

Gawigawen of Adasen

Mabel Cook Cole

Philippine

Intermediate

14 min read

Aponibolinayen was sick with a headache, and she lay on a mat alone in her house. Suddenly she remembered some fruit that she had heard of but had never seen, and she said to herself, “Oh, I wish I had some of the oranges of Gawigawen of Adasen.”

Now Aponibolinayen did not realize that she had spoken aloud, but Aponitolau, her husband, lying in the spirit house outside, heard her talking and asked what it was she said. Fearing to tell him the truth lest he should risk his life in trying to get the oranges for her, she said: “I wish I had some biw” (a fruit).

Aponitolau at once got up, and, taking a sack, went out to find some of the fruit for his wife. When he returned with the sack full, she said:

“Put it on the bamboo hanger above the fire, and when my head is better I will eat it.”

So Aponitolau put the fruit on the hanger and returned to the spirit house, but when Aponibolinayen tried to eat, the fruit made her sick and she threw it away.

“What is the matter?” called Aponitolau as he heard her drop the fruit.

“I merely dropped one,” she replied, and returned to her mat.

After a while Aponibolinayen again said:

“Oh, I wish I had some of the oranges of Gawigawen of Adasen,” and Aponitolau, who heard her from the spirit house, inquired:

“What is that you say?”

“I wish I had some fish eggs,” answered his wife; for she did not want him to know the truth.

Then Aponitolau took his net and went to the river, determined to please his wife if possible. When he had caught a nice fish he opened it with his knife and took out the eggs. Then he spat on the place he had cut, and it was healed and the fish swam away.

Pleased that he was able to gratify his wife’s wishes, he hastened home with the eggs; and while his wife was roasting them over the fire, he returned to the spirit house. She tried to eat, but the eggs did not taste good to her, and she threw them down under the house to the dogs.

“What is the matter?” called Aponitolau. “Why are the dogs barking?”

“I dropped some of the eggs,” replied his wife, and she went back to her mat.

By and by she again said:

“I wish I had some of the oranges of Gawigawen of Adasen.”

But when her husband asked what she wished, she replied:

“I want a deer’s liver to eat”

So Aponitolau took his dogs to the mountains, where they hunted until they caught a deer, and when he had cut out its liver he spat on the wound, and it was healed so that the deer ran away.

But Aponibolinayen could not eat the liver any more than she could the fruit or the fish eggs; and when Aponitolau heard the dogs barking, he knew that she had thrown it away. Then he grew suspicious and, changing himself into a centipede, hid in a crack in the floor. And when his wife again wished for some of the oranges, he overheard her.

“Why did you not tell me the truth, Aponibolinayen?” he asked.

“Because,” she replied, “no one Who has gone to Adasen has ever come back, and I did not want you to risk your life.”

Nevertheless Aponitolau determined to go for the oranges, and he commanded his wife to bring him rice straw. After he had burned it he put the ashes in the water with which he washed his hair. Then she brought cocoanut oil and rubbed his hair, and fetched a dark clout, a fancy belt, and a head-band, and she baked cakes for him to take on the journey. Aponitolau cut a vine which he planted by the stove, and told his wife that if the leaves wilted she would know that he was dead. Then he took his spear and head-ax and started on the long journey.

When Aponitolau arrived at the well of a giantess, all the betel-nut trees bowed. Then the giantess shouted and all the world trembled. “How strange,” thought Aponitolau, “that all the world shakes when that woman shouts.” But he continued on his way without stopping.

As he passed the place of the old woman, Alokotan, she sent out her little dog and it bit his leg.

“Do not proceed,” said the old woman, “for ill luck awaits you. If you go on, you will never return to your home.”

But Aponitolau paid no attention to the old woman, and by and by he came to the home of the lightning.

“Where are you going?” asked the lightning.

“I am going to get some oranges of Gawigawen of Adasen,” replied Aponitolau.

