

M459
An orphan goes fishing.

Told by Yang Xiu-gong.

People tell a story that once upon a time there was a Miao lad. His parents were dead and he lived by himself. He spent his time fishing, and one day he caught a small flat fish. He brought it back and put it down in his thatched hut while he went to gather firewood. By the time he had gathered the firewood, the little fish in his thatched hut had changed into a girl. He came and lit the fire and searched for his little fish to roast and eat. The girl said, "Orphan, what are you searching for?" The orphan said, "I am not searching!" The Miao girl said, "I know you are searching for a little fish. I am your little fish, and if you do not believe me, look here under my arms". The Miao lad looked and saw that the Miao girl had fins under her arms, so he knew that the Miao girl was indeed his little fish, and he stopped searching. While the Miao girl lived with the orphan, he no longer needed to go fishing but had plenty to eat. He no longer needed to work but had plenty to wear.

So it continued for a long time. The Miao girl said to the orphan, "I have been away a long time, I want to return to my parents and relatives". The orphan said, "I will go with you". The Miao girl said, "My parents and relatives are very fierce, you had better not go with me". The Miao lad said, "Whatever they are like I shall go with you". The Miao girl said, "In that case if you will go with me, wherever I tread you must tread, wherever I sit you must sit, and whatever I eat that only you must eat". The Miao lad said, "That will be all right". So the Miao lad went with the Miao girl, and reached the house of the Miao girl's parents. Her family was the family of Yeu-rang. In the place where her family lived everywhere there were flames, and the food which they ate was all put into an iron pan and roasted. So the Miao lad could neither have eaten nor remained there, were it not that in his father-in-law's home, his wife helped him to do everything. Thus his in-laws could find no way of harming him, because beforehand his wife explained everything to him.

On one occasion Yeu-rang was going to make poison to kill him. The orphan's wife knew about it and said to him, "I wanted you not to come with me but you insisted on coming. Now my father will prepare food for you to eat. You take some cloth and block your mouth and nose. Then pretend that you are going to eat it". The orphan followed the instructions of his wife. His brothers-in-law and father-in-law brought food with the poison for him to eat. He only went and smelt it, he did not eat any, but there were some chicken and pigs which came and ate it and they all dropped down, poisoned to death. This was only the first time. The next time his brothers-in-law and father-in-law mixed the poison with porridge and brought it for him to eat. His wife said to him, "This time also do as you did previously. Block your mouth and nose up. Let your mouth only touch it. Do not eat it". The orphan did as his wife told him to do. So this time also they did not poison him, but the dogs came and ate it and the dogs all died. This was only the second time. Then came the third time. This time the orphan's wife said to him, "Orphan, this time I have no way. I did not want you to come with me, but you insisted on coming. However, do not be troubled; you are going to die, but afterwards I will find a way to release you". This time the orphan's brothers-in-law and father-in-law put poison in the water for him to drink. As soon as he had only smelt it he died.

His brothers-in-law and father-in-law took him and put him in a coffin, which they brought and threw into a large lake. His coffin floated on the surface of the lake, and his wife came to see him every day bringing medicine for him to eat. In this way a number of days went by, and the orphan came back to life. The orphan's brothers-in-law and father-in-law saw it and said to the orphan's wife, "What did you do that you caused brother-in-law to get better?" She said, "When your brother-in-law was on the lake, I went and cut down a tree into the lake. I stood up on top of it and shook it hard, and so he stood up". Hearing this his brothers-in-law set poison for his father-in-law to eat, and his father-in-law died. Then his brothers-in-law took a coffin and put his father-in-law inside and carrying it down put it in the lake. Then they cut down a tree and put that also into the lake. They all got on top of the tree and shook it with all their strength. But doing so they all tipped over into the water and died. Thus the family property all came to the orphan and his wife.