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## **A poor man kills his son but the son leads him to riches.**

*Told by Yang Xiu-gong.*

They tell a story that once upon a time there was a Miao family to which was born a son. This son, the longer he lived the bigger he grew, and the bigger he grew the more he ate, until his family simply could feed him no longer. His family became very poor, and the time came when the man said to the woman, "This son of ours eats so much. We have grown old and what is more we can no longer work. What is the good of us rearing him? Come let us find a way of killing him!" The woman said, "All right. Now we still have one small chicken and one sow. You take him along and kill him, while I remain at home and kill the little hen in readiness for you".

On the first occasion the man took his son to fell a tree with the intention of the tree killing him. So the man chopped the tree until it was about to fall, and said to his son, "Come over on the lower side and wait to carry it on you back, it is about to fall". The son came on the lower side waiting till the tree fell. It killed him, crushing him there. The man returned home and said to the woman, "All right, this time he has been killed. Have you killed the chicken? Bring it and let us eat. When we have eaten let us die and that will be the end of it". The man had scarcely finished speaking to the woman, when the son, carrying the tree over his shoulder, arrived and said, "Father, where shall I put it?" The father said, "Carry it there below the house". Then the son said, "Has mother got the food ready?" His father said, "It is ready, over there, go and help yourself". The son went and looked in the steamer, where there was a small quantity of meal. Then he looked in the pot where there was some meat. With the spoon the son dipped up two spoonfuls of maize, and with the chopsticks dipped twice into the meat and ate it, and there was none left. So his mother and father had nothing to eat.

His father then said to his mother, "In the valley below there is a poulder. I will take him to carry it, and cause the poulder to crush him. Now all we have left is a sow. You take the sow and kill it in readiness for me". The woman said, "All right, you take him along". The man took the son along and reached the poulder. The father said, "You come and be ready to carry it while I raise it up". But the father could not raise it up and had to get the son to help him raise it on end, and then to go and carry it. When the son came to the lower side, the father gave it a push. It knocked the son down and crushed him to death. The man returned home and said to the woman, "Have you killed and finished cooking the sow? This time certainly our son is dead". The woman said, "That is good. The meat and meal are all ready, go and help yourself". The words were scarcely spoken when the son reached home carrying the poulder. He said, "Father, where shall I set the poulder down?" The father said, "Put it down below the house". When the son had put the poulder down he came and said, "Mother, is there any food?" His mother said the meal and vegetables are there, go and help yourself. The son went and took and ate two or three mouthfuls of meal and two or three mouthfuls of vegetables, and all was eaten up.

Now he said to his father, "Father, go and have made for me a hoe of two or three catties of iron, I am going to dig the land and grow crops". His father went collecting iron everywhere, and found a smith to come and work it. When the hoe was made the Miao lad took it and went digging. The Miao lad dug for only one day, but he dug over

several valleys and several plains. The Miao lad worked hard at his farming and got very great returns. His home, the whole place, became very wealthy.

The Miao lad said to his mother and father, "Now we have everything in our home, I want to go hunting". So he left. He went on and on and saw a man who was clearing ditches. The man who was clearing ditches said to him, "What are you doing?" He replied, "I am going hunting". The man said, "I will go with you". The two of them went on and on and they saw a maker of drums. The drum maker said, "What are you two doing?" They replied, "We are going hunting". The drum maker said, "I will go with you". The three of them went on and came to a very large wooded valley. In this place were many wild animals, so here the three remained to snare the game.

The three first went and bought food. The first day the cleaner of ditches stayed home to prepare food while the other two went out snaring game. When the cleaner of ditches had got the food ready he went and called, "I have got breakfast ready, you two come and eat!" Yeu-rang who lived in a cliff in that forest, heard him and said, "Coming, I will be there in a minute". Yeu-rang came. On the back of his neck Yeu-rang had a line of hair growing, and on his head he had two horns like a water buffalo. He came, took the food and ate it all. The next day the drum maker stayed home to prepare food while the other two went out to snare game. When the drum maker had got the food ready he went and called, "I have got the breakfast cooked, you two come and eat". Yeu-rang who lived in a cliff in that forest, heard him and said, "Coming, I will be there in a minute". Yeu-rang came. On his neck Yeu-rang had a line of hair growing, and on his head he had two horns like a water buffalo. He came, took the food and ate it all.

