

# The Legend of the Magat River

A long time ago, there lived in Bayombong a tall, handsome man called Magat. He was young and strong, and fast as a hunter and sure in his spear shot. He could run as fast as a deer and strong as he was, he could down a bull with ease. He was strong-willed and obstinate but he was also kind and gentle. Except for a few who envied him his prowess, everybody in the village loved and respected him. Magat loved outdoor life, and roamed in the forest surrounding the struggling settlement.

One day, fired by adventure he wandered farther than usual. Soon night came. Being far from home, he kindled a fire in his crude, primitive way. he lay beside the fire and fell asleep.

Early the next morning, he pursued his solitary way. Finally he came upon the largest stream he had ever seen. He stopped and crawled noisily to the bank of the river near the fall. Upon parting the tall grasses he beheld a lovely sight just across the stream-beneath the shade of the outspreading branches of the big balete tree was a very beautiful maiden. She was bathing and was nude from the waist up. She was the most beautiful woman Magat had ever seen and he fell in love with her at first sight.

From where he was hiding, Magat's attention was attracted by a silent movement on a spreading branch; Magat saw a great python, coiled around the branch, which was ready to attack the beautiful woman. He jumped backward. The noise he made drew the attention of the maiden, who, turning around, saw him poise a spear. She mistook his attitude for hostility and ducked under water. Just as the python sprang, the spear flew from Magat's hand. The snake was struck right through the eyes and brain.

The next moment, Magat was in the water and carried the beautiful Maiden ashore. She struggled a little but did not scream, as she modestly tried to cover her body with her long dark hair.

Magat pointed to the writhing python. Upon seeing it, she screamed instinctively and drew close to Magat, who put a protecting arm around her lovely shoulders. Gratitude and admiration were all over her pretty face.

Magat picked up his broken spear and went back to the young woman. They wandered about in the forest. Under the spell of nature, Magat asked the woman to be his wife; the woman, after making Magat promise in the name of the great Kabunian not to see her at noon, consented.

He brought her home and made a cozy room for her. Everything went well and happily for a while. But the passing days, his curiosity mounted more and more and at last, it grew out of bounds.

One noon, he broke his promise and broke into his wife's seclusion. In his wife's bed of soft leaves and grasses he beheld a sight that chilled his heart. A great crocodile was lying on his wife's bed. Believing that his wife had met a horrible death, he rushed to the kitchen, fetched an ugly weapon and returned to his wife's room. He raised his weapon to kill the crocodile when suddenly he saw his wife on the bed instead of the crocodile. His wife was dying.

"you broke your promise. I can no longer be happy nor live any longer. I must die." his wife sobbed. Slowly life ebbed from her. On her beautiful skin, scales appeared, as she turned into a crocodile before his very eyes. That was his punishment for having broken his promise made in the name of Kabunian.

Sadly, Magat buried the dead crocodile in his front yard. worn out by grief for his lack of fidelity to his word and over the death of his lovely wife, he drowned himself and his miseries in the same stream grew into the mighty troublesome Magat rive