Tale of the Turtle and the Monkey

*\*Collected by Otto J. Scheerer. In Ernesto Constantino. 1982. Isinay Text and Translations. Tokyo: Institute for the Study of Languages and Cultures of Asia and Africa. Pp. 15-22. Retold for translation: Jesus Federico C. Hernandez.*

Once there were a turtle and a monkey who were friends. One day, while they were walking along the river bank, they saw a banana plant floating on the river. After fishing it out of the river and carrying it to the river bank, the monkey said to the turtle, “Let’s divide the plant and see if they grow, then we’ll have something to eat.”

The two cut the banana plant in the middle. The monkey chose the upper half thinking it would grow better because of the leaves and gave the turtle the lower half because it was dirty and would probably die quickly because it did not have leaves.

After some time, the monkey and the turtle saw each other in town. “Hello monkey, how are you? And how is your banana plant?” asked the turtle.

“I am well,” said the monkey. “My banana plant died a long time ago. How about yours?”

“My banana plant has borne fruits! It is full of ripe bananas now. Unfortunately, I cannot pick the fruits because they are too high on top,” replied the turtle.

Upon hearing this, monkey quickly offered to help turtle out. “Don’t worry my friend, I will climb the banana plant for you.”

“Thank you, my friend. We can divide the fruits between the two of us,” said the turtle.

The two of them headed to turtle’s house. And in the backyard, the monkey saw the bunch of ripe bananas hanging on the plant. He immediately climbed the plant and left the turtle. The monkey started to feast on the bananas while the poor turtle waited on the ground. The turtle begged the monkey to throw him some bananas but the monkey did not and instead he ate all the ripe bananas he could reach.

The monkey then decided to take a nap. He was really full from eating all the bananas. Pissed off at the monkey, the turtle went to the riverbank to gather thorns and carefully placed them on the trunk of the banana plant. He then hid under a coconut shell. When the monkey woke up and came down the banana plant, he did not notice all the thorns on the base of the banana trunk.

“Ouch!” The thorns placed by turtle on the trunk of the banana plant pricked the monkey’s feet and hands. The monkey was so mad at the turtle. And his hands and feet bled from the pricks and cuts made by the thorns. He looked for the turtle and after a while found him hiding under a coconut shell.

“You are going to pay for what you have done to me. I will either pound you to a pulp or throw you into the river!”

“Have mercy on me, friend monkey. I’d rather you crush me with the pestle than be thrown into the river. I do not know how to swim. I will drown”, begged the turtle.

Monkey dragged the terrified turtle to the riverbank and threw him in the river so he would drown.

Upon hitting the water, the turtle laughed and swam away shouting, “This has been my home since childhood, you fool!”

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