

LAZY BRAGGARTS

Once upon a time there was a lazy couple. The husband never washed his hands and face nor did his wife wash the pots. They imitated each other and only slept like pigs, begging or stealing their food. They were able to pass the whole day, without ever doing a stitch of work.

One day a thief showed up, bored a hole in the wall, and entered the house. The wife perceived him come in and yelled at her husband, "A thief's come! Catch him, kill him!" The husband suddenly awoke from his dreams and got up. As he was thinking of catching the thief, the thief thought, "If he catches me, I'll certainly be punished by the law," so he quickly took a nearby pot and an axe and fled.

The husband ran after the thief, and as he exited the door, the thief turned back and gave him a blow on the head with the axe, and then ran off—who knows where.

Then the wife came running and said, bragging shamelessly to her husband, "Come back, you don't have to chase him! It's good that I never washed that pot. For a long time that pot always had spots on it. Now the thief has stolen it and since there are blemishes inside it's not real copper. Look! Wasn't I virtuous not to have washed the pots?"

The husband ridiculed her and, thinking nothing of his wife's deed, said, "It's no virtue of yours. I never washed, so the benefit of the filth that was always there saved my life today! You look! The thief hit my head with an axe, but yet I wasn't harmed. So isn't the good that came from not washing my hands and face a bigger miracle than the good that came from your not washing pots?"

So the lazy couple, piling one boast on top of another, was even more heedless than before, and continued to live that way.

—'Jigs byed skyabs, *Qinghai Folk Literature* 4, 1984