

TWO LITTLE BIRD BROTHERS

Once upon a time two small birds, a husband and wife, lived in a place where grass and fruit trees were few at the top of the mountain, at its middle there were a few small meadows, and at the base an almost exhausted stream slowly descended. After not too long a time the husband died, and the wife who had been together with him had borne two offspring before and later. Not only that, but when the elder had been born, the mother had undergone intolerable pain.

The elder had a dirty face and the color of its feathers was unattractive. The younger was the opposite: it had a pretty face and the color of its feathers was attractive too. The mother bird loved the smaller child and had no love at all for the bigger one. From the time it was little onwards, not only did she take it outside and made it look for its own food, but she made it collect grass and fruit and repair the nest. The younger child always stayed in the nest and gradually got used to being lazy and spoiled. Usually at night, the mother bird whispered many things to the younger child in bed, but made the bigger child sleep near the doorway, so that from the time it was little onward, it never knew the warmth of its mother's body.

Then shortly later, the two bird children's mother died too. Just before she died, she gave the smaller bird child the nest and furnishings, but there was plentiful food, and she divided it equally in half for both children. After she died, the elder child said many times to the younger one that the two of them should live together, but not only did the younger not want to, he told the older one, "Mother gave the entire nest and furnishings to me and not to you. If you want to go somewhere else, do so! I'm the owner of this nest." Since he often spoke so roughly, the elder child could not bear staying and prepared to go elsewhere.

The day after that, he flew the entire day, and only then got to a pleasant place where the air was warm, there were thick forests with many flowers and clear streams descended. Not long after, a female bird, with a pretty face and feathers arrived; they met and became man and wife. They made a warm and pretty nest and lived there, passing their time happily.

One day the male bird saw a flock of cranes was flying in the sky where his younger brother lived. His desire to see his younger brother grew greater than before and he decided to go and look.

Before sunrise the next day, he went to see his younger brother. He flew the whole day and when it was close to sunset he got to where he had lived before. He saw that the previous nest had almost been destroyed by the wind and rain. His younger brother was dead upon the ground not far away.

—Lhun grub rdo rje, *Qinghai Folk Literature* 2, 1995