

SNAKEHEAD AND SNAKETAIL

One day Snaketail said to Snakehead, “You be the tail. I want to be the head.” The head was unwilling and explained the many circumstances why reversing head and tail would not be right, but no matter what he said it was all like pouring water onto sand. Then with many unhappy expressions, Snakehead forcefully said to Snaketail, “I’m always ahead and you’re always behind. Why do we have to exchange?” Snaketail was unable to tell Snakehead the circumstances of why they should.

Since Snaketail did not accept that Snakehead always wanted to be first, it wrapped itself tightly around a tree on the way and stayed there. Snakehead was unable to go anywhere, and there they stayed a while. Snaketail’s ability was the main thing.

At that time, Snakehead could do nothing and had no choice but to let Snaketail go first. But since Snaketail did not have the power of sight to see where they were going clearly, they went and went and fell into a big firepit. The whole body was instantly burnt, flesh and bone turned to ash. The snake died and its affairs concluded.

We should avoid affairs like foregoing in the way we live. We must always lump together things that have inharmonious qualities and opposing characteristics. Other than that, we need to prevent deeds like the snake’s death from happening.

—Dbyin Lan phe, *Qinghai Folk Literature* 10, 1984