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Two Miao lads who caught flat fish.

Told by Yang Xiu-gong.

People tell a story that once upon a time there were two Miao lads who went fishing. As they went they saw a log of firewood by the riverbank in a pool of water. They said, "Let us go and lift up that log of firewood, let it dry and carry it home to burn". Having said this they set to and lifted the log of firewood from the pool and stood it on end on the bank. The log of firewood said to them, "My two brothers, do not carry me away to burn, but you take these two flat fish which you have caught today. Do not roast and eat them, but put them in your water butt and look after them". They listened to the words of the log of firewood, and when they returned home the smaller lad did as the log of firewood told them to do. He took his fish home and looked after it in the water butt, but the bigger lad took his fish home and threw it on the fire to roast and eat it, but the fish jumped out of the fire. So the lad said, "My friend is looking after his, I also will take mine and look after it". Not long afterwards the two fish changed into two Miao girls. One was very pretty, but the other had scars on her face. Now the bigger lad wanted the one who was very good looking, but the smaller lad said to him, "How is it that you want the good looking one? When you brought yours home you threw her into the fire and burnt her and caused the scars. You should take the one with the scars and go along". The bigger lad could do nothing about it so he took the one with the scars.

Now the smaller lad worked very hard indeed and had food to eat, but the bigger lad had no thought but to go hunting every day, and so he became very poor. Accordingly he grew angry with the smaller one, because he was well off and had a good-looking wife. On one occasion he said to the younger lad, "I saw in the valley yonder a number of porcupines. I will take you to hunt them". The smaller lad said to him, "Good, I will go with you to hunt them". The bigger lad said, "You go up over the hill and keep watch, while I come and drive them up from the valley". The younger lad came up over the hill while the bigger lad came round the bottom of the valley, setting fire to the brushwood so that it burned, climbing upwards. The younger lad seeing the fire climbing up the hill, ran away, and was not burned, so that he reached home first. Later the bigger lad returned. He came and asked, "Has my friend come back?" The younger lad's wife replied, "Yes, and has had time to have his meal".

Some days later the bigger lad went and saw that there was a very deep pothole in a valley. He intended to trick the younger lad into falling into the hole. Accordingly he gathered leaves and covered it carefully. When he returned home he went and said to his younger friend, "I have seen in the valley yonder there is a herd of wild pigs. Let me take you to hunt them today". His younger friend said, "Let's do so", and the bigger lad took the smaller to the place where had carefully covered the pot hole with leaves. "The wild pigs are there, you go and drive them out, while I stay here and kill them". The smaller lad ran over and trod on the mouth of the hole as the bigger lad had arranged, and fell in. He fell down but he was not killed.

One day while he was in the hole a pig drover drove a herd of pigs past the mouth of the hole. He called to the Chinese man and said, "My friend the pig drover, business is very good indeed here, it is easy to make money. You break off some of the creeper there, knot it together, and come and pull me out, then you come here and do business". When the pig drover heard this he went and did as the lad had told him. He broke off a

lot of creeper, tied it together properly, let it down and pulled the lad who was in the hole out. When the lad who had been in the hole got out he let the pig drover down into the hole, then he took the drover's pigs, drove them away and sold them and carried the money home.

The lad who had previously deceived him came and saw that he had a great deal of silver, so he said to the smaller lad, "How did you get such a lot of silver?" He replied, "That place I went to is very rich. Now I have come back I should like to take you all there, but I want to rest for a few days yet". The bigger lad, when he heard these words, set his heart on going to search for silver. So he made proper preparations. First he made sure which hole it was that originally he had caused that lad to fall into, then he ran and dropped into the hole. After this every thing was counted as belonging to the younger lad.