

**M472**  
**The foolish kha woman.**

*Told by Yang Xiu-gong.*

They tell a story that once upon a time there was a Miao family. Father and son went out ploughing, and when mother had got the morning meal ready she took it out to them. As she was going along the road she met a kha woman who took her and ate her. The kha woman then took the morning meal and carried it for the father and son to eat. Before she arrived, father and son realized that she was not mother but a kha woman. So when they had eaten their food, father took a pot with a cracked bottom, and gave it to the kha woman to take and dip up water for a drink. The kha woman went to dip up the water, but though she dipped assiduously she got nothing. There was a crow on the branch of a tree which called and said, "A, a, a, pick some lily leaves and seal it". So the kha woman realized and picked lily leaves and sealed it. Having dipped the water, she was about to hunt down the father and son, but the father and son took hold of the tail of the buffalo and the tail of the bullock and climbed away up into the sky.

The kha woman returned to the home of the man and his son. At home there were still two members of the family, two daughters, left. In the evening the kha woman said, "You two sisters, whichever one has no lice, that one shall sleep with me!" The kha woman made them shake out the lice to see which one had any. The older sister was dull-witted but the younger was intelligent. The younger sister had hidden a handful of millet in her clothes, which came pattering out, but the older sister had nothing at all. So the kha woman slept with the elder sister. They slept until midnight when the kha woman took the elder sister and ate her. The younger sister heard and said, "Auntie, I want to go outside". The kha woman said, "I will not let you go". She said, "Auntie, if you are afraid that I shall go away, then take a length of rope and tie it on to me, so I can go out". The kha woman took a rope and tied it, and the Miao girl went out. She untied the rope and tied it to the fixing of the pounder, and climbed to the top of a tree.

The next day the kha woman brought out her sister's intestines to wash them. When she saw this she began to cry in the top of the tree, and her tears fell down on to the kha woman's hand. The kha woman looked up and called to her to come down, but she said,

"Having reached the rock it has caught me,  
Having reached the tree it holds me.  
So I cannot come".

The kha woman said, "In that case I will climb up". The orphan girl said, "If you want to climb up, well in our loft there is a small jar of fat, you bring it and smear on the bowl of the tree then you will be able to climb up". The kha woman went and brought the fat and smeared it on, and of course she could not climb up. The orphan girl said, "Below our house is a ploughshare, you get it and heat it until it is very red, then bring it to me. If you open your mouth and look up you will be able to climb up". The kha woman went and took the ploughshare, heated it until it was very red and took it to the orphan girl. Then she stretched back her head and looked up. The orphan girl said, "Now open your mouth". The kha woman opened her mouth and the orphan girl let the ploughshare fall down and burnt the kha woman to death there at the foot of the tree. Then the Miao girl called to her father and her brother to hold out the big basket and catch her up in the sky.

Nowadays in speaking of nettles, people call them “kha woman” still.