



Lumabet

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Intermediate
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Soon after people were created on the earth, there was born a child named Lumabet, who lived to be a very, very old man. He could talk when he was but one day old, and all his life he did wonderful things until the people came to believe that he had been sent by Manama, the Great Spirit.

When Lumabet was still a young man he had a fine dog, and he enjoyed nothing so much as taking him to the mountains to hunt. One day the dog noticed a white deer. Lumabet and his companions started in pursuit, but the deer was very swift and they could not catch it. On and on they went until they had gone around the world, and still the deer was ahead. One by one his companions dropped out of the chase, but Lumabet would not give up until he had the deer.

All the time he had but one banana and one camote (sweet potato) for food, but each night he planted the skins of these, and in the morning he found a banana tree with ripe fruit and a sweet potato large enough to eat. So he kept on until he had been around the world nine times, and he was an old man and his hair was gray. At last he caught the deer, and then he called all the people to a great feast, to see the animal.

While all were making merry, Lumabet told them to take a knife and kill his father. They were greatly surprised, but did as he commanded, and when the old man was dead, Lumabet waved his headband over him and he came to life again. Eight times they killed the old man at Lumabet's command, and the eighth time he was small like a little boy, for each time they had cut off some of his flesh. They all wondered very much at

Lumabet's power, and they were certain that he was a god.

One morning some spirits came to talk with Lumabet, and after they had gone he called the people to come into his house.

"We cannot all come in," said the people, "for your house is small and we are many."

"There is plenty of room," said he; so all went in and to their surprise it did not seem crowded.

Then he told the people that he was going on a long journey and that all who believed he had great power could go with him, while all who remained behind would be changed into animals and buso. He started out, many following him, and it was as he said. For those that refused to go were immediately changed into animals and buso.

He led the people far away across the ocean to a place where the earth and the sky meet. When they arrived they saw that the sky moved up and down like a man opening and closing his jaws.

"Sky, you must go up," commanded Lumabet.

But the sky would not obey. So the people could not go through. Finally Lumabet promised the sky that if he would let all the others through, he might have the last man who tried to pass. Agreeing to this, the sky opened and the people entered. But when near the last the sky shut down so suddenly that he caught not only the last man but also the long knife of the man before.

On that same day, Lumabet's son, who was hunting, did not know that his father had gone to the sky. When he was tired of the chase, he wanted to go to his father, so he leaned an arrow against a baliti tree and sat down on it. Slowly it began to go down and carried him to his father's place, but when he arrived he could find no people. He looked here and there and could find nothing but a gun made of gold. This made him very sorrowful and he did not know what to do until some white bees which were in the house said to him:

"You must not weep, for we can take you to the sky where your father is."

So he did as they bade, and rode on the gun, and the bees flew away with him, until in three days they reached the sky.

Now, although most of the men who followed Lumabet were content to live in the sky, there was one who was

very unhappy, and all the time he kept looking down on the land below. The spirits made fun of him and wanted to take out his intestines so that he would be like them and never die, but he was afraid and always begged to be allowed to go back home.

Finally Manama told the spirits to allow him to go, so they made a chain of the leaves of the karan grass and tied it to his legs. Then they let him down slowly head first, and when he reached the ground he was no longer a man but an owl.

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