

## BEAR AND RABBIT (II)

Snying dkar skyid

Snying dkar skyid writes:

I recorded this story from Khro mo rgyal (b. 1927) in Stag rig Village (Khrang dmar Township, Khri ka County, Mtsho lho Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Qinghai Province). She is one of the best storytellers in the village. Most village children have heard stories from her. She also knows much village history.

I recorded several folktales from Khro mo rgyal in my home during the winter of 2009-2010. Each time we finished a story she immediately asked, "Do you need more? I can tell more if you like."

I first heard this story from Khro mo rgyal when I was a child. At that time, we often tried to finish dinner early and then ran to Khro mo rgyal's home to hear stories, especially if the weather was warm. Many village children gathered in her courtyard and sat on the ground to listen to her stories. I remember one time that she told twelve different stories, one after the other.

Now things have changed. Children no longer listen to Khro mo rgyal's stories, and she misses the times when many children gathered in her home to listen to her.

Once there was a mother bear with a cute cub. Their neighbors were a mother rabbit and her baby. Every day the two mothers went out to dig their main food, which was *gro ma*. They left their babies at home to play together when they were away.

One sunny day, the mother rabbit went as usual to call the mother bear to go dig *gro ma*. They went to the mountains near their homes as they did every day, and started digging. As she dug, the mother bear dug one *gro ma* and ate it, dug another one and ate it, and so on. Thus, at the end of the day, her bag was empty.

The mother rabbit hadn't been greedy and hadn't eaten even one *gro ma*, so at the day's end she had a big full bag. The mother bear saw this and felt ashamed to go home with an empty bag. She began to think of a way to get the mother rabbit's *gro ma*, and eventually she had an idea. She knew the rabbit had a big soul-wart on her head, so the mother bear said to mother rabbit, "We haven't rested for a long time. Let's take a short break, OK?"

"OK. Just a short rest though, otherwise our babies might worry since it's getting dark," said the mother rabbit, smiling.

"Sure," the bear replied. "Let me scratch your head. I've heard that this helps you relax."

"How kind of you," said the mother rabbit as she lay on the ground, putting her head on the mother bear's legs.

They talked about their babies and how cute and well-behaved they were. Little did the mother rabbit know she was in mortal danger. Suddenly, the mother bear cried out in amazement, "What is that big, black thing on your head?"

"Don't touch it! That is my soul! If you squeeze it, I'll die," said the mother rabbit nervously.

"Oh, really? OK then," said the mother bear, and squeezed the big black wart, killing the mother rabbit instantly, just for a bag of *gro ma*.

Next, she pulled the mother rabbit's dead body to pieces and put them in her bag, along with the mother rabbit's *gro ma*.

The day grew dark as the baby rabbit waited for her mother. As the mother bear was going along the path in front of the rabbits' home, the baby rabbit called, "Mother Bear, where is my mother? Isn't she coming with you? Where is she now?"

"Dear baby, go boil some tea for your mother and she will come soon. Just wait for her with some hot tea," said the mother bear, and then went off, carrying the mother rabbit's dead body and the *gro ma* in her bag.

The poor baby rabbit boiled tea and then went out again to wait for her mother. When she didn't come, she shouted, "Mother Bear, where is my mother now?"

"Your mother will come from behind the small hill. Just prepare some noodles for her and she'll come soon," yelled the mother bear.

The baby rabbit cooked noodles for her mother and waited, but still no one came. The baby rabbit began to worry, for it was very late and her mother still hadn't come. She started to think that maybe something had happened.

The baby rabbit went to the mother bear's house, climbed on the roof, and saw that the mother bear was putting meat in a pot. She saw something hanging from the eaves. When she looked closely, she realized it was her mother's legs and head. The head was terrifying! She also saw her mother's bag on the table and realized that the mother bear had killed her mother because of the *gro ma*. She whimpered and decided to take revenge.

One day she saw the mother bear leave her home. She called the baby bear to play outside, "Baby bear, come outside and play with me, I'll take you to a place you have never been before," called the baby rabbit.

"No! Go away! My mother said I can't go outside. It's too dangerous," the baby bear yelled at the baby rabbit.

"Your mother is not at home. Come play with me for a bit. Your mother won't know," said the baby rabbit.

"Hm... a little while is OK, but I need to come back early. Let's go now," said the baby bear happily.

"Just follow me," said the baby rabbit, hopping and smiling.

At last, they reached a threshing stone resting on two small supports. The baby rabbit smiled and said, "It's really nice to play with the threshing stone."

"Wow! How do we play with the threshing stone? I've never played with such a thing. Teach me how to play with it," said the baby bear excitedly.

"OK, first I'll go under the threshing stone while you lift it, then you can go under it while I lift it," said the baby rabbit.

"OK," said the baby bear and lifted the threshing stone.

After the baby rabbit had gone under it, she said, "It's your turn, come on."

When the baby bear went under the threshing stone, the baby rabbit dropped it, crushing the baby bear to death.

Having avenged her mother's death, the baby rabbit fled, knowing that the mother bear would try to kill when she found her dead cub.

While escaping, the baby rabbit overheard two yak herders. One man said, "Did you see a big bear asking people if they had seen a rabbit? Someone must have made her unhappy because she was in a rage."

