

THREE TALES

I. THE CAT WHO HID HIS OWN FAULTS

Cat was very glad to glorify himself and always concealed his own faults. One day he caught a mouse, but he did not hold it tightly and it got out of its paws. But Cat said, "This mouse was still too small and not ready to eat, so I let it go on purpose."

Another day, Cat went to the river bank to catch fish. That time a fish hit its face with its tail, and even though his face hurt intolerably, Cat put on a false smile and said, "I didn't catch the fish on purpose. I thought I'd use his tail to wash my face. Look, everyone! Isn't my face washed clean now?"

One time he fell into a bog and his whole body was covered with mud. When his friends were looking at him in amazement, he lied, saying, "There were a lot of fleas on me; the best way to get rid of them is to wash with mud."

Again another time he fell in the river. When his friends were planning to rescue him, he bragged, "Did you think I'm in trouble? Not at all. I'm dancing in the river." As soon as he said that, he sank into the water and the river carried him off. Then his friends laughed and mocked him and left, saying, "Let's go. Now our friend Cat is playing on the river bottom."

II. THE DONKEY WHO TURNED A MILLSTONE

Donkey and Horse talked about pulling a wagon together, but Donkey, not wanting to get sick from work, always went out of the gate and tried to kill time. The householder therefore did not know what to do. He made the horse pull the wagon, and kept Donkey at home, making him turn a millstone.

A few days later, Horse advised Donkey, "If the two of us leave and pull the wagon, on one hand you'll be able to have foresight, and on the other you'll have a big road in front of you."

Donkey replied, "I'm satisfied with the way of making a living before my eyes. Furthermore, compared to going outside and running back and forth on a crooked road, staying home and turning a millstone is better. Not only that, but even if I traveled the road the whole day, your work wouldn't be any less. I'm able to go around the grinding path every day, and in this way I increase my own happiness beyond comprehension."

III. THE FOX EXAMINES ENMITY

From early on, Fox and Wolf opposed each other. But because Fox had confessional vows, no matter what harm Wolf did him, he treated it as a trifle.

One day Donkey said to Fox, "One day Wolf will certainly do you an injury. You should keep that in mind!"

Fox sucked in his breath and said to Donkey, "Dear Donkey, thanks. I've known from before that Wolf might injure me. But as for Wolf's harming me, I'm not alone. I still have a much more important affair coming up."

Donkey pricked up his ears and asked Fox in amazement, “What are you saying? What important affair is coming?”

Fox whispered, “It’s a big secret, so you can’t tell anyone. If you can fulfill my wish, it’s ok for me to tell you.”

Donkey said, “If you’ve a wish, tell me! I’ll do whatever I can in every possible way to fulfill it.”

Fox heaved a sigh and said, “Since Wolf is such a brute, he’s sure to harm anyone, no matter who. He’s an animal that trusts no one, and I’ve heard he causes trouble everywhere. So he’s suspicious of Bear who steals his grain. He plans to take his wolf pack and retaliate. He thinks that the one who steals his food is Wild Pig, and he’s planning to take revenge. If we two compete with these carnivores, Bear and Wild Pig, it’ll be no contest, and we’ll lose big. Don’t reveal our conversation to anyone.”

After a little while, there was a rumor among the carnivores that the wolf pack would take revenge on Bear and Wild Pig. But they all kept it secret and did not bandy it abroad.

Early one day, they killed Wolf in the midst of the forest, reduced its flesh to dust and threw it away.

—Phag go, *Qinghai Folk Literature* 3, 1986