

**The chicken and the wildcat, a matter of comparing mouths.**

*Told by Yang Xiu-gong.*

They tell a story that once upon a time, there was a family of chicken. One day father chick said to mother chick, "I must go out digging, you stay at home and prepare breakfast, and at breakfast time bring mine out to me, please". Presently mother chick prepared breakfast and carried it out for father chick to eat. As she was going along the road she met the wildcat. The wildcat said, "What are you doing?" Mother chick said, "Father chick has gone digging and I am taking him his breakfast". The wildcat said, "Well, let us two compare mouths and see who has the bigger. If my mouth is the bigger I shall eat you, if your mouth is bigger then you can eat me". The wildcat went on, "Now you open your mouth and I will ease my head inside. If you can hold my head in your mouth you shall eat me". So mother chick opened her mouth for the wildcat to ease his head in, but mother chick's mouth not being very big, the wildcat's head would not go in. The wildcat said to mother chick, "My head will not go in. Now I will open my mouth, you ease your head in". So the wildcat opened his mouth and mother chick eased her head in, and it went right inside the wildcat's mouth. The wildcat took mother chick and dragged her to the foot of the cliff and ate her there.

Father chick went on digging until breakfast time, but there was no sign of mother chick bringing his breakfast, so father chick returned home and asked the children, "What did your mother go out to do?" The little chicks replied, "Mother has taken your breakfast out to you". Father chick said, "Your mother did not arrive. If she came out with my breakfast and I did not meet her on the way back, then she must have met the wildcat, and the wildcat has caught and eaten her. You stay at home while I go and look for her".

While father chick was going to look for mother chick, he first met the rope. The rope said, "Father chick, what are you going out to do?" Father chick replied, "Mother chick has disappeared, and I am going to look for her". The rope said, "I will go with you to look". The two of them went on and met the washing dolly. The washing dolly said, "What are you two going out to do?" They replied, "Mother chick has disappeared, and we are going to look for her". The washing dolly said, "I will go with you to look". They went on and met the needle, the cow dung and the acorn who all said, "We will go with you to look".

They went on and came to the foot of the cliff. When they saw the chicken feathers in the middle of the space at the bottom of the cliff, they knew that it was here that the wildcat had eaten mother chick. Next they searched and found the wildcat's hole, and this is what they did. The rope tied up the washing dolly over the entrance of the hole. The cow dung lay on the ground to be stepped on. The needle hid beside the fire and the acorn hid in the fireplace. Then father chick went inside the hole to lure the wildcat out. The wild cat ran into the middle of the hole, slipped on the cow dung and fell down. He got up and went to blow the fire. The acorn came out and rapped him on the head, which made him sit down on the ground. At this the needle pricked him so that he got up and ran outside. Then the washing dolly swung down and struck him on the head. So the wildcat was killed.