



Illustration by Hubert Balonso Fucio

LAUAN

The Seed that Wanted to Fly

SYNOPSIS

Lauan is delighted with his new wings. With them, he imagines he can soar to great heights and find adventure in places that his mother Awi Yao can only dream of. However, Lauan is not a bird but a seed, and his curiosity about the winged creatures living on her mother's branches has further fueled his dreams of being able to touch the sky.

One day, Lauan's wish is granted: the winds carry him away to places strange and unknown. As he travels through the skies above to the forests below, he encounters mythical beings and fascinating creatures who will help him discover his true worth.

This is not only a touching story of loss and coming of age; it is also about the ways of nature and the life in the fabled forests of Mount Makiling.

Lauan, The Seed That Wanted To Fly

It was a very exciting day for little Lauan and his siblings. They have just sprouted their new pair of wings.

“Look, Mama, how majestic my wings are!” Lauan proudly showed them to Awiyao, his mother.

“I agree. They look very beautiful,” she told him.



Awiyao stood tall among the many trees in Mount Makiling. After all, she is one of the oldest and sturdiest trees in the forest.

Different animals have made homes in Awiyao’s body. On her tallest branches, the majestic Lawin and the watchful Ninok the owl built their nests on her bosom. Sometimes Alamid, a cat-like animal, rested on a hole in her trunk after eating lots of betel palm fruits.

Kuliglig and his fellow clung to her twigs during their choir sessions. Alupihan and Tukô have burrowed on the soil beneath her roots.

Life in the Makiling forest has always been generous to its inhabitants.



Awiyao was happy that her children have finally turned into mature fruits. The mature fruits sprout a pair of gliders, which allow the seeds to spiral downward to the ground.

But to Lauan, they are like the wings of Lawin and Ninok. Since he has matured into a fruit, he has always dreamt of flying, like the birds that live on his mother's branches.

"Oh Mama, I would like to touch the clouds in the sky," he once told his mother.

"Not a bad dream, my son," Awiyao touched Lauan's forehead. "But remember, Nature has made us earth-dwellers, so eventually, you will become part of the soil."

"But I don't want to be on the ground," he looked down below. "Look at all those insects crawling and those vines creeping all over you. I'm afraid that they would be all over me with their feet and tendrils."

Awiyao laughed at her son's quirky answer.

Once, the curious Lauan met Lawin, who is busy fixing her nest. She is about to lay her first egg and is carefully picking twigs.

"Hello, Lawin," she called her. "What majestic wings you have there! I want to have a pair like yours," he said.

"For what, my little Seed? Trees don't grow in the sky," Lawin answered.

"But my dream is to become a creature of the heavens," Lauan protested.

“Well, let’s see where that pair of wings will bring you,” Lawin chuckled as she finished cleaning her nest.



One day, Awiyao felt the strong monsoon winds shake her. While Lauan’s other siblings were shivering and nervous that they might fall, he was excited that this day had finally come. He shook himself off from the branches of his mother.

“Mama, this is the time,” he told her. “I’m ready to fly!”

With a strong nudge from the winds, he broke free from her clutches. His siblings soon followed, but Lauan was happiest of all, while they nervously jerked their flippers. The monsoon winds, Amihan and Habagat, played with Lauan as he danced and flapped his gliders.

A flock of Mayas saw the flying Lauan as the winds blew. “Is that a bird approaching us?” one Maya asked her fellow.

“Hello, fellow flyers,” Lauan flapped his gliders along with the flock. “Isn’t this a fine day for flying?” he prattled about.

The Mayas looked at each other and giggled. “This isn’t actually a good day for flying,” one Maya said, shivering from the cold.

“We’re looking for a good place to take shelter,” another Maya said, hopelessly flapping her wings.

After saying that, they dove toward the forest.



Lauan continued cavorting as Amihan and Habagat continued to play with him.

“Oh playful Winds, can you bring me closer to the clouds?” he asked them.

“You’re a nosy little thing, aren’t you? But we can’t come near, for Kidlat might wake up.”

Then Amihan and Habagat blew him so mightily that he soared upwards. Lauan was so happy that his heart beat fast as he spiraled toward the clouds. Soon, he was almost near. He thought his dreams are finally coming true.

