

M458
The Miao lad and the bat.

Told by Yang Xiu-gong.

They tell a story that once upon a time there was a Miao family. The father had died, and there remained only the mother and a grown-up son. Every day the son went out minding the cattle. One day he saw a bat hanging in a tree. He went and took it and brought it home. Every day at meal times the lad took food for it to eat in the dog's feeding bowl. On one occasion the lad said, "I am going to give this bat of mine a food bowl from which to eat". His mother said, "That bat is most revolting, you must not give it a food bowl". But from then on the lad gave the bat food to eat in a food bowl.

Every day he took the bat with him minding the cattle. On one occasion the people who were with him minding cattle said to him, "Lad, what a pretty girl you have brought with you minding the cattle!" The lad said, "You are joking! There is only a bat minding cattle with me". Those folk said, "If you do not believe us, you hide away quietly and see". So the time came when the lad hid and watched. He saw the bat there change into a very pretty girl. In the evening he reached home, had his evening meal and went to bed. The lad made as though he was heavily asleep. The bat took off its bat skin and lay down with the lad. The lad waited until the bat was asleep, then he took the bat skin and hid it. When the next day came the girl could not find her bat skin, and so could not change back into a bat. She was ashamed to come out. The lad's mother went to fetch her, and presently she came out and became the lad's wife.

Not long afterwards the lad and his wife went out farming, while the lad's mother remained at home. The lad's mother went and found his wife's bat skin which she used to wear. The lad's mother took it to burn on the fire. The lad's wife knew that someone was burning her skin, and she ran home. It was not yet fully burnt so she came and took the skin, and smoothed and smoothed it, and eventually smoothed it out completely so that now it was as good as before. Another day the lad and his wife went out farming. This day they were a long way from home. The lad's mother again took the wife's bat skin to burn it. This time when the wife ran home the skin was burnt right up, and so the lad's wife died.