The other herder said, "Yeah, I saw her. She was so strong! Whoever she is looking for will surely die—that's the only possibility. She'll be here soon."

When the baby rabbit heard that, she asked the two herders to let her hide in the nose of one of their yaks. Just as she climbed in, the mother bear ran up and asked them if they had seen a rabbit. They told her that the rabbit had been there and left, and pointed to show the way. The bear ran off in the direction they indicated.

After a while, the rabbit jumped down to the ground, thanked the herder, and resumed her journey. In the same way she hid in a sheep's wool when the bear approached. The bear asked the shepherd if he had seen a rabbit and he answered, "I saw a rabbit. It went that way just a minute ago." Then the mother bear ran off in the direction the shepherd indicated.

When the bear left, the rabbit thanked the shepherd and resumed her journey.

When she reached a field, she saw a strong yak eating grass with several yak calves. Suddenly, she saw the mother bear standing nearby. His eyes were glowing like coals and her mouth was wide open. The rabbit realized she was going to be swallowed. Without any recourse, she said, "Dearest Uncle Yak, my mother was killed by that bear, so I killed her baby, and now she is going to kill me. She killed my mother first! I'm not in the wrong. Please help me, I beg you."

"Is it true? If what you said is true, I will definitely help you," said Uncle Yak.

"How would I dare lie to you?" said the rabbit, kneeling to Uncle Yak, her front paws held together in supplication.

"OK! Now, look at me. I promise I will kill that demon in a few seconds," said Uncle Yak gravely.

"Come! I'm not afraid of you at all," said the mother bear, grinding her sharp teeth on a huge stone, preparing to challenge Uncle Yak. After a few seconds, they charged each other. At last the mother bear was defeated. She turned and ran, saying she would surely return to take revenge. Her face was covered with blood as she fled.

Then old Uncle Yak said, "I helped you, so now what will you give me as a reward?"

"I have nothing to give you, but I will say good words to praise you," said the smart rabbit.

"I would like to hear these good words," said Uncle Yak, sitting on a big stone beside a wall with a hole in it.

"Uncle Yak's eyes are gold eyes, Uncle Yak's nose is a gold nose, Uncle Yak's mouth is a gold mouth, Uncle Yak's hands are gold hands, Uncle Yak's legs are gold legs..." said the rabbit.

"OK. What's next?" Uncle Yak asked happily.

"Uncle Yak's eyes are shit eyes, Uncle Yak's nose is a shit nose, and Uncle Yak's mouth is a shit mouth," said the rabbit and ran to the other side of the wall.

Uncle Yak furiously charged the hole in the wall. Although the hole was big, his head was bigger—especially with his two horns. He thus got stuck in the hole and died.

Then the rabbit went on, feeling hungry after meeting so many difficulties. She fortunately soon saw a nearby house, went up, and knocked on the door. A woman opened it and invited her in. The rabbit saw there was a baby sleeping on the bed. The woman offered her good food and after she had eaten enough, she said, "I killed a large yak just a bit ago in a field near here. If you want its meat, go get it."

"Is that true? If so, my husband and I would like to go fetch it," said the woman.

"It's true. Go and I'll care for your baby," said the rabbit in a friendly manner.

The couple then took a long rope and left. The baby cried without stopping. The rabbit slit open the baby's belly, removed the viscera, and stuffed a pigeon inside. Next, she cut the baby's head off, put it under the quilt, and covered it up again. Lastly, she cut off the baby's arms and legs and put them into a pot of boiling water.

When the couple happily returned with the yak's carcass, the rabbit said that she had cooked meat for them. The couple happily ate the meat. They then realized that their baby had been sleeping for a long time. When they took away the quilt, the baby's head rolled onto the floor. They

immediately understood that they had eaten their own baby's flesh, screamed, and decided to take revenge.

"These two just ate their own baby's flesh!" yelled the rabbit loudly repeatedly as she hopped away.

The baby rabbit came in front of their house to yell like that day after day. The man wanted to kill the rabbit so he went outside and said to the rabbit that he would kill her if she came near their house again.

One day, the man put some glue on a big stone in front of their house. Later, the rabbit came to their house, sat on the stone, and yelled as usual.

The man came out and said, "This time, I will not let you go. I want to avenge my dear baby."

The rabbit wanted to run away, but her bottom was stuck to the stone. She couldn't move. "Please put some ash in my ears so you can kill me," said the rabbit.

"OK, I will listen to you one last time since you are about to die," said the man and put ash into the rabbit's ears. Suddenly, the rabbit shook her head and all the ash went into the man's eyes. Then the rabbit ran away.

In the end the rabbit won.

NON-ENGLISH TERMS

Khrang dmar བྲང་དམར། 常牧

Khri ka ཁྲི་ཀ། 贵德

Khro mo rgyal ཁྲོ་མོ་རྒྱལ།

Mtsho lho Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture མཚོ་ལྷོ་བོད་རིགས་  
རང་སྐྱོང་ཁུལ། 海南藏族自治州

Qinghai མཚོ་ལྷོ་ན། 青海

Snying dkar skyid སྤོང་དཀར་སྐྱིད། 羊格姐

Stag rig སྟག་རིག