

**The Dog Holding the Moon In  
His Mouth**

and

**Other Folktales From Shan State**

by

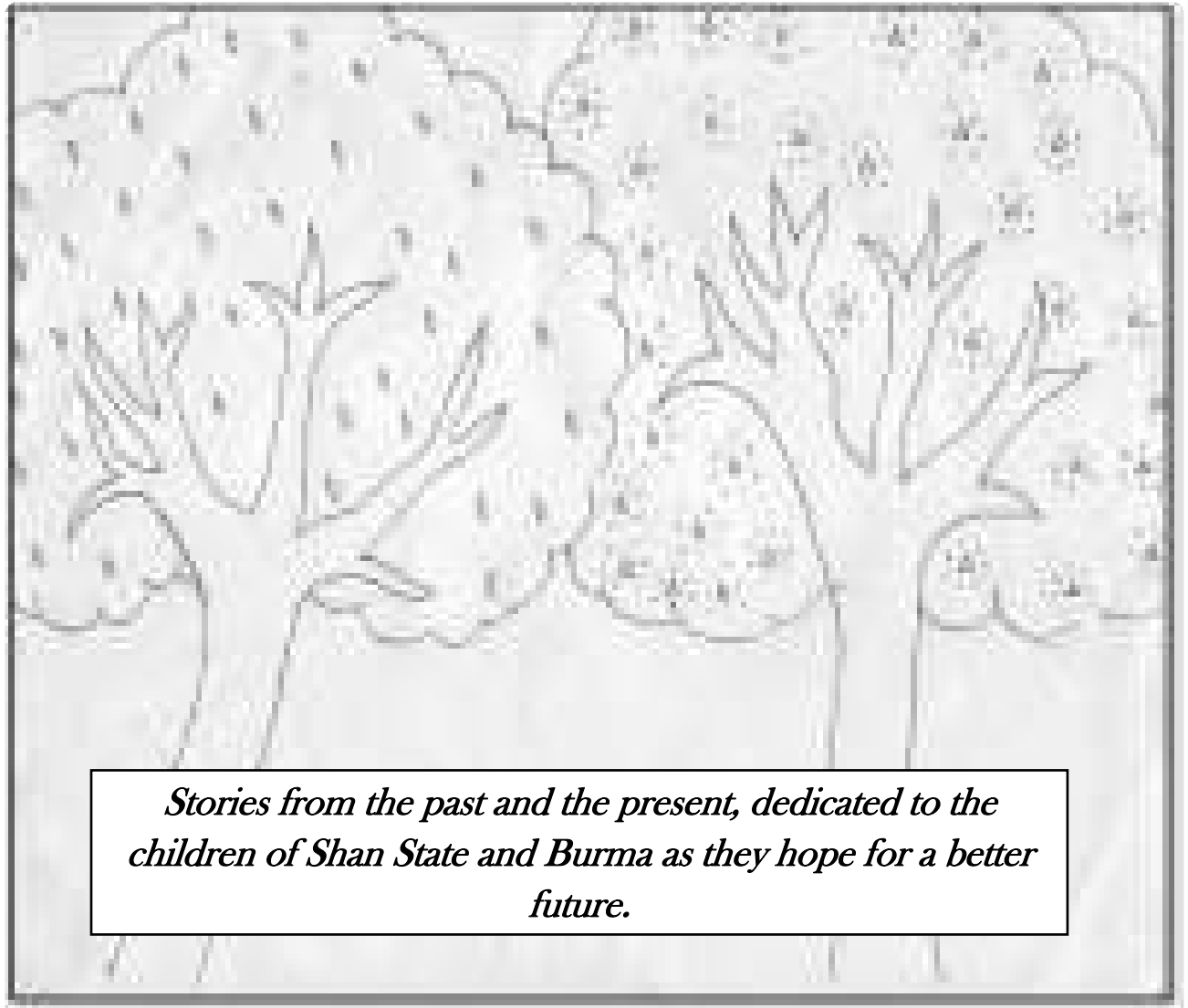
**The Students of SSSNY's 9th Social Justice  
Education Program**

# The Dog Holding the Moon In His Mouth and Other Folktales From Shan State

by  
The Students of SSSNY's 9<sup>th</sup> Social Justice Education  
Program

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Cover Illustration  
by  
Lao Murng



We would like to thank all those who support our school-- our staff, teachers, advisors and donors. Your hard work and dedication make this school an institution of the spirit, not only a place of learning.

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*Ancient stories reflecting on Shan State's past.*

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Rarely is the world able to read celebratory news about Burma. The stories that reach the international community involve the brutality of the long-reigning military regime and the diaspora of refugees in neighboring nations. In ethnically diverse regions like Shan State, the population struggles to survive forced relocations, a stagnant economy and a corrupt educational system that has suppressed ethnic languages and literature.

It is somewhat remarkable then, that out of this oppression has emerged a generation of youth at home and in exile, who are dedicating their lives to promoting and preserving their culture and ethnic identities. They, like their parents and grandparents before, have carried these folktales on journeys through jungles, over mountains and across borders. Their stories, like them, are Kachin, Kayan, Pa-O, Shan and Wa; they highlight their love of nature, family and tradition.

These ancient tales also inspired many students to compose new works fitting the modern age. Found near the end of this book, these contemporary stories reflect both the challenges facing their communities today and the better future they are dedicated to creating—one where they are free to pursue education, return to their homeland, and live in peace.

