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The Miao man's good scheme for marrying a sky-maiden.

Told by Yang Xiu-gong.

They tell a story that, once upon a time, there was a Miao man who went out farming. A bevy of sky-maidens flew down to bathe in the water pool in the middle of his land, and he wanted to find some way of taking one of them to be his wife. So, the next day he brought a large carrying basket and hid himself under it there beside the water. He watched until the sky-maidens came to bathe and then looked to see which one was the prettiest. When he had looked well he went quietly and took the wings of the one that was very good and hid them. Then he rushed out and surprised the sky-maidens. Each took her own wings and flew away into the sky. Having no wings, only that one who was very good could not fly away, so she had no option but to come with the Miao man and be his wife.

After a long time the sky-maiden and the Miao man had two fine big sons. Every day the Miao man made her work out of doors while he remained at home, but one day, the Miao man had to go out to work and leave his wife to look after the children at home. This day the boys wanted their mother to let them have the things to play with that they had every day, but she did not know what it was they wanted. They could not yet talk but only raised their hands upwards. Their mother looked up and saw that on the shelf there was a covered, flat basket. She took it down and looked and saw her wings inside. Their mother took the wings and gave the boys each a wing feather, and told them, "When you two have grown up come and seek me in the sky". Having said this their mother flew away.

Time passed and when the two had grown up, they took the wings their mother had given them, put them on their arms and flew up to the sky in search of her. When they arrived at their grandfather's household, their grandfather sought all manner of ways to put them to the test. On the first occasion their grandfather took them out and scattered millet for them to pick up. They went and told their mother, who said, "Do not worry, I can find a way to help you pick it up". She released the pigeons to go and pick it up. They pecked until not a single grain remained. Their grandfather said, "Indeed, you are truly my grandsons".

On the next occasion their grandfather wanted to test them by taking them out to burn the scrub. So the two of them went and said to their mother, "Grandfather wants to take us out to burn the scrub, what ought we to do?" Their mother said, "You go and find a hole in the rocks. If you go and stay inside, there is nothing to fear". Their grandfather took them out and made them go into the middle of the forest while he began to burn off the scrub from the lower side. When it was all burnt off their grandfather called to them and they answered him. Their grandfather said, "So you are truly my grandsons".

On the last occasion, their grandfather wanted to take them out for hide and seek. They went and told their mother. Their mother said, "When you go with your grandfather, and he goes and hides, if, on the way, you see a water buffalo, go and stroke it and say, "Our grandfather is here, our grandfather is here!" The two of them went off with their grandfather. Their grandfather went and turned into a water buffalo in the marsh.

When they saw him they said, “Our grandfather is here, our grandfather is here!” Then their grandfather said, “You are truly my kin, you are truly my grandsons”.