As he approached the clouds, they weren’t as white and fluffy as he usually sees them. They have become grey and gloomy. Lauan heard rumbling and growling inside the clouds. He knocked on the cloud’s door many times, but he was shocked at the sight of a brilliant but angry creature.

“Who are you to disturb my abode?” Kidlat sharply looked at him.

“I can’t help but hear the noise inside the clouds. I want to know what’s inside,” Lauan innocently replied.

“Don’t you realize that I’m not in a good mood right now!” Kidlat pulled a burning spear and threw it in front of him.

Lauan was able to avoid the spear, but he was thrown away toward the direction of the winds. Amihan and Habagat were now scampering away from Kidlat as he started throwing bolts of burning spear after another.

“Look at what you’ve done,” they angrily told Lauan as they fled away. The burning spears poked the other clouds, which began leaking with streams and showers of water.

Lauan felt himself falling. Even if he flapped his wings, they couldn’t bring him upwards, now that the Amihan and Habagat were gone. He went round and round and round as he plunged, getting heavier as he went down. He wished to fall down on the arms of his mother Awiyao, but she was now far away from him. He also couldn’t see his siblings.

He found himself falling into the darkness of the wet forest.



Lauan fell straight onto the dark forest covering. Good thing his pair of gliders helped him land upright or it would have broken his shell. Bruised and tired, Lauan called out to his mother. But his voice could not escape the thickness of the forest.

For a long time he continued sitting on the wet soil. He cried and cried as the rain poured all over him.

He did not notice a little root slowly sprouting on his side, clinging to the earth where he sat. Lauan continued calling to his mother and siblings, but the answers he got were from the Kuligligns and the Tipaklongs, as they gleefully tried to out-sing each other’s groups.

Soon, the precious wings which he loved fell off. But he didn't care anymore, since he realized they weren't the best wings for flying. He sometimes felt a Higad crawl on his head and he gets queasy.

Soon, the itch on his head was caused not by the insects, but by the vibrant green leaves now growing on his head.



Day and night, he looked towards the sky. He wished to be beside his mother but his loneliness slowly disappeared.

Soon he grew familiar with the singing of the Kuligligns and the crawling of Alupihan and his one hundred legs. He started to enjoy the company of the Higads, who later transformed into colorful butterflies and large moths. He made friends with the beautiful Kapa-Kapa, who always pranced about her beautiful magenta leaves and flowers, and the Kasupangil, who taught him to sing his "do, re, mi" notes. He enjoyed the water falling from the leaves of the Almaciga and the Kamagong who delighted in taking care of him.

Lauan forgot all about the memory of his pair of gliders and his trip to the sky. He was no longer a seed but a sapling, growing robustly under the care of the creatures on the forest floor.



Many years have passed and Lauan is now a sturdy grown-up tree. He has grown so handsomely among the other trees in the forest. He finally saw his mother Awiyao, who still stood majestically, the oldest among the trees. He also saw some of his brothers, now as tall as he has been. The part of the forest where he grows has been converted into a big botanical garden. Many people, especially children, come and visit them to learn more about nature and taking care of the mountain and its creatures.

Lauan is happy even if he no longer has the pair of wings he once loved. He is, after all, in good company with the forest creatures and the humans who take care of them. Up in the slopes of Mount Makiling, he can still touch the clouds whenever they get too heavy with rain, and the sun above gently dries him after each shower. [END]

NOTES:

Lauan. A dipterocarp tree also known as Philippine mahogany or Lawaan (*Shorea teysmanniana*), priced as a timber but is a critically vulnerable species.

Kapa-kapa. A Philippine native epiphyte (*Medinilla magnifica*) that has become rare in its native habitat; when it blooms, it develops a crown of pink to coral-red bracts (brightly coloured leaves) that resemble a cape, hence the name.

Kasupangil. Also known as Musical Note, Morning Kiss, Clerodendron or Witches Tongue (*Clerodendrum incisum Macrosiphon*), it is a small bushy shrub with small leaves, its budding white unopened flowers resembling musical notes.

Almaciga. A Philippine native evergreen tree (*Agathis philippinensis*) also known as Philippine rubber tree, whose resin is used to make varnish or lacquer.

Kamagong. A Philippine native ironwood tree (*Diospyros blancoi*) now critically endangered in the Philippines; its fruits, covered in fine, velvety fur is known as Mabolo or Velvet Apple.