“Go stand on that high rock that I may see what your sign is,” commanded the lightning.

So he stood on the high rock, but when the lightning flashed Aponitolau dodged.

“Do not go,” said the lightning, “for you have a bad sign, and you will never come back.”

Still Aponitolau did not heed.

Soon he arrived at the place of Silit (loud thunder), who also asked him:

“Where are you going, Aponitolau?”

“I am going to get oranges of Gawigawen of Adasen,” he replied.

Then the thunder commanded:

“Stand on that high stone so that I can see if you have a good sign.”

He stood on the high stone, and when the thunder made a loud noise he jumped. Whereupon Silit also advised him not to go on.

In spite of all the warnings, Aponitolau continued his journey, and upon coming to the ocean he used magical power, so that when he stepped on his head-ax it sailed away, carrying him far across the sea to the other side. Then after a short walk he came to a spring where women were dipping water, and he asked what spring it was.

“This is the spring of Gawigawen of Adasen,” replied the women. “And who are you that you dare come here?”

Without replying he went on toward the town, but he found that he could not go inside, for it was surrounded by a bank which reached almost to the sky.

While he stood with bowed head pondering what he should do, the chief of the spiders came up and asked why he was so sorrowful.

“I am sad,” answered Aponitolau, “because I cannot climb up this bank.”

Then the spider went to the top and spun a thread, and upon this Aponitolau climbed up into town.

Now Gawigawen was asleep in his spirit house, and when he awoke and saw Aponitolau sitting near, he was surprised and ran toward his house to get his spear and head-ax, but Aponitolau called to him, saying:

“Good morning, Cousin Gawigawen. Do not be angry; I only came to buy some of your oranges for my wife.”

Then Gawigawen took him to the house and brought a whole carabao for him to eat, and he said:

“If you cannot eat all the carabao, you cannot have the oranges for your wife.”

Aponitolau grew very sorrowful, for he knew that he could not eat all the meat, but just at that moment the chief of the ants and flies came to him and inquired what was the trouble. As soon as he was told, the chief

called all the ants and flies and they ate the whole carabao. Aponitolau, greatly relieved, went then to Gawigawen and said:

“I have finished eating the food which you gave me.”

Gawigawen was greatly surprised at this, and, leading the way to the place where the oranges grew, he told Aponitolau to climb the tree and get all he wanted.

As he was about to ascend the tree Aponitolau noticed that the branches were sharp knives, so he went as carefully as he could. Nevertheless, when he had secured two oranges, he stepped on one of the knives and was cut. He quickly fastened the fruit to his spear, and immediately it flew away straight to his town and into his house.

Aponibolinayen was just going down the bamboo ladder out of the house, and hearing something drop on the floor she went back to look and found the oranges from Adasen. She eagerly ate the fruit, rejoicing that her husband had been able to reach the place where they grew. Then she thought to look at the vine, whose leaves were wilted, and she knew that her husband was dead.

Soon after this a son was born to Aponibolinayen, and she called his name Kanag. He grew rapidly, becoming a strong lad, and he was the bravest of all his companions. One day while Kanag was playing out in the yard, he spun his top and it struck the garbage pot of an old woman, who became very angry and cried:

“If you were a brave boy, you would get your father whom Gawigawen killed.”

Kanag ran to the house crying, and asked his mother what the old woman meant, for he had never heard the story of his father’s death. As soon as he learned what had happened, the boy determined to search for his father, and, try as she would, his mother could not dissuade him.

As he was departing through the gate of the town with his spear and head-ax, Kanag struck his shield and it sounded like a thousand warriors.

“How brave that boy is!” said the surprised people. “He is braver even than his father.”

When he reached the spring of the giantess, he again struck his shield and shouted so that the whole world trembled. Then the giantess said:

“I believe that someone is going to fight, and he will have success.”

