



# *Aponibolinayen*

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Philippine

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The most beautiful girl in all the world was Aponibolinayen of Nalpangan. Many young men had come to her brother, Aponibalagen, to ask for her hand in marriage, but he had refused them all, for he awaited one who possessed great power. Then it happened that the fame of her beauty spread over all the world till it reached even to Adasen; and in that place there lived a man of great power named Gawigawen.

Now Gawigawen, who was a handsome man, had sought among all the pretty girls but never, until he heard of the great beauty of Aponibolinayen, had he found one whom he wished to wed. Then he determined that she should be his wife; and he begged his mother to help him win her. So Dinawagen, the mother of Gawigawen, took her hat which looked like a sunbeam and set out at once for Nalpangan; and when she arrived there she was greeted by Ebang, the mother of the lovely maiden, who presently began to prepare food for them.

She put the pot over the fire, and when the water boiled she broke up a stick and threw the pieces into the pot, and immediately they became fish. Then she brought basi in a large jar, and Dinawagen, counting the notches in the rim, perceived that the jar had been handed down through nine generations. They ate and drank together, and after they had finished the meal, Dinawagen told Aponibalagen of her son's wishes, and asked if he was willing that his sister should marry Gawigawen. Aponibalagen, who had heard of the power of the suitor, at once gave his consent. And Dinawagen departed for home, leaving a gold cup as an engagement present.

Gawigawen was watching at the door of his house for his mother's return, and when she told him of her success, he was so happy that he asked all the people in the town to go with him the next day to Nalpangan to arrange the amount he must pay for his bride.

Now the people of Nalpangan wanted a great price for this girl who was so beautiful, and the men of the two towns debated for a long time before they could come to an agreement. Finally, however, it was decided that Gawigawen should fill the spirit house eighteen times with valuable things; and when he had done this, they were all satisfied and went to the yard where they danced and beat on the copper gongs. All the pretty girls danced their best, and one who wore big jars about her neck made more noise than the others as she danced, and the jars sang "Kitol, kitol, kanitol; inka, inka, inkatol."

But when Aponibolinayen, the bride of Gawigawen, came down out of the house to dance, the sunshine vanished, so beautiful was she; and as she moved about, the river came up into the town, and striped fish bit at her heels.

For three months the people remained here feasting and dancing, and then early one morning they took Aponibolinayen to her new home in Adasen. The trail that led from one town to the other had become very beautiful in the meantime: the grass and trees glistened with bright lights, and the waters of the tiny streams dazzled the eyes with their brightness as Aponibolinayen waded across. When they reached the spring of Gawigawen, they found that it, too, was more beautiful than ever before. Each grain of sand had become a bead, and the place where the women set their jars when they came to dip water had become a big dish.

Then said Aponibalagen to his people, "Go tell Gawigawen to bring an old man, for I want to make a spring for Aponibolinayen."

So an old man was brought and Aponibalagen cut off his head and put it in the ground, and sparkling water bubbled up. The body he made into a tree to shade his sister when she came to dip water, and the drops of blood as they touched the ground were changed into valuable beads. Even the path from the spring to the house was covered with big plates, and everything was made beautiful for Aponibolinayen.

Now during all this time Aponibolinayen had kept her face covered so that she had never seen her husband, for although he was a handsome man, one of the pretty girls who was jealous of the bride had told her that he had three noses, and she was afraid to look at him.

After her people had all returned to their homes, she grew very unhappy, and when her mother-in-law commanded her to cook she had to feel her way around, for she would not uncover her face. Finally she became so sad that she determined to run away. One night when all were asleep, she used magical power and changed herself into oil. Then she slid through the bamboo floor and made her escape without anyone seeing her.

On and on she went until she came to the middle of the jungle, and then she met a wild rooster who asked her where she was going.

“I am running away from my husband,” replied Aponibolinayen, “for he has three noses and I do not want to live with him.”

“Oh,” said the rooster, “some crazy person must have told you that. Do not believe it. Gawigawen is a handsome man, for I have often seen him when he comes here to snare chickens.”

But Aponibolinayen paid no heed to the rooster, and she went on until she reached a big tree where perched a monkey, and he also asked where she was going.

“I am running away from my husband,” answered the girl, “for he has three noses and I do not want to live with him.”

“Oh, do not believe that,” said the monkey. “Someone who told you that must have wanted to marry him herself, for he is a handsome man.”

Still Aponibolinayen went on until she came to the ocean, and then, as she could go no farther, she sat down to rest. As she sat there pondering what she should do, a carabao came along, and thinking that she would ride a while she climbed up on its back. No sooner had she done so than the animal plunged into the water and swam with her until they reached the other side of the great ocean.

There they came to a large orange tree, and the carabao told her to eat some of the luscious fruit while he fed on the grass nearby. As soon as he had left her, however, he ran straight to his master, Kadayadawan, and told him of the beautiful girl.

Kadayadawan was very much interested and quickly combed his hair and oiled it, put on his striped coat and belt, and went with the carabao to the orange tree. Aponibolinayen, looking down from her place in the tree, was surprised to see a man coming with her friend, the carabao, but as they drew near, she began talking with him, and soon they became acquainted. Before long, Kadayadawan had persuaded the girl to become his wife, and he took her to his home. From that time every night his house looked as if it was on fire, because of the beauty of his bride.

After they had been married for some time, Kadayadawan and Aponibolinayen decided to make a ceremony for the spirits, so they called the magic betel-nuts and oiled them and said to them,

“Go to all the towns and invite our relatives to come to the ceremony which we shall make. If they do not want to come, then grow on their knees until they are willing to attend.”

So the betel-nuts started in different directions and one went to Aponibalagen in Nalpangan and said,

“Kadayadawan is making a ceremony for the spirits, and I have come to summon you to attend.”

“We cannot go,” said Aponibalagen, “for we are searching for my sister who is lost”

“You must come,” replied the betel-nut, “or I shall grow on your knee,”

“Grow on my pig,” answered Aponibalagen; so the betel-nut went on to the pig’s back and grew into a tall tree, and it became so heavy that the pig could not carry it, but squealed all the time.

Then Aponibalagen, seeing that he must obey, said to the betel-nut,

“Get off my pig, and we will go.”

The betel-nut got off the pig’s back, and the people started for the ceremony. When they reached the river, Gawigawen was there waiting to cross, for the magic nuts had forced him to go also. Then Kadayadawan, seeing them, sent more betel-nuts to the river, and the people were carried across by the nuts.

As soon as they reached the town the dancing began, and while Gawigawen was dancing with Aponibolinayen he seized her and put her in his belt. Kadayadawan, who saw this, was so angry that he threw his spear and killed Gawigawen. Then Aponibolinayen escaped and ran into the house, and her husband brought his victim back to life, and asked him why he had seized the wife of his host. Gawigawen explained that she was his wife who had been lost, and the people were very much surprised, for they had not recognized her at first.

Then all the people discussed what should be done to bring peace between the two men, and it was finally decided that Kadayadawan must pay both Aponibalagen and Gawigawen the price that was first demanded for the beautiful girl.

After this was done all were happy; and the guardian spirit of Kadayadawan gave them a golden house in which to live.

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