

M422
The man's great feat.

Told by Yang Xiu-gong.

Once upon a time old man tiger, old man bear, old man wild boar, old man thunder, old man rabbit, old man fox and old man wild cat were going to perform their feats of strength up in a pass. They happened to meet old man Miao and compelled him to go with them and perform to see whose feat was the greatest. Old man Miao had no option, so he went with them and arrived at the pass.

First they made old man tiger perform. Old man tiger roared until he shook the forest, and bounded splitting and crashing among the trees and the rocks. Everyone praised him and said, "Aye! Old man tiger is strong, strong indeed!"

Then they made old man bear perform. Old man bear bounded with great alacrity, climbing the trees and bending the forest together to form a nest in the trees. Then he leapt down to the ground with a crash, and he growled, "beu!" until the forest swayed. Everyone praised him and said, "Aye! Old man bear is strong, strong indeed!"

Then they made old man wild boar perform his feat. Old man wild boar, thrusting with his snout as he went, tore up the roots of the trees until the trees and rocks were lifted and thrown aside. Then grunting, "Nkheu-nkheu!" he ran through the forest undergrowth, blowing it apart as he went. Everyone praised him and said, "Aye! Old man wild boar is strong, strong indeed!"

Then they made old man thunder perform. Old man thunder rose up and belched into the sky. The clouds billowed up until it grew dark, the wind swayed the trees, the rain came in torrents and the water gurgled in the gullies. Then old man thunder belched again and the sky grew bright and clear. Everyone praised him commenting, "Oo-hu! Old man thunder is strong, strong indeed!"

Then they made old man rabbit perform. Old man rabbit ran and hopped up over there and squeaked, "pi-li!" and ran back here and squeaked, "pi-li!" Everyone commented "Oh dear! Old man rabbit! What a waste of time!" Then they made old man fox perform. Old man fox ran over there and barked, "ghao-ghao!" and ran here and barked, "ghao-ghao!" Each one said, "Oh dear! Old man fox! What a weakling!" Then they made old man wild cat perform. Old man wild cat just went over there and mewed, "niao!" and came back here and mewed, "niao!" Everyone said, "Oh dear! Old man wild cat! What an utter weakling!"

When they had finished performing they said to the Miao man, "This time it is your turn. Perform, and be quick about it!" Old man Miao took out his flint and steel, and he rolled a small piece of tinder. He struck until the sparks flew in all directions, and he said, "You go up into the hill above, and wait there and see what I will bring you". They commented, "Oo! That little, tiny old man Miao there, what is he going to do? Let us go on ahead up the hill and see what he brings". When they had all gone the Miao man struck sparks and caught them on the tinder, which he blew gently among some grass until it flamed up. He took this and set fire right around the foot of the hill. The forest crackled when the flames caught it, and the smoke came billowing up. They said, "He is coming! He is coming!" In a very short time the flames reached the place where

they were. They fled, but could not escape, they ran, but could get nowhere. Thunder rose and fled up into the sky, but old man tiger with old man bear, old man wild boar, old man rabbit, old man fox and old man wild cat, in forcing a way out together had their coats all scorched by the flames.