



The Story of Kanag

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Philippine

Advanced
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When the rice had grown tall and it was near the time for it to ripen, Aponitolau and Aponibolinayen grew fearful lest the wild pigs should break in and destroy all their crop, so they sent their son, Kanag, to the field to guard the grain. Kanag willingly went to the place, but when he found that the fences were all strong so that the pigs could not get in, and he was left with nothing to do, life in the little watch-house grew lonely, and the boy became very unhappy.

Each day Aponitolau carried cooked rice and meat to his son in the field, but Kanag could not eat and always bade his father hang it in the watch-house until he should want it. Each time Aponitolau found the food of the day before still untouched, and he began to suspect that the boy was unhappy at having to guard the grain. But he said nothing of his fears to Aponibolinayen.

One day after his father had returned home, Kanag was so lonely that he used his magical power and became a little bird and flew up into the top of a tree. The next day when Aponitolau came to the field he looked everywhere for his son, and when he could not find him he called, and from the top of a bamboo tree a little bird answered him. Realizing what had happened, the father was very sad and begged his son to come back and be a boy again, but Kanag only answered:

“I would rather be a bird and carry the messages of the spirits to the people.”

At last the father went home alone, and he and the boy’s mother were filled with grief that they had lost their son.

Some time after this, Aponitolau prepared to go out to fight. He took his spear and shield and head-ax and started early one morning, but when he reached the gate of the town, Kanag flew over him, giving him a bad sign, so he turned back. The next morning he started again, and this time the little bird gave him a good sign, and knowing that nothing would injure him, he went on.

After a long journey he reached a hostile town where the people said they were glad to see him, and added that because he was the first of his people who had dared to enter their town they intended to keep him there.

“Oh,” said Aponitolau, “if you say that I cannot return home, call all your people together and we will fight.”

“You are very brave,” answered his enemies, “if you wish to fight us all.”

And when the people had gathered together they laughed at him and said, “Why, one of our fingers would fight you.”

Nevertheless, Aponitolau prepared to fight, and when the bravest of the enemy threw his spear and head-ax at him he jumped and escaped. They noticed that he jumped very high, so they all ran at him, throwing their spears and trying to kill him.

But Aponitolau caught all their weapons, and then while they were unarmed he threw his own spear, and it flew about among them until it had killed them all. Then he sent his head-ax, and it cut off all the heads of the enemy; and he used magical power so that these heads went to his home in Kadalayapan.

After that Aponitolau sat down by the gate of the town to rest, and the little bird, flying over his head, called down:

“The sign that I gave you was good, Father, and you have killed all your enemies.”

“Yes,” said the man, and as he started on the home-ward journey the little bird always flew near him. When he

reached home, he stuck the heads around the town, and commanded the people to go out all over the world and invite everyone and especially the pretty girls to come to a party in celebration of his victory.

The people came from all parts of the world, and while they played on the gongs and danced, Aponitolau called to Kanag and said:

“Come down, my son; do not stay always in the tops of the trees. Come and see the pretty girls and see which one you want to marry. Get the golden cup and give them basi to drink.”

But Kanag answered, “I would rather stay in the tops of the trees and give the signs when anyone goes to fight.”

Then the father and mother pleaded with him to become a boy once more, begging his forgiveness and promising never again to send him to guard the rice. But he would not listen to them, and only flew away.

Finding that they could not win him that way, Aponitolau and Aponibolinayen called the spirit servants, and commanded them to follow Kanag wherever he went, and to find a girl whom he would want to marry. So the spirit servants went after him, and wherever he went they followed.

By and by they stopped near a well, and there the spirit servants used magic so that all the pretty girls nearby felt very hot; and in the early morning, they came to the well to bathe. One among them was so beautiful that she looked like a flame of fire among the betel-nut blossoms, and when the servants saw her washing her hair they ran to Kanag and begged him to come and see her. At first he would not listen to them, but after a while he flew into the top of a betel-nut tree near by, and when he caught sight of her, he flew into the tree above her head.

“But,” said he to the servants, “what can I do if I become a man now, for I have no clothes and no head-band?”

“Do not worry about that,” said the spirit servants, “for we have everything here for you.”

So Kanag became a man and put on the clothes and head-band, and he went to speak to the girl. He gave her betel-nut, and they chewed together, and he said:

“My name is Kanag and I am the son of Aponitolau and Aponibolinayen.”

Then the girl said: “My name is Dapilisan and I am the daughter of Bangan and Dalonagan.”

When Dapilisan went home Kanag followed her, and he told her parents his name and how he had changed into a little bird. And when he had finished he asked if he might marry their daughter. Bangan and his wife were greatly pleased that Kanag wanted Dapilisan for his wife, but they were afraid that his parents might object, so they sent a messenger to invite Aponitolau and Aponibolinayen to come to visit them.

As soon as Kanag’s parents heard that their son had become a man they were very happy and started at once to go to him, carrying many fine presents. Before arrangements for the wedding could be made, it was necessary to decide on the price to be paid for the girl. A long discussion took place. Bangan and Dalonagan finally said that the spirit house must be filled nine times with different kinds of jars.

When this was done Dalonagan raised her eyebrows, and half of the jars disappeared. Aponibolinayen used her magical power and the spirit house was filled again, and then Dalonagan said to her:

“Now the web of the spider shall be put around the town and you must put gold beads on it. If it does not break, Kanag may marry Dapilisan.”

When Aponibolinayen had put the gold beads on the thread, Dalonagan hung on it to see if it would hold. As it did not break, she declared that the sign was good; and Kanag and Dapilisan were married.

Then the people played on the copper gongs, danced, and made merry for a long time, and when they returned to their homes Kanag and his bride went with Aponitolau and Aponibolinayen.

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