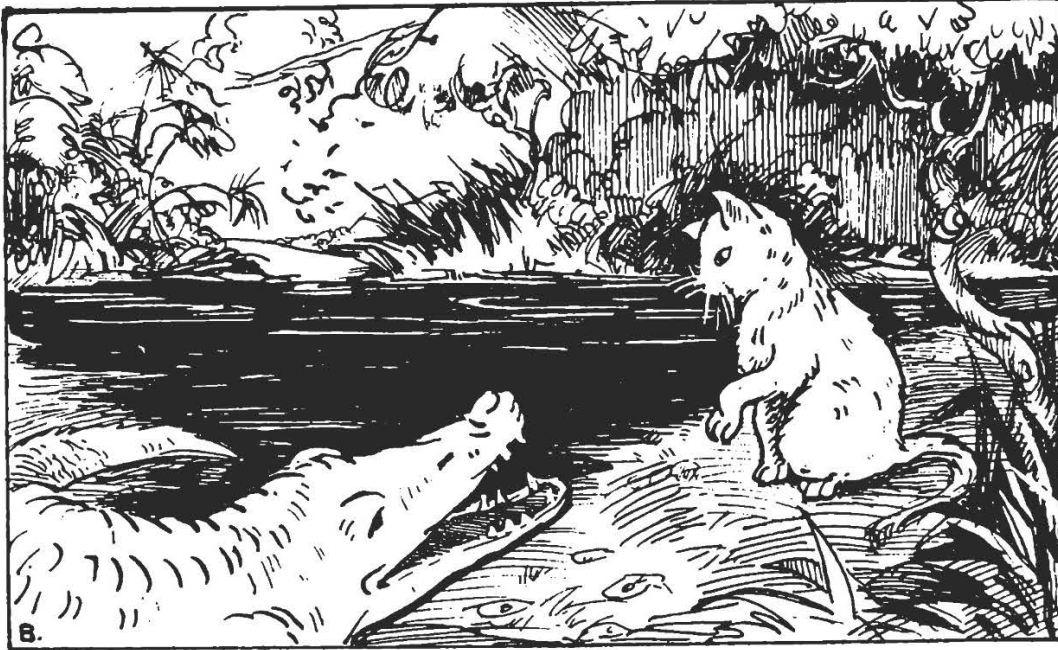


READING TIME FOR YOUNG FOLKS

How the Crocodile Learned to Hunt

(A Lanao Folk Tale)

By MAXIMO RAMOS *



"Friend Cat, how do you catch an animal?"

THE crocodile had just come into the world. He did not know yet how to secure his food. So he approached a dog and said, "My friend, please tell me how you catch an animal for food. I have not caught one for days now. My stomach is very empty."

"Well," replied the dog, "you are a crocodile and I am a dog. I am not sure that you will be able to catch an animal in the same way that I catch it. But I will tell you how I do. You see, I just rush at my prey, and when it

tries to run away, I run after it. When it is tired out, I catch it and eat it—that's all. Easy, isn't it?"

"Thank you, friend Dog," said the crocodile, who went away to try out what he had learned. He stopped at a shallow part of the lake near the bank, and lay in wait for whatever might come along. Soon he saw a man with a big bamboo tube across his shoulder. The man was coming to the lake to get water. "Now is my chance to eat a man," thought the crocodile.

Soon the man reached the water.

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(Please turn to page 73.)

**HOW THE CROCODILE
LEARNED TO HUNT**

(Continued from page 51)

The crocodile rushed at him. But he made so much noise in doing so that the man heard him, and of course he ran away, as any wise man would. He did not want to be eaten. The crocodile followed him as fast as he could. But the man threw away his bamboo tube and ran very, very fast. As he ran, he kept shouting for help, so that before he reached the village, he had attracted many people with his loud cries of "Help! Help!" The people rushed at the crocodile with great clubs and began to strike him. They struck him so hard that he ran back into the lake, but not before he had received a very severe beating. Instead of catching a man, he himself was almost captured.

For some days after this, the crocodile did not go out of his cave. The poor creature had no mother to give him anything to eat while he was getting well from his beating. So he recovered

very slowly from the injuries which he had received. He was very angry at the dog for his bad advice. He resolved that he would include dogs among the animals that he and his children and his children's children would eat.

When he became better, he went out once more to hunt for food. He tried to catch the animals that came his way, but he could not capture any of them. So he said to a cat whom he saw drinking at the edge of the lake, "Friend Cat, please tell me how you catch an animal for food."

The cat answered, "Just sit in a hidden place and wait there quietly for an animal to come along. Do not move until the animal is within easy reach. When he is near enough, jump at him and you will get him."

The crocodile thanked the cat and went way to hunt for food. He hid himself in a shallow part of the water near the shore where water plants grew. He lay in wait there without moving, and before long he saw a wild pig coming down to the water for a drink. He felt hungrier than ever when he saw the fat pig. He wanted to rush at him at once. He was so still that the pig did not see nor hear him, and even went into the water near the crocodile's hiding place, for it was noon and the day was warm. While the pig was enjoying his bath, the crocodile rushed upon him, knocked him down with his strong tail, and caught him with his

great jaws. He had a fine meal that day.

The crocodile went to the cat and thanked her for her good advice. "I will always remember what you told me, friend Cat," said the crocodile. "You have taught me how to hunt and catch animals. If it had not been for you, I would surely have starved to death, for I was unable to catch any animal for my food until I learned the trick from you. Now I shall always have plenty of food, thanks to your teaching, friend Cat. And as long as crocodiles live, they will never harm a cat."

So even today the crocodile uses the same method of securing his food. He hides himself among the water plants and waits for some animal to come near him. Sometimes, when there is no hiding place for him in the water, he floats down the river, pretending to be a piece of wood, or a log, so that his prey will not easily notice him. Then, when he is near enough, he springs upon the animal and catches him. Sometimes he knocks him over with his powerful tail.

To show his hatred for the dog who gave him bad advice, the crocodile still eats dogs whenever he can catch them. On the other hand, the crocodile does not harm a cat. At least that is the belief. He is still grateful to the animal who taught him how to secure his food.—Adapted by permission from Lanao Progress.

CROSS-WORD PUZZLE

