


Stories from Around the World

COVER
NOT FINAL

MYTHICAL TALES

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So Tepeu and Gukumatz spoke more words and suddenly the seas and rivers were full of fish and other creatures, flashing silver under the water.

"Yes, more!" the Creators shouted.

Out of the mountains walked four-legged mammoths, while lizards and crocodiles slithered from shores and valleys.

"More!" they cried.

In the trees birds swooped and called, in every size and colour. When they had finished, the Creators spoke to their creations.

"Creatures of the Earth! You live because of our words! Now, raise your voices and speak to us!"

The animals raised their voices. The new air filled with braying, twittering, honking, clicking, bellowing, quacking, roaring and trumpeting.

But those were not the words Tepeu and Gukumatz were hoping for.

"NO no, speak WORDS! Say – "Tepeu, Gukumatz, creators, we praise you!" they cried.

The animals increased their volume, but they could not form the words. Tepeu and Gukumatz were angry. "If you can't speak our names, we will make other beings – and YOU will all be their servants!"

So, the two gods tried again. They searched the new world, lit by moon and stars, collected mud and clay from the riverbeds and spoke again.

"Clay, form and grow and bring forth people!"

The Clay obeyed – it shaped and formed itself into beings that stood on two legs, had two arms, hands, shoulders, and heads with hair, eyes facing forward.

"People of the Clay! You live because of our words. Now, raise your heads to the sky, lift your voices and speak to us!" ordered Tepeu and Gukumatz.

But there was a problem with these beings too. The clay was soft and fragile, and none of these new beings could turn their heads or open their mouths without breaking.

"These people cannot do what we need them to. We must try again."

So, Tepeu and Gukumatz spoke the words to undo what they had made – and the first rain fell and washed the clay away. But it didn't wash away the new trees.

"Ah, so wood is a much better building material!" they agreed.

"Wood, carve yourself and bring forth people!" they spoke.

And the wood obeyed. The shapes that emerged from the wood stood straight and tall against the green grass and grey mountains. These new people woke up, walked the earth heard its sounds, and spoke to each other. But when Tepeu and Gukumatz commanded them to speak, they seemed not to hear. Not one head raised! Not one word of praise for their creators!

"We must try again," the Creators said.

So, they ordered those beings into the trees, to chatter and swing and play. Then, as the sun peeped golden over the horizon for the first time, Gukumatz and Tepeu had their best idea yet.

"Those high ears of corn growing out of the ground in white, brown and gold, let's make our beings from those!" They mixed the corn with oil and water, and once again spoke the words of creation. One by one, these new beings – people – came to life, and the first thing they did, without being asked, was raise their heads to the sky and called out thanks to their creators.

"We have done well," declared Gukumatz and Tepeu. "These people will do nicely. The world belongs to us, and we belong to its people! They will never see past the horizon as we can, and that will inspire them. May they move towards it in their dreams and with their own creations!"

We did, and we still do.