Naturally the king was very angry to have his secret discovered. He immediately sent soldiers to look for Juan. Juan was soon found, and brought to the palace. The king said to him, "How do you know that I have a daughter? If you can bring her here, I will give her to you for a wife. If not, however, your head shall be cut off from your body."

"O your majesty!" said Juan, "I am sure that I can find her and bring her here. I am willing to lose my head if within three days I fail to fulfil my promise." After he had said this, Juan withdrew, and sadly went out to look for the hidden princess.

As he was walking along the road, he heard the cry of a bird. He looked up, and saw a bird caught between two boughs so that it could not escape. The bird said to him, "O monkey! if you will but release me, I will give you all I have."

"Oh, no!" said the monkey. "I am very hungry, and would much rather eat you."

"If you will but spare my life," said the bird, "I will give you anything you want."

"On one condition only will I set you free," said the monkey. "You must procure for me the ring of the princess who lives in the midst of the sea."

"Oh, that's an easy thing to do," said the bird. So the monkey climbed the tree and set the bird free.

The bird immediately flew to the island in the sea, where fortunately it found the princess refreshing herself in her garden. The princess was so charmed with the song of the bird that she looked up and said, "O little bird! if you will only promise to live with me, I will give you anything you want."

"All right," said the bird. "Give me your ring, and I will forever live with you."

The princess held up the ring; and the bird suddenly snatched it and flew away with it. It gave the ring to the monkey, who was, of course, delighted to get it.

Now the monkey jogged along the road until finally he saw three witches. He approached them and said to them, "You are the very beings for whom I have spent the whole day looking. God has sent me here from heaven to punish you for your evil doings toward innocent persons. So I must eat you up."

Now, witches are said to be afraid of ill-looking persons, although they themselves are the ugliest beings in all the world. So these three were terribly frightened by the monkey's threat, and said, "O sir! spare our lives, and we will do anything for you!"

"Very well, I will spare you if you can execute my order. From this shore you must build a bridge which leads to the middle of the sea, where the castle of the princess is situated."

"That shall be speedily done," replied the witches; and they at once gathered leaves, which they put on their backs. Then they plunged into the water. Immediately after them a bridge was built. Thus the monkey was now able to go to the castle. Here he found the princess. She was very much surprised to see this evil-looking animal before her; but she was much more frightened when the monkey showed her the ring which the bird had given him, and claimed her for his wife.

"It is the will of God that you should go with me," said the monkey, after the princess had shown great repugnance towards him. "You either have to go with me or perish."

Thinking it was useless to attempt to resist such a mighty foe, the princess finally yielded.

The monkey led her to the king's palace and presented her before her parents; but no sooner had the king and queen seen their daughter in the power of the beast, than they swooned. When they had recovered, they said simultaneously, "Go away at once, and never come back here again, you girl of infamous taste! Who are you? You are not the princess we left in the castle. You are of villain's blood, and the very air which you exhale does suffocate us. So with no more ado depart at once!"

The princess implored her father to have pity, saying that it was the will of God that she should be the monkey's wife. "Perhaps I have been enchanted by him, for I am powerless to oppose him."

But all her remonstrance was in vain. the king shut his ears against any deceitful or flattering words that might fall from the lips of his faithless and disobedient daughter. Seeing that the king was obstinate, the couple turned their backs on the palace and decided to find a more hospitable home. So the monkey now took his wife to a neighboring mountain, and here they settled.

One day the monkey noticed that the princess was very sad and pale. He said to her, "Why are you so sad and unhappy, my darling? What is the matter?"

"Nothing. I am just sorry to have only a monkey for my husband. I become sad when I think of my past happiness."

"I am not a monkey, my dear. I am a real man, born of human parents. Didn't you know that I was baptized by the priest, and that my name is Juan?"

As the princess would not believe him, the monkey went to a neighboring hut and there cast off his disguise (*balit cayu*). He at once returned to the princess. She was amazed to see a sparkling youth of not more than twenty years of age -- nay, a prince -- kneeling before her. "I can no longer keep you in ignorance," he said. "I am your husband, Juan."

"Oh, no! I cannot believe you. Don't try to deceive me! My husband is a monkey. But, with all his defects, I still cling to him and love him. Please go away at once, lest my husband find you here! He will be jealous, and my kill us both."

"Oh, no! my darling, I am your husband, Juan. I only disguised myself as a monkey."

But still the princess would not believe him. At last she said to him, "If you are my real husband, you must give me a proof of the fact." So Juan (we shall hereafter call him by this name) took her to the place where he had cast off his monkey-skin.

The princess was now convinced, and said to herself, "After all, I was not wrong in the belief I have entertained from the beginning, that it was the will of God that I should marry this monkey, this man."

Juan and the princess now agreed to go back to the palace and tell the story. So they went. As soon as the king and queen saw the couple, they were very much surprised. But to remove their doubt, Juan immediately related to the king all that had happened. Thus the king and queen were finally reconciled to the at first hated couple. Juan and his wife succeeded to the throne on the death of the king, and lived peacefully and happily during their reign.

The story is now ended. Thus we see that God compensated the father and mother of Juan for their religious zeal by giving them a son, but punished them for not being content with what he gave them by taking the son away from them again, for Juan never recognized his parents.

### **The Monkey and the Crocodile**

Monkey was upset. No food could be found anymore in the forest of the little island of Buyayaw. He was very hungry indeed. Of course, he could go to the mainland, where there was plenty of food, but that was exactly the problem. How could he cross the channel of water, infested with the voracious crocodiles?

"Well, let's find out from the water," Monkey said. "You, water, if it will be dangerous for me to cross, you should become cold."

He dipped with his hand into the water, and cold it was indeed! But to die from hunger wasn't a pleasure either, so he would try to cross the channel, whatever the outcome!

So Monkey started out. In the middle of the channel, Crocodile was waiting for him!

"What do you want of me, Crocodile?" Monkey asked.

"Well," Crocodile said, "I'll just have your liver. That's what I like best."

"My liver! exclaimed Monkey. "That's just too bad. I left it on the shore because if I took it along, I would surely be drowned. But as a good friend, I am willing to get it for you. Maybe you could give me a ride on your back?"

And then they went to the shore. With a great leap Monkey jumped onto solid land and turned around at a safe distance.

"You stupid Crocodile," he shouted, "did you ever hear about a man who left his liver behind!"

And after that he disappeared into the forest, leaving an angry crocodile behind.

But Crocodile planned to take revenge, and one day he hid himself in the house of Monkey, while Monkey was out. But Monkey was suspicious, and wanted to make sure as to whether or not Crocodile was inside the house.

"If somebody is in the house, let him keep silent," Monkey shouted, "but if nobody is inside, he should give a yell."

And sure enough, Crocodile gave a terrific yell!

Said Monkey, "You stupid Crocodile, have you ever heard a house yell, when nobody was inside!"

But Crocodile didn't give up. One day later on he had been wallowing in the mud and had an awful stench. Flies were settling on his body as if he had already died. While this was happening Monkey came up, so Crocodile acted as if he was a real cadaver.

Monkey came nearer. Crocodile looked dead, all right, but one couldn't be sure. "You, cadaver, if you are alive, don't make a sound. But if you are really dead, let me hear it."

And Crocodile gave a thundering roar!

"You stupid Crocodile," Monkey laughed from a safe distance. "Ever heard about the dead crocodile that roars?"

Because of his cleverness, Monkey could always escape the tricks of Crocodile.

Ref.: <http://folkloreandmyth.netfirms.com/philippines.html>