



IBONG ADARNA

AN OLD LEGEND ABOUT A WONDERFUL BIRD

*Linoleum cuts prepared
by gilmo baldovino*

ONCE upon a time, there was a king who was very much loved by the people. He was kind to them. When they were in trouble, the king was always ready to help them. One day the king fell ill. He called a physician who told him that his sickness was serious. The people were sad because they liked their king. They were afraid that something terrible might happen to their king. Twelve doctors came to see what sickness the king was suffering from. Each one of them shook his head after seeing the king in his bed. These twelve doctors agreed that they did not know how the king could be cured of his sickness. They said that no man could make the king well again.

But just when everybody thought that the king was beyond hope, a physician appeared in the king's palace. Nobody knew him. No one knew where he came from. But he had good news for the king. He said that the king's sickness could be cured only by a wonderful bird by the name of *Adarna*. When the king heard of this, he called Pedro, the eldest of his sons. He told him to look for the bird *Adarna*. Pedro was a proud prince. He obeyed the order of the king, thinking that

it would give him a chance to become admired by the people.

Prince Pedro started on his journey the following day in search of the *Adarna*. Before he could go very far, the prince met a beggar. This person was an old man, weak and dressed in rags. The beggar asked the prince for a piece of bread. But the prince did not want to be bothered by beggars. So he told the old man that he was not carrying a piece of bread with him, and added: "Do not bother me. I am on an important errand; and the end of my journey is yet far off." So Pedro hurried away, leaving the beggar in hunger.

But the beggar was God himself in disguise. He only wanted to test Pedro. God wanted to find out whether or not the prince was kind. Pedro failed to pass the test. He was thoughtless and selfish. As he went on he met a hermit, a man who lives in the mountains alone and spends his time in prayer and fasting. The hermit pointed to him the place where the bird could be found. He should go to one of those big trees, and on the branches of the biggest tree the *Adarna* was perched.

Prince Pedro arrived at the place where the tree was standing. It was then night time. Very soon he saw the *Adarna* flying around the tree. It was a beautiful bird, big and graceful. The prince waited for the bird to stop flying and to settle down on one of the branches. But while waiting, he became tired, so tired that he fell asleep. His sleep was sound. He dreamt that he was with the *Adarna* in his father's



palace. He saw himself surrounded by people admiring the great deed he had done in bringing back the bird which made his father well. While Pedro was resting in deep sleep, the *Adarna* sat on a branch just above his head. A feather fell from the body of the *Adarna*, hitting Pedro on the head. A strange thing happened. Pedro was turned into stone.

The king waited a long time for the arrival of Pedro. Days and, then, weeks passed. The king's condition grew worse and worse. Still Pedro did not appear. Nobody knew that he was changed into a piece of stone. At last the king sent his second son Diego. As Diego went out on his journey to look for the *Adarna*, the same thing happened to him as that which had happened to his elder brother Pedro. He met the beggar who asked him for a piece of bread. Diego did not want to be bothered by that old man. Hurrying to

the place where the *Adarna* could be found, he fell asleep under the tree and, like his brother Pedro, was also changed into stone.

The people in the palace were surprised that Diego had not come back. What was to be done? Pedro had not appeared anymore. Now it was Diego who failed to show up. The doctors said that in a few days the king would die. The good king had only one son left. He was Juan, the youngest of his children. The king was reluctant to send Juan. He was afraid that he would also lose him. But he took a chance. He called Juan and told him his doubts about sending him to look for the bird. But like a good and obedient son, Juan asked his father that he be allowed to go. "If I don't go, father, you



will surely die; but if I go, at least we will have a chance of making you live longer. So, please, let me go. I shall take good care of myself," Juan told the king.

The king was thus persuaded to let Juan try his luck. This young prince was a very kind person. He was thoughtful and he had a tender heart.

As Juan started on the journey, he saw the hungry beggar. Juan gave the old man not only a piece of bread but all the
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things which he was carrying with him. For all those things, the beggar thanked Juan and gave him a knife and a bottle of water. "When you see the *Adarna*," the beggar told him, "you will feel tired and sleepy. Do not fall asleep. With this knife cut small wounds on your arms, and then you can keep yourself awake. Thus you will be able to catch the *Adarna*."

Juan followed the instructions of the old man. When he reached the tree, he waited for the bird to settle on one of its branches. Then he climbed the tree and caught the *Adarna*. At the foot of the tree, Juan saw two big pieces of stones having the appearance of men. Juan knew that they were his brothers changed into stone. He took his bottle and poured its contents on the stones. Immediately his brothers recovered their human form. Instead of thanking Juan for saving them, they became jealous of him. They wanted to kill him.

When they reached the palace, the king became well at the sight of the bird. The evil plan of the two brothers was discovered by the king. He had them punished for it. When years afterwards his father died, Juan took his place. He became a good and wise king.