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Kakhuigai

Once upon a time, there lived a woman in a lonely village. She was expecting a baby soon. But her husband had died before she delivered her child. One day, with a *sham* on her head, she went out to pick flowers and collect some firewood. On the way, she met a huge python. She was frightened. She could not move because of fear. The python was also surprised to see a human being. Neither the widow nor the python moved for some time. A little later, the widow broke the silence, “O great python, I am a helpless woman. I cannot even hunt animals. If I had been a man I would have fought you.”



Then she pleaded, “Let the child I am going to bear be a boy. When he grows up, he will fight you. Let his name be called Kakhuigai. When the time comes I’ll bring him to you. Please wait till that time.”

The python felt pity for the widow. It decided to wait for the time. The widow folded a piece of cloth and gave it to the python to lay its head on. The python crawled and rested its head on the folded cloth. The widow came back home happily.

After a few days, the widow went to the spot to check whether the python was still there. To her surprise, she found that it was still there. Days and months passed and the widow finally gave birth to a son. The child was called Kakhuigai. As the child grew up, the widow secretly went to see the python. It was still waiting for the boy to grow up and fight him. She thanked the python and said, “O revered python, with your blessings I have given birth to a son. His name is Kakhuigai. He is growing up. Please wait till he grows into a young man. When the time comes, I’ll bring him to you.”

Years passed. Kakhuigai grew into a strong young man. One day, his mother called him and narrated the story of her encounter with the python. She told him about the promise that she had made to the python. Kakhuigai felt sad. Seeing this, the widow said lovingly, “Kakhuigai, my dear son, don’t worry. Consider yourself lucky. It is not an ordinary python; it is a spirit. You will not go alone. I will request the entire village to go with you. You will be accompanied by your kinsmen, uncles and cousins. We will take gifts and other

offerings to the spirit. It will bless you.” Assured by his mother, Kakhuigai felt happy.

From that day onwards, the widow brewed wine. She took the wine to the village elders and requested them to accompany her son when he went to meet the python. The villagers decided to catch the python soon. Next morning, the widow and her son prepared the offerings – crushed ginger, sprouted paddy, herbs and wine. Along with the villagers they approached the python. The widow spoke, “O great python, I have brought my son along with offerings for you. Please accept them.” Kakhuigai made the offerings, spread a large piece of cloth over the python’s head and prayed loudly, “O revered python, please lead me home.” The python slowly raised its head and started to lead Kakhuigai and his mother. They were followed by the villagers. When they reached the outskirts of the village, the python showed Kakhuigai the ***Pakhang-phan*** meant for the young unmarried males and the ***Leisa-phan*** meant for the young unmarried females. Initiating the rites, the python raised its head on a block of wood placed by the young man. Then, Kakhuigai lifted its head with a pair of wooden tongs and prayed to show him the spot to lay his sword. Soon, the python showed him the spot. Kakhuigai beheaded the python and split its belly with a sharp knife. Inside its belly, he found a magic box. Finishing the rituals, the python was cut into seven parts, cooked and eaten with a lot of merrymaking in the entire village. Its head was hung on the threshold of Kakhuigai’s home.

Because of the magic box, Kakhuigai grew richer day by day. He became a wealthy man and soon married the village chief's daughter. The following year, his wife gave birth to a son. He was named Galsungsung. A few years later, Kakhuigai's mother died. Soon, the magic box became an object of envy and all his relatives tried to steal it. They poisoned his family's food. Kakhuigai, his wife and child began to suffer from many diseases. Soon, Kakhuigai and his family died leaving the magic box behind.

But all his relatives fought over the box. It fell down on the ground and broke into pieces.

- A Kabui folk tale retold

GLOSSARY

python	:	a large serpent commonly found in forests
pleaded	:	requested
crawled	:	moved slowly on the belly
revered	:	respectable
encounter	:	meeting
brewed	:	made wine
crushed	:	made into very small pieces
sprouted	:	started to show new leaves and buds

Pakhang-phan

- and *Leisa-phan* : separate dormitories for unmarried young males and females respectively
- initiating : introducing, beginning
- tongs : a tool with two long parts, joining at one end, and used for lifting things
- beheaded : cut off the head
- threshold : the floor or ground beneath the doorway, entrance

COMPREHENSION

I. Answer the following questions:

1. What would the widow do when Kakhuigai grew up?
2. What did the widow give to the python and what did the python do?
3. What did the widow say to Kakhuigai when she found him sad?
4. What did the villagers decide to do?
5. How did Kakhuigai pray to the python as he made the offerings?

6. What did Kakhuigai find inside the python's belly?
7. How did the villagers finish the ritual?
8. How did Kakhuigai become a rich man?
9. What did Kakhuigai's relatives try to do?
10. What finally happened to the magic box?
11. Write how Kakhuigai's family suffered because of the magic box.

2. *Read the passage and answer the following questions:*

Abraham Lincoln spent his boyhood days in poverty. There was no schooling for him. He educated himself slowly and with difficulty in the little time he could snatch from work on his father's farm. But he was a person of strong determination. At last he became a lawyer. He travelled throughout the country and knew men and their ways of thinking. He loved justice and stood for truth. He even opposed his friends who supported injustice and dishonesty. He never defended any case if he did not believe in the justice of the cause.

a. *(Now answer the questions in one sentence each)*

- (i)** Under what condition did Abraham Lincoln spend

his boyhood days?

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(ii) Was there proper schooling for Abraham Lincoln?

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(iii) What kind of person was Abraham Lincoln ?

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(iv) What did Abraham Lincoln become at last ?

.....

(v) What did he love ?

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(vi) How did Abraham Lincoln know men and their ways of thinking ?

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b. (Answer the questions in about 20-25 words each)

(i) How did Abraham Lincoln educate himself in his boyhood days ?

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(ii) How did he work as a lawyer ?

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