

M456
The sky maiden.

Told by Yang Ya-go.

Once there was a Miao man who went and scooped out a pool for water, and every day he drove his cattle there to drink. One day his water pool was all muddy and he said, "What has been stirring my water pool and making it all muddy?" There was a child who told him that something flew from the sky and stirred it, so one day he hid and watched. ... He looked for the pretty one, and took away her wings. Then he came out and surprised them. They all flew off except the pretty one who could not find her wings. The Miao man said, "What are you looking for?" The pretty one said, "I am not looking for anything". The Miao man said, "If you are willing to become my wife, I will tell you". So the pretty one went home with the Miao man and became his wife.

In time they had two small sons. Every day the mother went out farming while the father remained at home, but one day, the mother remained at home while the father went out farming. The two sons were crying, and at the same time raising their hands toward the shelf. Their mother gave them all kinds of things, but they wanted none of them. Then she went and opened the covered basket and saw her wings. She took her wings, pulled them on to her body and flew away. She said to her two sons, "The day will come when you will grow big, then you may come and follow me". The mother flew over where the father was, and her shadow passed by. The father said, "May the spear take those two sons, for they have eaten their mother".

The two sons lived on until they had grown up. They then wanted to go in search of their mother. They went to spend the night with a very wealthy Yi family. When they had gone to bed the Yi family were discussing, "We have two fine guests staying with us here today, what should we kill to entertain them?" Now the Yi family had raised three geese. ... The geese said, "Kill the mother goose, then pity the little goose. Kill the father goose, then pity the mother goose". ... The two sons said, "We will not eat you but we want you to show us the way". The geese told them, "When you arrive yonder at the pass, if you see a troop of horses coming, with the leading one rippling with fat, do not ride it. Coming after there will be one which is plastered all over with manure, you two ride the one that comes after. Having reached the pass the bigger brother, not heeding the instructions, saw the very good horse and deliberately rode it, but that good horse bit his forehead and crushed it. ... The younger brother killed the gi-zhw birds. The heads of the little ones were crushed, but the mother bird picked lily leaves and placed them on the little birds' heads and they came back to life. The younger brother then copied the mother bird. He went and picked lily leaves and placed them on his elder brother's forehead, and his elder brother came back to life. The two of them went once again to the pass and waited, and once again the troop of horses came. They jumped up and rode the horse which was all plastered with manure. ... The two called "Mother, Mother". Their mother said, "I do not remember having any sons like these". But their aunt said, "Since you went and married on earth, I am afraid you have!" Their mother looked at them again and knew that they were indeed her sons, and took them home.

When they arrived at their grandfather's house, their grandfather said, "If you are indeed my grandsons I shall hide and you may seek. If you find me then you are truly my grandsons". Their grandfather went and changed into a pig thrusting with its snout.

They said to their mother, "If grandfather hides for us to seek, what shall we do?" Their mother said, "Don't worry! If you see a pig thrusting with its snout, you call out, 'Grandfather is there. Grandfather is there!'" ... Their grandfather said, "You are truly my grandsons, but I will hide once more". He then changed into a buffalo. The two said to their mother, ----- Their mother said, "Don't worry! If you see a buffalo lying down chewing the cud, you say, 'Grandfather is there! Grandfather is there!'" So they went and found him.

Their grandfather then made the two go and hide. They went and told their mother, "Grandfather wants us two to go and hide, what shall we do?" Their mother said, "Don't worry!" She took and changed them, one into a spoon and the other into a block. Their grandfather searched thoroughly but could not find them. He searched until he was hungry and took the spoon to dip up food to eat. The spoon said, "Ha, ha!" like this, "I am here, Grandfather". Their grandfather said, "Thanks to some crafty boulder!" Their grandfather then wanted to take the block to sit on. The block laughed, "Ha, ha! I am here, Grandfather!" Their grandfather said, "Thanks to some crafty boulder!"

Their grandfather wanted to take them clearing the undergrowth. They said, "Grandfather wants to take us clearing the undergrowth. What shall we do, Mother?" Their mother said, "Don't worry! When each of you has made several axe strokes then go and sleep quietly". The two slept and woke up, and all the undergrowth was completely cleared. Their grandfather then wanted to take them to burn off the undergrowth. They said to their mother, "Grandfather wants to take us to burn off the undergrowth. What shall we do?" Their mother said, "Don't worry! When grandfather takes you there, in the middle of the brushwood is a water hole. You two go down inside". Their grandfather burned off the undergrowth completely, and then called them, and the two grandsons came out.

Their grandfather wanted to take them to sow millet. He wanted one "lu" one "dyu" of millet sown, so the two said to their mother, ----- . "Don't worry!" Their mother said, "You need sow only three handfuls each, then have a quiet sleep". When they got up to look the sowing was completely finished. Having got back to the house their grandfather wanted them to collect up again the whole one "lu" one "dyu" of millet seed. The two said to their mother, ----- . "Don't worry!" Their mother said, "When you have gone out collect a few grains from the four corners of the land and put them into the container. Then," she said, "you two whistle". As they whistled the wild pigeons arrived and collected up all the millet until it filled the container completely. They carried it home and arrived even before people had had their morning meal. Their grandfather took the bushel to measure it, and there was a little missing in one corner. Their grandfather said, "It is not enough". They went to their mother and asked her, "What ought we to do, there is a little missing?" Their mother said, "Take the crossbow, go and shoot the pigeon in the tree outside the door". Having shot the pigeon they cut open its crop and took the seed and it filled the bushel. Their grandfather said, "You are indeed my grandsons, you are indeed my grandsons".

The two said, "Grandfather, we want to take our mother and go ..."