

**C**LEVERNESS is an admirable quality, especially when it is done with no malice and no insincerity. But Misfortune is clever, too. Even more cruel and unkind. Some say it is the devil's creation; It comes just as everything seems fine. Some say it is the devil's creation; others say it may be the creation of his colleague and contemporary. In Kikoy's case it was neither of the two assumptions. It was his own creation.

The southeast monsoon had been blowing since sundown. The

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The wind kept whistling on the wires. Kikoy mused on the story of the old ones. He scoffed at the silly superstition. He promised to return safe to his wife and children. Only two days ago his wife remonstrated him not to go because of the rumors of hardships met by

traders—Japanese boats combed the seas and coastal towns while guerrillas in the interior were inordinately strict on passes carried by merchants. There were stories of several Boholanos, who after eluding the Japanese, were liquidated by the Army as spies. But Kikoy was undaunted. Many times he had been down in life but he came out head first.

To Kikoy came back the words he consoled his wife with, "Don't be alarmed, Isang. This is the last time; after this no more of this risky business." He assured his wife his safe return and with the enormous profit from his rice and corn he would settle down in peace and devote his life to his family and  
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**He was lucky until his streak of luck ran out on him, and then . . .**

"Matulin" with its sails bulging with the wind, sprightly ploughing the dark blue waters, curtsied gently as it nosed its way against every wave. Now and then this lightsea-craft would shake from the stern to the prow when waves rolled under its belly causing the outrigger to flap and squeak in the air. Already a handful of scattered stars were blinking faintly like tiny pin-points across the dusky sky. Far ahead was the dim crest of the mountain squatting in the murky horizon. Kikoy listened to the whistle of the wind plucking the long tight guy wires that held the outriggers. Something in its sound made him apprehensive. The old ones used to say that when the wind blowing the ship's guy wires sounds like the whistle of a lad wailing home in the darkness, whistling louder to drown the loud thumping of his frightened heart so that the spirits watching him in the dark might think him unscared, it means that a foreboding evil may come upon anyone of the crew.

Kikoy smiled at the thought. How can nature foretell man's misfortunes? It is true that in many physical phenomena nature can give unmistakable signs of subsequent occurrences. Cirrus clouds mean line weather; cumulus clouds indicate an on-coming rain. Hot days mean cold evenings; the early chirping of crickets, a sunny day. But clouds and crickets act with the laws of nature. Unlike man they have no freedom. Man controls nature most of the time.

