The Ocean and the Salt Maker

A Filipino Folktale
Retold by: Erlex U. Hermogino

Long before the ocean was salty, there lived a man named Pedro. He was very poor and had no money. He would go to the market to beg for food and promised one day to repay his credit.

One day, he rowed his boat across the clear white waters of the Philippines to a small island. There, he found an old machine. "I wonder what this machine is for," wondered Pedro. "I believe I can make something off of this." The machine had a spout much like a faucet but there were no other holes. It was rusty and covered with dirt. As he rubbed and cleaned the machine, smoke started to come out of the spout, along with a genie.

Pedro was scared at first, until the genie spoke. "Magandang umaga, Pedro," greeted the genie. "You have called on me. I am a genie salt maker. I can grind salt for you and your family. The next time you rub your new machine, I will grind salt for you. However, do not be greedy with your salt. Share the salt with your family and village mates," explained the genie. "One more thing--You must not remove your new machine from this island. If you do, you will pay the consequences."

The next day, Pedro came back to the island with three large buckets. He rubbed the machine and salt started gushing out. He placed the bucket right below the spout to catch the freshly ground salt. As he finished with the last bucket, the machine stopped. The genie knew when to stop grinding.

Later that day, Pedro took the salt home to his family. They used it for cooking and other things. He thought, "I can make money by selling salt to my village mates. But, I do not like traveling back and forth to that island. It's such a long way from here."

The next day, Pedro thought of taking the machine home so he could grind the salt and sell it at the market. Although he knew that he might face a consequence, greed filled his heart. "I will finally be rich by selling salt!" he shouted.
As soon as Pedro arrived at the island, he carried the heavy machine onto his boat. Right when he placed the machine down, he heard a voice. "You must not remove your machine from this island," said the genie. However, Pedro ignored the genie and continued on his way. As he rowed home, smoke started to come out of the machine. The genie appeared and Pedro stopped rowing. "You have disobeyed me. You will now face the consequence," said the genie, as he vanished, never to return to the machine. But, just then Pedro's machine started grinding salt. "What kind of consequence is this? By the time I reach the market place, my boat will be filled with salt. I will sell all the salt in my boat and I will have more money that I can ever imagine!" exclaimed Pedro.

The machine kept grinding salt and would not stop. Pedro started to worry because he was only halfway to the market place and was still in the middle of the clear white ocean water. "Oh no! Stop grinding! The boat will sink! Genie, I ask of you to stop grinding!" he shouted. But, the genie would not listen to Pedro's frantic cries for help and the machine would not stop grinding.

The machine kept grinding salt. It filled Pedro's boat with Pedro in it. His feet and body were covered with salt. He could not move. Suddenly, the boat started sinking. It sank into the clear ocean water with Pedro trapped in his boat. He drowned and died, but the machine kept grinding salt at the bottom of the ocean.

It has been many years since Pedro's heart was filled with greed. He faced his consequence and everybody has heard of what happened to Pedro and his machine. Even now, the machine hasn't stopped grinding salt underwater. That is why today the ocean is salty.

"Magandang umaga" means "Good Morning" in Tagalog, the official language of the Philippines.

About the author: My name is Erlex U. Hermogino. People know me by the name "Rex." I was born in Candelaria, Zambales in the Philippines on October 8, 1975. I am the youngest in the family. I have two twin brothers and one older brother (kuya), and two older sisters (ate). My family moved to Guam on April 14, 1983. Since then, I grew up here learning a lot about anything and everything. My hobbies are music and computers.

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