

MASOY AND THE APE VISAYAN FOLK-TALE

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Masoy was a poor man who lived on a farm some miles from the town. His clothing was very poor, and his little garden furnished him scarcely enough to live on. Every week day he went to town to sell his fruits and vegetables and to buy rice. Upon his return he noticed each day that some one had entered the garden in his absence and stolen some of the fruit. He tried to protect the garden by making the fence very strong and locking the gate; but, in spite of all he could do, he continued to miss his fruit.

At length Masoy conceived the happy idea of taking some pitch and moulding it into the shape of a man. He put a bamboo hat on it and stood it up in one corner of the garden. Then he went away.

As soon as he was gone, the robber, who was none other than a huge ape, climbed the fence and got in.

“Oh!” he said to himself, “I made a mistake! There is Masoy watching. He did not go away as I thought. He is here with a big bamboo hat, but he could not catch me if he tried. I am going to greet him, for fear he may consider me impolite.”

“Good morning, Masoy,” he said. “Why do you not answer me? What is the matter with you? Oh! you are joking, are you, by keeping so silent? But you will not do it again.” On saying this, the ape slapped the man of pitch with his right hand, and of course it stuck, and he could not get it loose.

“For heaven’s sake,” cried the ape, “let me go. If you do not, I will slap you with my other hand.” Then he struck him with the other hand, which, of course, stuck fast also.

“Well, Masoy,” cried the ape, “you have entirely exhausted my patience! If you don’t let go of me at once, I shall kick you.” No sooner said than done, with a result which may easily be imagined.

“Masoy,” cried the now enraged ape, “if you have any regard for your own welfare, let me go, for if you don’t, I still have one leg left to kill you with.” So saying, he kicked him with the remaining foot, getting so tangled up that he and the tar man fell to the ground, rolling over and over.

Then Masoy came, and, when he saw the ape, he said: “So you are the robber who has stolen my fruit! Now you will pay for it with your life.”

But the ape cried, “Oh, spare my life, and I will be your slave forever!”

“Do you promise not to steal my fruit again?”

“I do, and I will serve you faithfully all my life.”

Masoy agreed to spare him.

From that time on the ape worked very hard for his master. He sold the fruit and bought the rice and was honest and industrious. One day, on his way to market, he happened to find a small piece of gold and another of silver. At that time this country was not ruled by any foreign power, but each tribe was governed by its own datto or chief. The chief was naturally the bravest and richest of the tribe.

The chief of Masoy's tribe had a very beautiful daughter. The ape schemed to have her marry his master. Now he hit upon a plan. He went to the chief's house and asked for a ganta, which is a measure holding about three quarts and used for measuring rice.

“My master,” he said, “begs you to lend him a ganta to measure his gold with.”

The chief was astonished at such an extraordinary request, and asked: “Who is your master?”

“Masoy, who owns many gantas of gold and silver, acres upon acres of land; and uncountable heads of cattle,” was the reply.

The ape carried the ganta home, and there he stuck the piece of gold he had found on the inside of the bottom of the measure, and then returned it to the chief.

“Oh, ape!” said the datto, “your master has forgotten to take out one piece of gold. Take it and give it back to him.”

“Never mind, sir,” answered the ape, “he has so much gold that that small piece is nothing to him. You may keep it.”

Some weeks afterwards, the ape went again to borrow the chief's ganta.

“What do you want it for now?” asked the chief.

“To measure my master's silver with,” was the answer. So he carried it home, stuck inside the piece of silver he had found, and returned it. The chief found the piece of silver and offered to return it, but was answered as before, that it did not matter.

The chief believed all that the ape said, but was puzzled to know how such a rich man could be living in his territory without his having heard of him.

After a few days the ape, considering the way well prepared for his plans, called upon the datto and said: “My master requests you to give him

your daughter in marriage. I am authorized to make all the arrangements with you for the wedding, if you consent to it.”

“Very well,” answered the chief, “but before we arrange matters I wish to see my future son-in-law. Ask him to come to see me, and I will receive him in a manner befitting his rank.”

The ape returned home and said to Masoy, who knew nothing at all of the negotiations with the chief: “I have good news for you. The chief wants to see you, for he intends to give you his daughter in marriage.”

“What are you chattering about?” answered Masoy. “Have you lost your senses? Don’t you know that I am too poor to marry the chief’s daughter? I have not even decent clothes to wear and no means of getting any.”

“Do not worry about the clothes. I will get them for you somewhere,” replied the ape.

“And how shall I talk? You know that I am ignorant of city ways.”

“Oh, Masoy, don’t trouble about that! Just answer ‘Yes’ to the questions they ask you and you will be all right.”

Finally Masoy consented to go, and went down to the river to wash off the dirt and grime. A rich merchant was bathing some distance up the river, and the ape slipped along the bank, stole the merchant’s clothes, hat, and shoes, and running back swiftly to his master, bade him put them on. Masoy did so, and found himself, for the first time in his life, so well dressed that he no longer hesitated about going to the chief’s house. When they arrived there they found that the chief was expecting them and had made a big feast and reception in honour of his future son-in-law. The chief began to talk about the wedding and said: “Shall we have the wedding in your palace, Masoy?”

“Yes,” answered Masoy.

“You have a large palace, I suppose, haven’t you, sir?”

“Yes,” was the reply.

“Don’t you think it would be well for us to go there this afternoon?”

“Yes,” was again the reply.

Meanwhile the ape had disappeared. He went along the road towards home and said to all the people he met: “The datto will be along this way pretty soon and when he asks you to whom all these farms and cattle belong, you must say that they are Masoy’s, for otherwise he will kill you.”

The ape knew that in a certain spot stood an enchanted palace invisible to men. He went to the place, and just where the front of the house appeared whenever it was visible, he began to dig a ditch. The witch who lived in the house appeared and asked: "What are you ditching there for, Mr. Ape?"

"Oh, madam," was his answer, "haven't you heard the news? The chief is coming this way soon, and is going to have all witches and the low animals like myself put to death. For this reason I am digging a pit to hide myself in."

"Oh, Mr. Ape!" said the witch, "let me hide myself first, for I am not able to dig for myself, and you are. Do me this favour, please."

"I should be very impolite, if I refused to do a favour for a lady," said the ape. "Come down, but hurry, or you will be too late."

The witch hurried as fast as she could and got down into the pit. Then the ape threw stones down on her until she was dead. The house then became free from enchantment and always visible.

The ape then returned to the chief's house and reported that all was ready for the wedding. So the chief, Masoy, and the bride, escorted by a large number of people, set out for Masoy's palace. On the way they saw many rich farms and great herds of cattle. The chief asked the people who the owner of these farms and cattle was. The answer always was that they belonged to Masoy. Consequently the chief was greatly impressed by Masoy's great wealth.

The chief greatly admired the palace and considered himself fortunate to have such a son-in-law. That night the wedding took place, and Masoy lived many years in the palace with his wife, having the ape and a great number of slaves to serve him.

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