



Quicoy and the Ongloc

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Philippine

Intermediate

8 min read

This story is known generally in the southern Islands. The Ongloc is feared by the children just as some little boys and girls fear the Bogy Man. The tale is a favorite one among the children and they believe firmly in the fate of Quicoy.

Little Quicoy's name was Francisco, but every one called him Quicoy, which, in Visayan, is the pet name for Francisco. He was a good little boy and helped his mother grind the corn and pound the rice in the big wooden bowl, but one night he was very careless. While playing in the corner with the cat he upset the jar of lubi lana, and all the oil ran down between the bamboo strips in the floor and was lost. There was none left to put in the glass and light, so the whole family had to go to bed in the dark.

Quicoy's mother was angry. She whipped him with her chinela and then opened the window and cried:

“Ongloc of the mountains!

Fly in through the door.

Catch Quicoy and eat him,

He is mine no more.”

Quicoy was badly frightened when he heard this, for the Ongloc is a big black man with terrible long teeth, who

all night goes searching for the bad boys and girls that he may change them into little cocoanuts and put them on a shelf in his rock house in the mountains to eat when he is hungry.

So when Quicoy went to his bed in the corner he pulled the matting over his head and was so afraid that he did not go to sleep for a long time.

The next morning he rose very early and went down to the spring where the boys get the water to put in the bamboo poles and carry home. Some boys were already there, and he told them what had taken place the night before. They were all sorry that his mother had called the Ongloc, but they told him not to be afraid for they would tell him how he could be forever safe from that terrible man.

It was very easy. All he had to do was to go at dusk to the cocoanut grove by the river and dig holes under two trees. Then he was to climb a tree, get the cocoanut that grew the highest, and, after taking off the husk and punching in one of the little eyes, whisper inside:

“Ongloc of the mountains!

Ongloc! Ugly man!

I’m a little cocoanut,

Catch me if you can!”

Then he was to cut the cocoanut in halves, quickly bury one piece in one of the holes, and, running to the other tree, bury the remaining half in the other hole. After that he might walk home safely, being sure not to run, for the Ongloc has always to obey the call of the cocoanut, and must hunt through the grove to find the one that called him. Should he cross the line between the holes, the buried pieces would fly out of the holes, snap together on him, and, flying up the tree from which they came, would keep him prisoner for a hundred years.

Quicoy was happy to think that he could capture the Ongloc, and resolved to go that very night. He wanted some of the boys to go with him, but they said he must go alone or the charm would be broken. They also told him to be careful himself and not cross the line between the holes or he would be caught as easily as the Ongloc.

So Quicoy went home and kept very quiet all day. His mother was sorry she had frightened him the night before, and was going to tell him not to be afraid; but when she thought of the lubi lana spilled on the ground, she resolved to punish him more by saying nothing to him.

Just at dark, when no one was looking, Quicoy took his father's bolo and quietly slipped away to the grove down by the river. He was not afraid of ladrones, but he needed the bolo because it is not easy to open a cocoanut, and it takes some time, even with a bolo, to get the husk chopped from the fruit.

Quicoy felt a little frightened when he saw all the big trees around him. The wind made strange noises in the branches high above him, and all the trees seemed to be leaning over and trying to speak to him. He felt somewhat sorry that he had come, but when he thought of the Ongloc he mustered up courage and went on until he found an open space between two high trees.

He stopped here and dug a hole under each of the trees. Then he put his feet in the notches and climbed one of the trees. It was hard work, for the notches were far apart; but at last he reached the branches and climbed to the top. The wind rocked the tree and made him dizzy, but he reached the highest cocoanut, threw it to the ground, and then 'started down the tree. It was easy to come down, though he went too fast and slipped and slid some distance, skinning his arms and legs. He did not mind that, however, for he knew he had the cocoanut that would capture the Ongloc. He picked it up, chopped off the husk, punched in one of the little eyes, and whispered inside:

"Ongloc of the mountains!

Ongloc! Ugly man!

I'm a little cocoanut,

Catch me if you can!"

He then chopped it in halves and buried one piece, and, running to the other tree, buried the remaining piece. Just as he finished he thought he heard a noise in the grove, and, instead of walking, he started to run as fast as he could.

It was very dark now, and the noise grew louder and made him run faster and faster, until suddenly a dreadful scream sounded directly in front of him, and a terrible black thing with fiery eyes came flying at him. He

turned in terror and ran back toward the trees. He knew it was the Ongloc answering the call of the cocoanut, and he ran like mad, but the monster had seen him and flew after him, screaming with rage.

Faster and faster he ran, but nearer and nearer sounded the frightful screams until, just as he felt two huge claws close on his neck, there was a bump, a loud snap, and he felt himself being carried high in the air. When the shock was over he found that he was squeezed tightly between two hard walls, and he could hear the Ongloc screaming and tearing at the outside with his claws. Then he knew what had happened.

He had crossed the line between the buried pieces and they had snapped on him and carried him up the tree from which they came. He was badly squeezed but he felt safe from the Ongloc, who finally went away in disappointment; for, although he likes cocoanuts, he cannot take one from a tree, but must change a boy or girl into the fruit if he wishes to eat of it.

Quicoy waited a long, long time and then knocked on the shell in the hope that some one would hear him. All that night and the next day and the next he knocked and cried and knocked, but, though people passed under the tree and found the bolo, he was so high up they did not hear him.

Days and weeks went by and the people wondered what had become of Quicoy. Many thought he had run away and were sorry for his poor mother, who grieved very much to think she had terrified him by calling the Ongloc. Of course the boys who had sent him to the grove could have told something of his whereabouts, but they were frightened and said nothing, so no one ever heard of poor little Quicoy again.

If you pass a cocoanut grove at night you can hear a noise like some one knocking. The older people say that the cocoanuts grow so closely together high up in the branches that the wind, when it shakes the tree, bumps them together. But the children know better. They say, "Quicoy is knocking to get out, but he must stay there a hundred years."

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