



## ASS CONQUERS WOLF

Immeasurably long eons ago, in a land called Medokdzenden, was a town called Ngömbar Gyipay Trong. In that town there was old Ass called Drinsang Gunga. One day when hungry Wolf was wandering in the forest looking for food, the ass Drinsang Gunga came to the forest as well to eat the tasty grass. Wolf licked his chops and was really happy, thinking, “Hey, hey. That’s good. Today I’ve gotten a big income without expecting it. I’m one lucky Wolf.” Wolf quickly went to where Ass was and asked, “Old Ass, where did you come from?” Ass said, “I’ve come from my own town.” Wolf said, “Well, that’s really great. You’ve come at a good time. A few days have gone by since I’ve eaten anything. I’m hungry and thirsty and my stomach is burning. There’s a worldly expression: ‘When the cattle die, they come to the door of the wolf den.’ Isn’t that so? Today I’m going to eat you.”

Ass got scared and it lifted its ears, shook its head and took a few steps back. It said, “Wolf, Your Excellency! Please have mercy on me; don’t eat me!”

Wolf said, “A fire of hunger and thirst is raging in my belly. I’ve no choice but to eat you. If it’s ok with you, I’ll eat you. If it isn’t, I’ll eat you anyway.”

Ass said, “Even by simply eating the flesh of my body, your belly won’t be full for your whole life. If you don’t eat me, I can find you enough meat for a year.”

Wolf said, “Really? If that’s true, let’s negotiate.”

Ass said, “It’s true. You—Wolf, Your Excellency—ride on my back and I can take you to some beautiful grasslands. There are countless herds of sheep there. There’s mutton to eat and sweet, delicious lamb and ewe meat. What would you rather do: not eat such tasty meat or eat my—an old ass’s—hard, dry flesh?”

After Wolf heard what Ass told him, he was very glad. He thought no one had ever called him ‘Your Excellency’ up until now, nor had he ever ridden on an animal’s back. No one had ever shown him an entire herd of sheep, nor had anyone told him of so many utterly delicious sheep.

Out of the corner of his eye, Wolf looked at Ass who actually regarded him as an ‘Excellency’, and speaking as though he were a great chief, he said, “Well, let’s do so. I consent to go and ride on you, but when you move you’re not allowed to sway. If you do, and I’m the least uncomfortable, I’ll really not pardon you. You must be humble!”

Ass said, “Wolf, Your Excellency! Be content! I’ll plant my four limbs firmly on the ground, and I intend to offer you service that will be pleasant and comfortable.”

Then Wolf rode Ass, and, in order to make himself comfortable and happy, he tightly grasped Ass’s ears.

Ass, walking firmly on the small path that clove the forest, circled around a large boulder and went forward. While they were going, he asked Wolf, “Excellency, am I swaying? Is it comfortable on my back?”

Wolf said, “You’re not swaying. There’s no great discomfort. If you do it like this, go forward, and don’t sway!”

Wolf rode Ass, with his head high. He looked around and was filled with happiness. He thought, “I’m a good aristocrat that people really respect.”

Ass traveled a long time, stepping firmly, and finally they came to the edge of the forest and arrived near a village.

Wolf was so hungry he could not bear it. He asked Ass, “Hey, old Ass! How come I don’t see the sheep herd?”

Ass said, “Your Excellency, You’ll be able to see it soon.”

Then after a little while, Wolf asked again, “Where’s the sheep herd? Where are the lambs?”

Ass said, “Your Excellency, there’s no need for you to worry. In a little while you’ll have everything you want to eat. There’s cooked mutton and lamb and ewe.”

While they were talking, Ass stepped along ever faster and in a little while they got to the town. Galloping, carrying Wolf on his back, he shouted in a loud clear voice, “Everyone look! I’m carrying Wolf on my back!” As soon as the people heard that, they grabbed lots of different of weapons—axes, spears, swords—and yelling, ‘Kill it, hit it,’ they ran to Wolf. They scolded him, saying, “Rotten Wolf, you’ve killed lots of our cattle before, haven’t you? Where are you going today? Hey old Wolf!” and they ran to beat him.

After Wolf saw this, he knew it was no good, jumped off Ass’s back to the ground, and prepared to flee, but the people had already arrived near him, and, having no way to flee, he fell into their hands. He had to endure an unendurable beating. Then Wolf thought, “My father and grandpa never even rode a beast. Today I displayed myself like an elegant official and rode an ass. Even though I got not a little pleasure, now my dear life is ready to disappear. Alas!” Then a man stuck a long spear into Wolf’s chest and split his living heart into eight pieces. Wolf’s soul was sent for criticism before the ox-headed Lord of Death of the South.

—Blo gros rgya mtsho, *Moonbeam 2*, 1985