

Yeu-rang-zi-lao and the orphan.

Told by Yang Xiu-gong.

They tell a story that once upon a time, Yeu-rang-zi-lao was going to seek wine to drink in a Chinese village. When he reached oak tree valley, Yeu-rang-zi-lao heard an orphan in oak tree valley gathering firewood. The orphan said, "Ai-zho! Help me up! Ai-zho! Help me up!" When Yeu-rang had drunk his wine and was returning, he said to his eldest daughter, "Big sister you go and help the orphan up and make him a mandarin". The eldest said, "I won't go and help him up!" Then he said to his middle daughter, "Middle sister, you go and help the orphan up and make him a mandarin". The middle one said, "I won't go and help him up!" After that he said to the youngest, "Little sister, you go and help the orphan up and make him a mandarin". The youngest one said, "If I go and help him up, I will raise him to become a king!"

Later her father and two sisters took her to drink wine at the Chinese village. When they reached the place where the orphan was living, the youngest went to live with the orphan. In the evening, Yeu-rang's daughter said to the orphan, "Get the evening meal for us to eat". The orphan replied, "There is no evening meal", and they continued sitting there. Yeu-rang-zi-lao's youngest daughter again said, "Orphan, find some evening meal for us two to eat". So the orphan went and took out a small pot of porridge millet. Yeu-rang's youngest daughter took it and poured it out to feed the chicken, and when the orphan saw it he wept. At this Yeu-rang's youngest daughter took off and threw a bracelet into the fire. It changed into a cooking pot. Then she slipped off a ring and threw it into the fire. It changed into a rice steamer. Now Yeu-rang's youngest daughter prepared a small pot of meat and a steamer full of meal and served it for the orphan to eat. The orphan ate and ate, he could not leave it, until Yeu-rang's youngest daughter said, "Orphan, you really must eat less!"

After this Yeu-rang's daughter said to the orphan, "Tonight you must sleep quietly though the rain will be very heavy". In the evening, when Yeu-rang had finished drinking, he returned to the place where the orphan lived, and erected a set of buildings for the orphan and Yeu-rang's youngest daughter to live in. He took the orphan's little hut and tied it up under the eaves of the house. Early the next day the orphan rose and looked. He saw that it was not his house and he wanted to get up and run away. Yeu-rang's youngest daughter rose and reasoned with him, but he was unwilling to remain, he wanted to get up and run. So Yeu-rang's youngest daughter got up, came to him and said, "Orphan, if you do not believe me, you look up there, up under the eaves". The orphan lifted his head and looked upwards and saw his little hut which Yeu-rang-zi-lao had taken and lifted up there under the eaves. So gradually he was convinced and sat still.

In the year that the king was coming, Yeu-rang's youngest daughter remained indoors every day making wine. On the day that the king was due to come, Yeu-rang's youngest daughter collected the wine and poured it into a tiny flask. She gave it to the orphan to take out to the road along which the king would come and give it to the king. When the king arrived, the orphan rose and bowed three times, and gave his tiny flask of wine to the king to drink. The king said to the orphan, "Your little flask of wine there, is not enough for me to drink". The orphan said to the king, "If it were given to a common person to drink it would be but two mouthfuls, but the king may keep drinking,

and it will still not be finished, and if he also divides it for his soldiers to drink, still it will not be finished.

After this the king gave a pair of pigeons to two of his retainers to go and roast at the orphan's house and bring them back to eat as a relish with the wine. At that time the orphan's wife made as though she was very busy, going out and coming in. The two retainers kept watching her, because the orphan's wife was beautiful, and the two pigeons got roasted to a cinder. There was nothing that the king's two retainers could do and both began to cry. The orphan's wife enquired, "What are you two crying about?" The king's two retainers said, "We are not crying about anything!" The orphan's wife returning enquired again. Eventually they said, "The king gave us two pigeons to bring and roast to be eaten as relish with his wine, but we have roasted them to a cinder, that is why we are crying". The orphan's wife said to them, "Do not cry, you two, I will roast two small ones for you to take to the king to eat as relish with his wine". The orphan's wife took some meal and made it into two little pats, which changed into two pigeons. These she gave to the two retainers to take to the king to eat as relish with his wine. The king kept eating but could not finish it. He divided it for his soldiers but still they could not finish it.

