

Kutuktin

Derived from the narrative of Jerzon Ayongchi

The kutuktin are a race greatly feared by the Ifiallig. They are said to walk the earth and to take skeletal forms. On nights when the moon is at its fullest, they roam the land of Fiallig in search of mortal flesh on which to feast. It is believed among the Ifiallig that should the leader of the kutuktin be slain, then all other kutuktin perish with it.

Long, long ago, in a place called Fiangtin, there lived an old man named Lakay Chinomkay. One day, he decided to catch himself some frogs, crabs, and fish from a stream at nightfall. It was chilly this time of year. So he waited for darkness to descend and, with his trusty sulo, set out for Fiallok.

In those days, the fastest way to Fiallok was uphill passing through a burial ground. Many anet-el trees and dense vines were spread out along the way, obscuring the path. After an arduous trek, Lakay Chinomkay finally reached Fiallok.

There was somebody across the stream, who, like Lakay, had brought his own sulo to catch prey. "What are you catching?" the individual on the opposite bank asked Lakay Chinomkay.

"And what are YOU catching?" Lakay Chinomkay replied. They were both headed upstream as they fished.

"Don't capture the leaches."

"And why are YOU capturing the leaches?" Lakay responded, who simply went on his way fishing upstream.

"Why are you catching the snake?"

"And why are YOU catching the snake?" Lakay Chinomkay answered.

In the darkness, Lakay Chinomkay had not noticed it was a kutuktin that he conversed with. After a while, they reached Finaliw.

"Why are you catching frogs?"

"And why are YOU catching frogs?" Lakay retorted once more. The kutuktin was incensed.

"Tonight whilst you lay snoring we shall carry you away, you irksome old geezer," mouthed the kutuktin silently to itself.

His task completed, Lakay Chinomkay got out of the water to return to his ator at Fiangtin, which was right below Kunchiyan's house. He left the kutuktin behind.

When Lakay Chinomkay arrived back at the ator, he found none of the youngsters who usually took naps there. He was alone. So he just roasted his catch, ate, and drifted to slumber. As Lakay dozed, two kutuktin – a father and its child – made their swift and silent approach. The father kutuktin was the one Lakay Chinomkay had angered that same day.

“There, Lakay Chinomkay snores in his repose. Come and let us carry away his chakurug as he lies asleep in it,” said the father kutuktin. They cautiously carted his chakurug off.

They managed to get the chakurug all the way up to Wingian, just when Lakay was about to turn in his sleep. The two hastily tossed the chakurug off the precipice, into the river that awaited far below. Lakay Chinomkay could not return to consciousness in time to hold on to an anet-el tree or grasp one of the many vines that dangled about.

“Too late...and now we feast on your bones.”

The long fall off the cliff killed Lakay Chinomkay instantly. The two kutuktin made their way down the rock face to recover Lakay Chinomkay's drowned corpse. They also retrieved his chakurug.

They proceeded to devour Lakay Chinomkay's carcass. “His brain is mine,” declared the father kutuktin.

“Then I will take his ears,” replied the child.

“I shall have his nose.”

“And I want his eyes,” the child exclaimed.

They split Lakay Chinomkay's neck, and took a hand apiece. Much like a bunch of starved predators they gnawed viciously on his corpse as they had their meal. It took the kutuktin until midnight to polish off Lakay's head and arms. Making their way his torso, they tore off and ripped apart every morsel of his various parts.

Upon reaching his crotch, the father kutuktin said, “I shall take the shaft of his penis.”

“Leave me his testicles, then,” replied the child.

And again they divided up Lakay's legs.

Having finished with Lakay Chinomkay's innards the father kutuktin said to his child, "Let us put his bones back together and return them to the ator. We could put them in this chakurug. This geezer was quite infuriating, he mocked me constantly."

So they reassembled his skeleton and arranged it in the chakurug. They carried the chakurug back to the ator and left it there to be found.

When morning came, some residents of Fiangtin headed for Lakay Chinomkay's ator to warm themselves by the fire. Much to their bewilderment they noticed no smoke wafted from the ator. Perhaps Lakay Chinomkay had only fallen asleep, they thought. So they proceeded to the ator anyway.

The sight of Lakay Chinomkay's bones came as a great shock to them, and they quickly concluded that this was the work of kutuktin. Petrified by fear they ran about to inform the elders of the dire news. Two old men were already at the ator by the time they returned. The slaying of Lakay Chinomkay caused terrible anguish among the residents of Fiangtin. They gathered and buried his bones in grief.

Once Lakay Chinomkay's bones were buried, the villagers gathered around the fire to discuss the events that had passed. So it was decided that they were to formulate a plan to capture the kutuktin by the next rise and fall of the moon.

When the time finally came, the elders had assigned a fine youth of Fiangtin the task of apprehending the kutuktin. The young man agreed to the undertaking and was given advice on how to best go about killing the kutuktin.

"Light a fire at the ator and cast your fiangkaw into the flames that it may grow hot," the elders instructed. "Lie down and feign slumber. Pretend to snore and lay in wait for the kutuktin."

When the moon shone in full, the youth headed to the ator. He shut the door and started the bonfire. Following the elders' instructions he cast the tip of his spear into the fire to heat it. In the dead of night, the young man faked a snore. He distinctly heard the sound of feet scampering about the ator. Then the shuffling noises stopped.

The young man then saw a leg protruding from the sufia. He knew the kutuktin would enter from the sufia and would soon descend upon him. He waited until the kutuktin could fully make its way down to him.

The kutuktin was finally all the way down. The sheer horror of its appearance startled the young man and scared him stiff. Despite having been paralyzed by fear, the youth was able to gather his wits about him and retrieve his fiangkaw from the fire. He flung the weapon hurriedly, aiming for the kutuktin's ribs.

His fiangkaw scored a direct hit, sizzling as it seared its way through the kutuktin's body. The kutuktin tumbled from the attack it had sustained. The young man extracted his weapon turning the kutuktin over. It was dead. The young man still trembled in fright.

He immediately opened the door and dragged the lifeless kutuktin outside. Then he rushed back into the ator, barricading the door with a piece of wood. He stirred fretfully trying to sleep, but sleep would not overcome him for he feared the arrival of even more kutuktin. He cast his spear into the fire once more in preparation.

At the cock's crow he gazed into the sky and saw it was beginning to brighten. He hesitated to step out just yet, ill at ease. He waited for the dawn to fully break before opening the door of the ator to check on his fresh kill.

The kutuktin was not where he had left it. In its place was an atifiangran tree. Frightened, the young man returned to the ator and shut himself inside. The older people arrived moments later.

"Well, open up," they ordered.

"Oh, you are here," the young man breathed a sigh of relief. At last, he was no longer alone.

"And where is your previous night's quarry?" asked one of the elders.

"It was there just last night. All that remains in the spot now is that atifiangran," he replied.

"Then perhaps that atifiangran is the kutuktin. Their shapes *are* similar," said an old man.

Ever since then, whenever an atifiangran is seen, it has been said to resemble a kutuktin.

They waited until the sun was out in full before setting the atifiangran on fire, which gave off a unique odor. It might very well have been the slain kutuktin. So too, must it have been the leader of the kutuktin, for no kutuktin appeared in Fiangtin again.