On the third day the Miao lad with the big appetite stayed home to prepare food. While he was preparing it he went and cut some bamboo and wove a basket at the same time. When the food was cooked the basket was also finished, and he went to call the other two to come and eat. When he called Yeu-rang replied, "Coming, I will be there in a minute". and on his head he had two horns like a water buffalo. He came, took the food and ate it all.

On the third day the Miao lad with the big appetite stayed home to prepare food. While he was preparing it he went and cut some bamboo and wove a basket at the same time. When the food was cooked the basket was also finished, and he went to call the other two to come and eat. When he called Yeu-rang replied, "Coming, I will be there in a minute". Yeu-rang came. His head was like a water buffalo, and on his neck he had a mane. He came where the Miao lad was. Now the Miao lad waited for him to arrive, then he fought with Yeu-rang. Yeu-rang then changed into a centipede. The Miao lad changed into a cockerel to go and peck it up. Yeu-rang then changed into an eagle flying down to take the cockerel. The Miao lad then turned back into a man to kill the eagle. Yeu-rang then changed into a sparrow hawk and flew up into the sky. As the Miao lad was looking up, the sparrow hawk flew down to peck him. The Miao lad waited until he flew down near the ground, then he took the basket he had woven and caught the sparrow hawk under it.

When the cleaner of ditches and the drum maker arrived the Miao lad said to them, "You two go and buy some wine from the Chinese to go with the sparrow hawk when we have roasted it". Yeu-rang inside the basket heard this. Yeu-rang said, "You three do not roast me to eat with your wine. If you will let me go I have three daughters whom I will give to you". The three said, "Where is your home, and what assurance will you give?" Yeu-rang said, "My home is in the cliff yonder, in the middle of the

forest over there. When you come all you have to do is to strike the middle of the cliff and my door will be opened". The three then said, "When may we come to your house?" Yeu-rang said, "Whenever you come will be all right". Having finished talking the three released Yeu-rang.

After this the three went to look. All they could see was a perfectly smooth cliff. Unable to do anything they want and felled a tree to make crossbows. They produced three crossbows and three quivers of arrows. When these were completed they went together and reached the foot of the cliff. The Miao lad made the clearer of ditches shoot first. The clearer of ditches released one shot, but the arrow hit the cliff and fell down. The he made the drum maker shoot. The drum maker shot, but with the same result as the clearer of ditches. Now the Miao lad released a shot. It hit the cliff and a slab of cliff fell away and made an opening. The three entered. The clearer of ditches led the way, the drum maker followed while the Miao lad came at the rear to beat off the dogs. Yeu-rang's dogs were very fierce, and the Miao lad coming at the end had a dog at every step.

When they arrived and went indoors, Yeu-rang was not at home. Only Yeu-rang's three daughters were in. They went and sat down to wait. They had not waited long when Yeu-rang arrived. Yeu-rang said, "My three sons-in-law are very tired. Bring my fan let me fan my three sons-in-law". Yeu-rang's three daughters brought his fan to him and Yeu-rang fanned three times and fanned the three right outside. The cliff became perfectly smooth again.

So the three returned to the place where they were staying. They made a fan exactly like Yeu-rang's fan, and again went to Yeu-rang's house. When they reached the cliff it was just the same as on the previous occasion. There was no way in. The lad who was so strong made the clearer of ditches shoot first. But when the clearer of ditches shot, his arrow simply fell away. Then he made the drum maker shoot, but when the drum maker shot it was the same as the clearer of ditches. Then the Miao lad went and shot. He released one shot and hit the cliff and a slab fell away. The Miao lad made the clearer of ditches go first, followed by the drum maker, while he came behind. When they arrived, Yeu-rang's daughters brought Yeu-rang's fan for them to fan themselves. Having got it, they exchanged it for the one they had made. Yeu-rang returned and said, "My three sons-in-law have arrived early, my three sons in law are very tired. Bring my fan, let me fan my three sons in law!" His three daughters brought the fan to Yeu-rang, and he took it and fanned the three lads but could not fan them away. Then the three said, "Our father-in-law is very tired, let us three fan our father-in-law. The three took Yeu-rang's fan which they had exchanged and fanned Yeu-rang right outside. So it was that now everything of Yeu-rang's counted as theirs, and they got Yeu-rang's three daughters as well.