As soon as Kanag reached the place where the old woman, Alokotan, lived, she sent her dog after him, but with one blow of his head-ax he cut off the dog's head. Then Alokotan asked where he was going, and when he had told her, she said:

“Your father is dead, but I believe that you will find him, for you have a good sign.”

He hurried on and arrived at the place where lightning was, and it asked:

“Where are you going, little boy?”

“I am going to Adasen to get my father,” answered Kanag.

“Go stand on that high rock that I may see what your sign is,” said the lightning.

So he stood on the high rock, and when the bright flash came he did not move, and the lightning bade him hasten on, as he had a good sign.

The thunder, which saw him passing, also called to ask where he was going, and it commanded him to stand on the high rock. And when the thunder made a loud noise Kanag did not move, and it bade him go on, as his sign was good.

The women of Adasen were at the spring of Gawigawen dipping water, when suddenly they were startled by a great noise. They rose up, expecting to see a thousand warriors coming near; but though they looked all around they could see nothing but a young boy striking a shield.

“Good morning, women who are dipping water,” said Kanag. “Tell Gawigawen that he must prepare, for I am coming to fight him.”

So all the women ran up to the town and told Gawigawen that a strange boy was at the spring and he had come to fight.

“Go and tell him,” said Gawigawen, “that if it is true that he is brave, he will come into the town, if he can.”

When Kanag reached the high bank outside the town, he jumped like a flitting bird up the bank into the town and went straight to the spirit house of Gawigawen. He noticed that the roofs of both the dwelling and the

spirit houses were of hair, and that around the town were many heads, and he pondered:

“This is why my father did not return. Gawigawen is a brave man, but I will kill him.”

As soon as Gawigawen saw him in the yard he said:

“How brave you are, little boy; why did you come here?”

“I came to get my father,” answered Kanag; “for you kept him when he came to get oranges for my mother. If you do not give him to me, I will kill you.”

Gawigawen laughed at this brave speech and said:

“Why, one of my fingers will fight you. You shall never go back to your town, but you shall stay here and be like your father.”

“We shall see,” said Kanag. “Bring your arms and let us fight here in the yard.”

Gawigawen was beside himself with rage at this bold speech, and he brought his spear and his head-ax which was as big as half the sky. Kanag would not throw first, for he wanted to prove himself brave, so Gawigawen took aim and threw his head-ax at the boy. Now Kanag used magical power, so that he became an ant and was not hit by the weapon. Gawigawen laughed loudly when he looked around and could not see the boy, for he thought that he had been killed. Soon, however, Kanag reappeared, standing on the head-ax, and Gawigawen, more furious than ever, threw his spear. Again Kanag disappeared, and Gawigawen was filled with surprise.

Then it was Kanag’s turn and his spear went directly through the body of the giant. He ran quickly and cut off five of the heads, but the sixth he spared until Gawigawen should have shown him his father.

As they went about the town together, Kanag found that the skin of his father had been used for a drum-head. His hair decorated the house, and his head was at the gate of the town, while his body was put beneath the house. After he had gathered all the parts of the body together, Kanag used magical power, and his father came to life.

“Who are you?” asked Aponitolau; “how long have I slept?”

“I am your son,” said Kanag. “You were not asleep but dead, and here is Gawigawen who kept you. Take my head-ax and cut off his remaining head.”

So Aponitolau took the head-ax, but when he struck Gawigawen it did not injure him.

“What is the matter, Father?” asked Kanag; and taking the weapon he cut off the sixth head of Gawigawen.

Then Kanag and his father used magic so that the spears and head-axes flew about, killing all the people in the town, and the heads and valuable things went to their home.

When Aponibolinayen saw all these come into her house, she ran to look at the vine by the stove, and it was green and looked like a jungle. Then she knew that her son was alive, and she was happy. And when the father and son returned, all the relatives came to their house for a great feast, and all were so happy that the whole world smiled.

Read more fairy tales on Fairytalez.com