



# *The Story of Sayen*

Mabel Cook Cole

Philippine

---

*Intermediate*  
*6 min read*

In the depths of a dark forest where people seldom went, lived a wizened old Alan. The skin on her wrinkled face was as tough as a carabao hide, and her long arms with fingers pointing back from the wrist were horrible to look at. Now this frightful creature had a son whose name was Sayen, and he was as handsome as his mother was ugly. He was a brave man, also, and often went far away alone to fight.

On these journeys Sayen sometimes met beautiful girls, and though he wanted to marry, he could not decide upon one. Hearing that one Danepan was more beautiful than any other, he determined to go and ask her to be his wife.

Now Danepan was very shy, and when she heard that Sayen was coming to her house she hid behind the door and sent her servant, Laey, out to meet him. And so it happened that Sayen, not seeing Danepan, married Laey, thinking that she was her beautiful mistress. He took her away to a house he had built at the edge of the forest, for though he wished to be near his old home, he dared not allow his bride to set eyes on his ugly mother.

For some time they lived happily together here, and then one day when Sayen was making a plow under his house, he heard Laey singing softly to their baby in the room above, and this is what she sang:

“Sayen thinks I am Danepan, but Laey I am. Sayen thinks I am Danepan, but Laey I am.”

When Sayen heard this he knew that he had been deceived, and he pondered long what he should do.

The next morning he went to the field to plow, for it was near the rice-planting time. Before he left the house he called to his wife:

“When the sun is straight above, you and the baby bring food to me, for I shall be busy in the field.”

Before he began to plow, however, he cut the bamboo supports of the bridge which led to the field, so that when Laey and the baby came with his food, they had no sooner stepped on the bridge than it went down with them and they were drowned. Sayen was again free. He took his spear and his shield and head-ax and went at once to the town of Danepan, and there he began killing the people on all sides.

Terror spread through the town. No one could stop his terrible work of destruction until Danepan came down out of her house, and begged him to spare part of the people that she might have some from whom to borrow fire. Her great beauty amazed him and he ceased killing, and asked her to prepare some betel-nut for him to chew, as he was very tired. She did so, and when he had chewed the nut he spat on the people he had killed and they came to life again. Then he married Danepan and took her to his home.

Now it happened about this time that the people of Magosang were in great trouble. At the end of a successful hunt, while they were dividing the meat among themselves, the Komow, a murderous spirit that looks like a man, would come to them and ask how many they had caught. If they answered, “Two,” then he would say that he had caught two also; and when they went home, they would find two people in the town dead. As often as they went to hunt the Komow did this, and many of the people of Magosang were dead and those living were in great fear. Finally they heard of the brave man, Sayen, and they begged him to help them. Sayen listened to all they told, and then said:

“I will go with you to hunt, and while you are dividing the meat, I will hide behind the trees. When the Komow comes to ask how many deer you have, he will smell me, but you must say that you do not know where I am,”

So the people went to hunt, and when they had killed two deer, they singed them over a fire and began to divide them. Just then the Komow arrived and said:

“How many have you?”

“We have two,” replied the people.

“I have two also,” said the Komow, “but I smell Sayen.”

“We do not know where Sayen is,” answered the people; and just then he sprang out and killed the Komow, and the people were greatly relieved.

Now when Kaboniyán, a great spirit, heard what Sayen had done, he went to him and said:

“Sayen you are a brave man because you have killed the Komow, Tomorrow I will fight with you. You must remain on the low ground by the river, and I will go to the hill above.”

So the following day Sayen went to the low ground by the river. He had not waited long before he heard a great sound like a storm, and he knew that Kaboniyán was coming. He looked up, and there stood the great warrior, poising his spear which was as large as a big tree.

“Are you brave, Sayen?” called he in a voice like thunder as he threw the weapon.

“Yes,” answered Sayen, and he caught the spear.

This surprised Kaboniyán, and he threw his head-ax which was as large as the roof of a house, and Sayen caught that also. Then Kaboniyán saw that this was indeed a brave man, and he went down to Sayen and they fought face to face until both were tired, but neither could overcome the other.

When Kaboniyán saw that in Sayen he had found one as strong and brave even as himself, he proposed that they go together to fight the people of different towns. And they started out at once. Many people were killed by this strong pair, and why they themselves could never be captured was a great mystery. For it was not known that one was the spirit Kaboniyán, and the other the son of an Alan.

If he was surrounded in a river, Sayen would become a fish and hide so that people could not find him. And if

he was entrapped in a town, he would become a chicken and go under the house in a chicken-coop. In this way he escaped many times.

Finally one night after he had killed many in one town, the people decided to watch him, and they saw him go to roost with the chickens. The next day they placed a fish trap under the house near the chicken-coop, and that night when Sayen went under the house he was caught in the trap and killed.

**Read more fairy tales on [Fairytalez.com](http://Fairytalez.com)**