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A STORY

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ached, their muscles grew numb, yet they kept on rowing, faster and faster went the paddles, till it seemed almost beyond human strength and skill. Bacnang knelt in the stern of the boat where he could watch their efforts, first encouraging and then shouting commands and warnings. They are gaining. The open water above seems so near, but coming so slowly, so very slowly. Can they keep their weary muscles at this terrific pace just a few moments longer? Just as they reached the head of the canyon and safety, the youngest boy dropped his paddle and fell to the bottom of the boat exhausted. But they were safe. They paddled quickly to the bank, and carried the youngest boy and laid him on the beach, and rubbed his hands and poured water on his forehead, and he soon revived.

After this hard experience, they kept rowing their boat for many days, going up, up the stream, ever farther from their old home and nearer to the land of promise. Lutab, the oldest, became very strong and hard. He could handle the boat alone with ease, when the water was still, or across some of the lakes that they encountered. He began to think he did not need any guide. And although he had never been to the land of Canyon, he told Bacnang one night that he believed he would camp there for several days and enjoy the hunting and fishing, which appeared to be plentiful, and Bacnang and the other boys could go on, and he would follow later. But Bacnang said:

"You know not the way nor the dangers yet ahead of you. Moreover, the season of storms is at hand. Your father would not want me to leave you here. I promised him I would take you to the land of Canyon. No. It would be dangerous for you, and foolish to undertake the rest of the journey alone. You have learned much thus far, and you have become strong. But I have noticed that often you rock the boat needlessly, and you do not know all the dangers there are ahead. You must come with us."

So after much persuasion and unpleasant feeling, Lutab the next morning, set out with the rest. But he was resentful. He interfered with the progress by splashing water on his brothers. And when the guide was not looking, Lutab would suddenly sit on the side of the boat, and tip it dangerously near the surface of the water, even occasionally dipping some water into the canoe. But on and up the river they went. One day they came to a place where there were many great boulders in the water, larger than houses. It was not swift, and if you knew which way to go, there was no danger. Lutab, thinking he would have some more fun, suddenly turned his paddle and guided the canoe between two great rocks just off the direction they were going. Bacnang yelled but it was too late, and they hit a submerged rock, and the canoe was overturned and they were all thrown into the water. It was deep and far from the banks and the rocks were hard to hold to, being very slippery. But with great efforts and splendid swimming, Bacnang was able to turn the canoe upright and finally all the boys were again in the boat; but they had lost their paddles, and the only thing they could do was to drift down with the current until they came to some open water where they worked their way over to the bank and camped. They made new paddles, and after losing several days to replenish their lost provisions by hunting and fishing, they set out again. And Bacnang warned Lutab that he must follow his guidance, as it was dangerous, not only for himself but for all of his companions.

Lutab was obedient and helpful for several days, and then he began to chafe and rebel under Bacnang's restraint again. He wanted to take his own time and choose his own camping places and follow his own choice between the rocks and even wanted

to go up some of the side-streams that led off in another direction. But Bacnang held him to the true course, and they continued to make progress.

But one morning, Bacnang woke up at daybreak as usual, and as he looked about he noticed that one of the blankets was empty, and looking out on the stream, he saw their canoe with Lutab in it alone paddling straight towards a dangerous current that was coming from an underground stream on the far bank of the river. Bacnang immediately jumped into the icy river and swam with all his might straight towards the disappearing boat. With powerful sweeps of his skillful arms, and without a splash or a sound he rushed through the water, hoping he could reach Lutab before too late. When he was just a few yards away, Lutab saw him, and angry at being detected and anxious to carry out his adventure, he raised his paddle to strike Bacnang on the head. But Bacnang was too quick for him. He dove and came up under the canoe, upsetting it and throwing Lutab into the water. Seeing that he could not go on, Lutab helped to recover the boat and they went back to camp.

Then said Bacnang: "Lutab, you cannot go farther with us. I must send you back to your father. You know the way back, because you have just come over it. You will never see the Land of Canyon. We shall tarry here to make you a boat and start you back to the land of fog and poverty."

Then, after starting Lutab back, Bacnang set out again upstream with the five remaining sons of Acop. And poor Lutab, although he knew the way, never reached his father. The first side-stream he saw on his way down, he started to play and see where it came from and what pleasures it afforded, not knowing that the stream led to a lake infested with dangerous and deadly snakes. It was a beautiful lake, and as he looked over its smooth waters, he said to himself: "What a fool Bacnang was, and how wise I am. Here is something better than the Land of Canyon, and I am going to camp here and enjoy myself several days." That night as he lay in his blanket, apparently so comfortable and secure, a dozen green poisonous and deadly snakes coiled about his arms, legs and neck, and he awoke as they struck him again and again, and he died in great agony.

But Bacnang and the five brothers were not yet to the end of their journey. The five boys were becoming skillful in handling the canoe, and they were learning all about the Great River, and the many difficulties and dangers held little fear for them, because they trusted their guide and he knew the way. One day, there came a great storm. The wind blew a terrific gale, and the rain came down in torrents. The thunder and the lightning were frightful, and great trees were torn from their roots. Great waves came up on the river, and it was only with the greatest difficulty that they were able to keep it from rocking and filling with water. Bacnang, reassured the boys however, and said: "Yonder, boys, just beyond that sharp point is a deep and safe cave in which we can find shelter from the storm." So with superhuman efforts they made their way to the cave. Had not the boys been strong and skillful in handling their paddles they could never have kept the boat straight, and would certainly have been overturned even with the guidance of Bacnang.

Finally after many, many days, and weeks and months of constant paddling and rowing and rowing and working, they began to get into a different atmosphere. The boys were overjoyed at the beauty of the trees and the flowers, the bright sunshine, and the abundance of game and fish for food. They realized they were approaching the Land of Canyon. What happiness was theirs to think of the terrible dangers and hardships that lay behind them, and of the beauty and plenty and joy they knew were to be theirs.

At last one day they asked Bacnang: "Good friend and guide, when do we reach the land of Canyon? We have seen many signs of the nearness we are to that wonderful land, and it seems we should be there. These trees, these flowers, and birds, the fish and game, the sunshine and fresh air,—all are delightful, and we are so happy to be there. But tell us, when do we arrive at the Land of Canyon?"

Then spoke Bacnang: "My boys, many days have we travelled together. Many dangers and hardships have I guided you over. You have learned great skill. You have grown strong. The storms have no terror for you. The rocks and the rapids obey your commands. Without knowing it, by obeying and following your guide you have become strong and as wise as your guide. I must tell you now that you will go on alone

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