He remained there until the evening, and the king wanted to come and sleep at the orphan's house. The orphan said to the king. "My house is too narrow, there is no room for you to sleep". The king said to the orphan, "Though there is no room in your house, I am certainly coming to sleep at your house". The orphan came back and asked his wife. His wife said, "Orphan, let him come and sleep". So the orphan returned and said to the king, "My wife invites you to come and sleep". Then the orphan led the king back to sleep at his house.

The king's two retainers said to the king, "The orphan's wife is very beautiful". The king said, "In that case let her come out for me to see". But the first time the orphan made one of the house-sweepers come out for the king to see. The king said, "This one is certainly beautiful". The two retainers said, "This is not the one, this is only a house-sweeper". The next time he made the cook go out for him to see. The two retainers said, "Neither is it this one, this is only the cook". The king said, "If it is neither of these then make the orphan's wife come out for me to see". The third time the orphan's wife burst out suddenly, shining bright as she went, and dazzling the king and the king's retainers, causing them all to fall down, so that they did not see her clearly. The king said to them, "You take some of the orphan's rope of wild creepers and tie me up". They brought the wild creeper rope and tied the king to the central pillar of the orphan's house. Then the orphan's wife burst out suddenly again. Each one of the king's soldiers fell down, but the king, tied with the rope of wild creeper, did not fall, and saw clearly. Now the king said, "Come, orphan, let us exchange wives and exchange estates". The king said to the orphan, "I have seven cities and seven wives". But the orphan was not willing and said, "In this case I must first go and ask my wife and see". The orphan returned and told his wife. His wife said, "Orphan, you exchange, that will be very well". So the orphan and the king now drew up a document, exchanging wives and land and positions.

After this, the orphan's wife said, "Orphan if you are not convinced, then go as far as the grey earth gap yonder, then you return and see". The orphan went with the king's retainers until they reached the grey earth gap yonder. The orphan said to his retainers, "I have left something behind, I must go back and get it". The retainers said to him, "Your Majesty, stay here, we will go and fetch it for you". The orphan said to his

retainers, "I have put that thing of mine where you could not get it". So the king's soldiers carried the orphan back. Now thy came and saw that the orphan's house, which he had exchanged with the king, was all in ruins, and the king was sitting inside smoking. The orphan's wife, whom he had exchanged with the king, now said to the orphan, "If you are still not convinced, go to the halfway place, and then return and see". The orphan went to the halfway place and said to his retainers, "I have left something else behind, I shall have to go back and get it". The retainers said to him, "Your Majesty, stay here, we will go and fetch it for you". The orphan said, "I have put that thing of mine where you could not get it". So the retainers carried him back. When they had reached the place, Yeu-rang's youngest daughter had taken the king and beaten him nearly to death, and Yeu-rang's youngest daughter had got up and followed her father and the others to the sky. The orphan took the king's pipe, filled it with tobacco and put it into the king's mouth. Now the orphan was very happy. He jumped into the sedan chair and took his seat and went off to the royal city.

Afterwards, when Yeu-rang's youngest daughter had returned, one night she gave birth to a son. She took a piece of cloth and wrapped him up and threw him into the world of men. She threw him down and he fell into the gutter around the house of an old man and an old woman. In the night the couple heard the boy crying. The man said to the woman, "Woman, get up, let us light a lamp and see, perhaps the Heavenly Father has given us a child. If it is a girl we will bring her up to mind the pigs. If it is a boy we will bring him up to be a student". The two of them went and brought it in and it was a boy. They looked after him until midnight, and the boy was just able to smile, but by the following day he could run. So the two old folk made him study. He studied and became learned, he wrote and excelled as a writer.

