



## Full Text

### WHY DOGS WAG THEIR TAILS

Brought to you by Areté at Ateneo Basic Education, *Why Dogs Wag Their Tails*, from the Philippine Folk-Tales written by Clara Kern Bayliss, et al. and read for us by John Kevin S. Samson.

Once upon a time there lived in a certain pueblo a rich man who had a dog and a cat. His only daughter, of whom he was very fond, was studying in a convent in a city several miles distant and it was his custom, about once a week, to send the dog and cat

to take her a little present. The dog was so old that he had lost all his teeth, and so was unable to fight, but the cat was strong and very cunning, and so one could help the other, since the dog knew better how to find the way.

One day the rich man wished to send a magic ring to his daughter, so he called the dog and the cat to him. To the cat he said: “You are very cunning and prudent. You may carry this magic ring to my daughter, but be sure to take very great care of it.” To the dog he said: “You are to go with the cat to take a magic ring to my daughter. Take care not to lose the way, and see that no one molests the cat.” Both animals promised to do their best and set out immediately.

On the way they were obliged to cross a wide and deep river, over which there was no bridge, and as they were unable to find a boat, they determined to swim across it. The dog said to the cat: “Give me the magic ring.” “Oh, no,” replied the cat. “Did you not hear the master say just what each of us had to do?”

“Yes, but you are not very good at swimming, and may lose the ring, while I am strong and can take good care of it,” answered the dog. The cat continued to refuse to disobey its master, until at last the dog threatened to kill it, and it was obliged to entrust the ring to the dog’s keeping.

Then they began to swim across the river, which was so strong that they were about an hour in getting over, so that both became very tired and weak. Just before they came to the other side, the dog dropped the ring into the water, and it was impossible to find it. “Now,” said the cat, “we had better go back home and tell our master that

we have lost the ring.” “Yes,” answered the dog, “but I am very much afraid.” So they turned back toward home, but as they drew near the house his fear so overcame him that he ran away and was never seen again.

The master was very much surprised to see the cat back so soon, and asked him, “Where is your companion?” The cat was at first afraid to answer. “Where is the dog?” asked the master again. “Oh, he ran away,” replied the cat. “Ran away?” said the master. “What do you mean? Where is the ring?” “Oh, pardon me, my master,” answered the cat. “Do not be angry, and I will tell you what has happened. When we reached the bank of the river, the dog asked me to give him the ring. This I refused many times, until at last he threatened to kill me if I did not give it to him, and I was obliged to do so. The river was very hard to cross, and on the way the dog dropped the ring into the water and we could not find it. I persuaded the dog to come back with me to tell you about it, but on the way he became so frightened that he ran away.”

Then the master made a proclamation to the people, offering a reward to the one who should find his old dog and bring him to him. They could recognize the dog by his being old and having no teeth. The master also declared that when he had found the delinquent he would punish him by cutting off his tail. He ordered that the dogs all around the world should take part in the search, and so ever since that time, when one dog meets another he always asks: “Are you the old dog who lost the magic ring? If you are, your tail must be cut off.” Then instantly both show their teeth and wag their tails to mean no. Since that time, also, cats have been afraid of water, and will never swim across a river if it can be avoided.

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Source: Philippine Folk-Tales by Clara Kern Bayliss, Berton L. Maxfield, W. H. Millington, Fletcher Gardner, Laura Watson Benedict PDF (p.34-35)

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