

## A TALE OF THE MAN, THE WOLF AND THE HARE

Once upon a time, there was a family in a valley where three rivers came together. The mother's name was Riklo, and the son's name was Töndrup. Mother and son made a living selling firewood. One day, Mother Riklo got sick and suddenly died. From that time on, the son, Töndrup, always had to collect firewood by himself.

How quickly time goes by. One day after a year had passed, Töndrup went to the forest to collect firewood, and as soon as he entered the forest where he had gone before, he saw a wolf, with long, sharp canines and a red tongue a fathom long, not very far away from him. When he took a few steps back in fright, Wolf said, "Ha, ha! Haven't my delicious meat and warm blood come today? I haven't even as much as smelt the aroma of meat for a week. Today you . . . heh, heh, heh!"

Töndrup took his words and said, "Uncle Wolf! It's okay if you eat me today, but I haven't eaten for three days and I'm hungry. Eat me tomorrow! I'll go back and after I've eaten my fill, I can come here."

The wolf said, "Ah! Ha, ha, ha! It's possible, but I don't know if you'll come tomorrow. If you don't, won't you have cheated me? But if what you say is true, swear to it!"

Accordingly Töndrup made his vow and said, "If I don't come, then wherever we meet you may eat me from top to bottom."

Sadly Töndrup returned to his home and on the way he met Hare who asked, "Elder Brother! Why are you sad? How come you're not carrying firewood?"

Then Töndrup told him the whole story straightforwardly—how he had gone to the forest that day, met Wolf, and so on. Hare walked back and forth with his arms behind his back. He said, "I know a way. You needn't be scared."

Töndrup thought, "Someone like you is weak and small; how can you save me?" But Hare said again, "Go! Go home!" When the two of them got there, Hare said, "Make a wooden gun!"

That evening Töndrup made a wooden gun. He cut off the corner of his belt and made a sling for it.

The next day the two of them got up early, ate their fill, and went to the forest together. On the way, Hare said, "If I give you a shout, you mumble to yourself, 'It's okay now. Uncle King's hunters have come.'"

Then Hare took the gun and flew off like a bird where the footpath separated, instantly disappearing like a shadow. Hare went to a ridge top not far away and kept watch.

As soon as Töndrup got to the place he had been before, Wolf came also and said, “Ha, ha! Now I’m going to eat you,” making ready to leap on Töndrup. Just then a long shout came from the ridge top not too far away. Töndrup looked around, and, as Hare had told him, murmured to himself, “Uncle King’s hunters have come.”

Wolf said, “Oh! Uncle King’s hunters . . .that’s not good.”

Simultaneously Hare asked from afar, “Hey! What’s that in front of you?” Then, when Töndrup turned around, Wolf quickly urged him to say ‘It’s a log!’ Töndrup said, “Hey! It’s a log!”

“Well, hit it with the ax!”

The wolf said, “Hit lightly, take it easy!”

Töndrup struck Wolf gently on the head, but Hare said, “What was that tapping sound?”

Wolf said, “Strike hard, strike hard!”

Again Töndrup, swung the ax in the air and stuck Wolf in the head as hard as he could, spilling all his brains on the ground.

—Skal bzang rgyal, *Qinghai Folk Literature* 3, 1991