His friends said to him, "Friend, give us some of your papers, and we will tell you who your mother and father are". So he gave his friends some of his papers and his friends said to him, "Your grandfather is the one who goes ahead, your aunt is the one who comes in the middle, your mother is the one who comes behind". Now when Yeu-rang's youngest daughter's son saw them he tucked up his clothes, and ran and caught hold of his mother's skirt. His mother scolded him and said, "What is this red-bellied thing?" His aunt said, "Think carefully what you did while you were on earth". So Yeu-rang's youngest daughter embraced him. The son had milk to drink and went stamping with his feet. He trampled all over his grandfather's high place. His grandfather said, "What creature has such strength? Catch it; I will roast it as relish with my wine!" Afterwards the son did the same again and Yeu-rang said the same, but now his neighbours told him that it was Yeu-rang's youngest daughter's son. So Yeu-rang knew that it was his grandson.

Yeu-rang said, "If you are indeed my grandson then your writing will be equal to mine, you must write as I do. Yeu-rang-zi-lao worked very hard at his writing. He wrote day after day, but his grandson simply went out to play every day. Yeu-rang-zi-lao wrote until only three sheets were left. Yeu-rang's youngest daughter was very worried and went and called her son. Her son said to her, "Mother, heat some water for me to wash my hands". His mother heated water for him to wash his hands and he began writing. He wrote out the document by which his father had exchanged wives and estates with the king. He took these papers on which he had written, together with those he had not yet written, placed them on the table, and he spat on the papers on the table. He then gathered and straightened them, and took and gave the to his grandfather to look at. As his grandfather looked at them he saw there was the document whereby his father had exchanged wives and estates. He also saw that the calligraphy was better than his own.

His grandfather now said, “This is indeed my grandson, but I do not know what name to give him. I shall simply give him the name Ndrao-mi-hlu.

His grandfather said to his mother, to them both, “Now then, the time has come for me to send you two to seek your father, don’t you think? But if you go by earthly roads, they are very long, it will take seven years. To go by the sky roads will take only seven months, but if you go by the sky roads there is fear that the sky blackness may come and block the road, and there is also fear that sky maidens may come and block the road”. Now his grandfather gave him a bamboo fan to carry, and the two departed, travelling along the road. The son enquired of his mother, “Mother, where is the sky blackness?” His mother said, “The sky blackness is over there on the mountain ridge yonder”. The two went on and came to the place where the sky blackness had come to block the road. The son took out his fan and fanned three times toward the North and fanned three times toward the South. The sky cleared, so he said to his mother, “Come quickly, mother, do not be afraid”. So they went onward. Then the son asked his mother, “Mother, they say that the sky maidens will come and block the road, well, where are they?” His mother said, “They are over there, on the mountain ridge yonder”. They went on together until they reached the place where the sky maidens had come to block the road. The son then took out the fan. He fanned three times toward the North and fanned three times toward the South, and the sky cleared. The son said, “Mother, come quickly”

Now he and his mother, the two of them, reached a city, and he said to his mother, “Let us call our father and see if he is here”. He fired a gun, “crack”, but none of the pagodas in that city fell. He said, “Our father is not here”. So the two of them, mother and son, went forward together and arrived at another city. He said again, “Come, let us call our father and see whether he is here”. So he fired the gun, “crack”, but none of the pagodas in that city fell. So he said, “Our father is not here”. So they went on together until they saw the king’s capital city. The son said, “Let us call our father and see if he is here”. So he took his gun and fired it, “crack”, and the king’s pagodas fell down flat. When the king saw it he was sick at heart. So he sent people to search below the city walls, but they saw nothing but a beggar woman and her son outside the city walls. These people who were sent went back and told the king. Then the lad fired the gun again, “crack”, and the king’s pagodas stood upright. The king said, “Who is the person who is as strong as this? Go and search outside the city once more and see”. They went and searched but they met with nothing at all. All they saw was a couple of beggars, mother and son.

The king was troubled at heart, so he himself rose and went to search. He went and saw only the couple of beggars, mother and son, there, making porridge to eat. The two beggars ladled out a basin full for the king and said, “Your Majesty, come and have lunch with us”. They added, if you do not wish to, take it and stir it up and see”. The king stirred it up to see and stirred out the document by which he had exchanged lands and wives. The king said, “My wife and son have arrived, but unfortunately I have seven wives”. The son said, “Don’t worry, Father”. He took them, mother and son, and when they arrived his seven wives had died and disappeared.