The simple continued existence of Shan State's folktales and the enthusiasm of SSSNY's students to record, illustrate and share them, is a legacy for the children of their country who will inherit their peoples' history. This book is a celebration of the region's unique heritage—a reminder that Shan State's culture and literature are still alive.

Sally Kantar  
9<sup>th</sup> SJEP Teacher  
SSSNY  
December, 2009

# Traditional Folktales

# WHY THE BUFFALO HEADBUTTS THE BANANA TREE

Story by Mwe Khao and Khun Htai Hto  
Illustrations by Mwe Khao



When the Buddha lived, the Buddha left the temple to save all living things in the world. While Buddha was crossing the jungle, a buffalo saw the Buddha. Suddenly, in his mind, he felt respect for the Buddha and wanted to follow him.

“When I saw you, it was very strange. I felt very much respect for you. I want to follow you and protect you,” the buffalo said. “Can I follow you?” The Buddha allowed him to follow.





The Buddha and the buffalo continued their trip. The weather was very hot. Halfway through the trip, the buffalo saw a puddle and he wanted to bathe. So he asked permission from the Buddha and ran down to it. The Buddha waited for him near a banana tree. The buffalo spent a lot of time bathing. He thought the Buddha was waiting for him.

The buffalo looked at the Buddha again and again. He couldn't see clearly because his face was full of mud.



“Why is the Buddha so patient and waiting for me?” he thought. He didn’t believe it and came out of the puddle. Then he saw there was a banana tree there instead of the Buddha.

The buffalo was very upset with the banana tree. “Why did the banana tree look like Buddha?” he thought. He headbutted the banana tree angrily.

Until now, when buffaloes see banana trees they headbutt them.

*We must respect others’ time and not make people to wait for us as long as we want.*

# THE TIGER AND THE RABBIT

Story by Lao Murng and Lont Tai

Illustrations by Lao Murng

Long, long ago, there was a tiger and a rabbit. They were friends and lived in the jungle. The rabbit was very lazy but more clever than the tiger. The tiger was very hardworking and hunted meat.

One day, they went to work to get grass to make a roof together. When they arrived at work, the rabbit said, "I am tired. I feel ill today. I will relax and wait for you here.



The rabbit was clever, but clever in a bad way. He expected to steal the tiger's food when the tiger left him alone and went to work. Later, lunch time arrived and the tiger came back. Before the tiger came, the rabbit stole the tiger's food and hid it under his seat. When the tiger arrived, he saw the rabbit eating something.

"What are you eating?" the tiger asked.

"I am eating the meat of my own buttocks," the rabbit answered. The tiger started looking for his food, but he saw nothing in his bag. He thought that the rabbit stole his food, but he wasn't angry at the rabbit. The tiger was very good hearted.

When the time to go home arrived, the tiger carried the grass for the roof on his back and the rabbit rode on top of that because he was lazy. Meanwhile, the rabbit started to make some sounds. The tiger heard.



“What are you doing?” the tiger asked. “What was that sound?”

“That was the sound of my teeth rubbing together,” the rabbit replied.

But that was really the sound of a match, and suddenly, both the grass and the tiger’s back caught on fire.



The tiger was very angry with the rabbit and he ran, throwing himself into the water. No one helped the tiger, but a few moments later, a buffalo came to him from under the water. The tiger and the buffalo became friends and the tiger doesn't eat buffalo even up to today.

Since that day, the rabbit and the tiger have ended their friendship and become enemies.

# THE STORY OF THE PA-O PARENTS

Story by Khun Myo and Nang Nu Wai

Illustrations by Khun Myo

*The Pa-O people believe that their mother is a dragon and their father is Wiekzar, a human.*

Long, long ago, there was a dragon country whose kingdom was under the water. The dragon king had many princesses and they were very happy living in their country. They could pretend they were human.

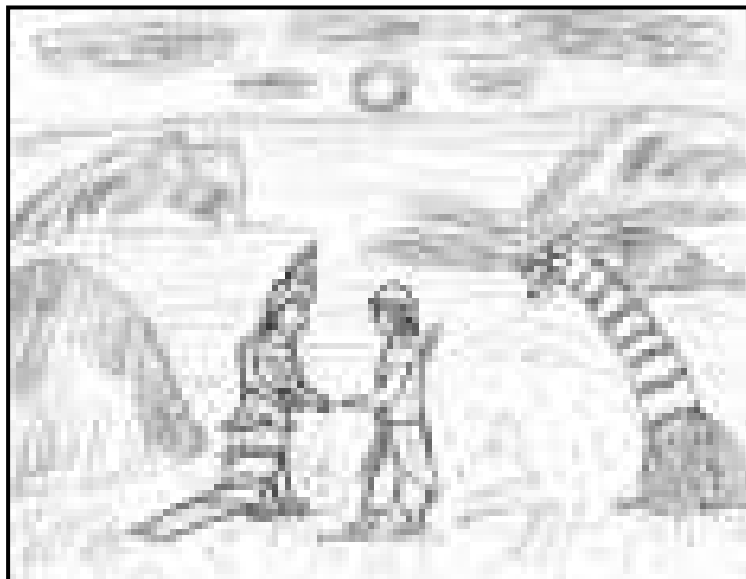
Meanwhile, Wiekzar was a person who was very powerful and could fly into the air. He was very intelligent and he could do everything he wanted. He didn't live with normal people and lived in the deepest jungle.

One day, one of the dragon princesses was bored living in their country and she asked her father for permission to visit the human world.

"Don't make friends with humans because we are different," her father ordered.

"Yes, OK!" she said. Then she went for a visit to the human world alone.

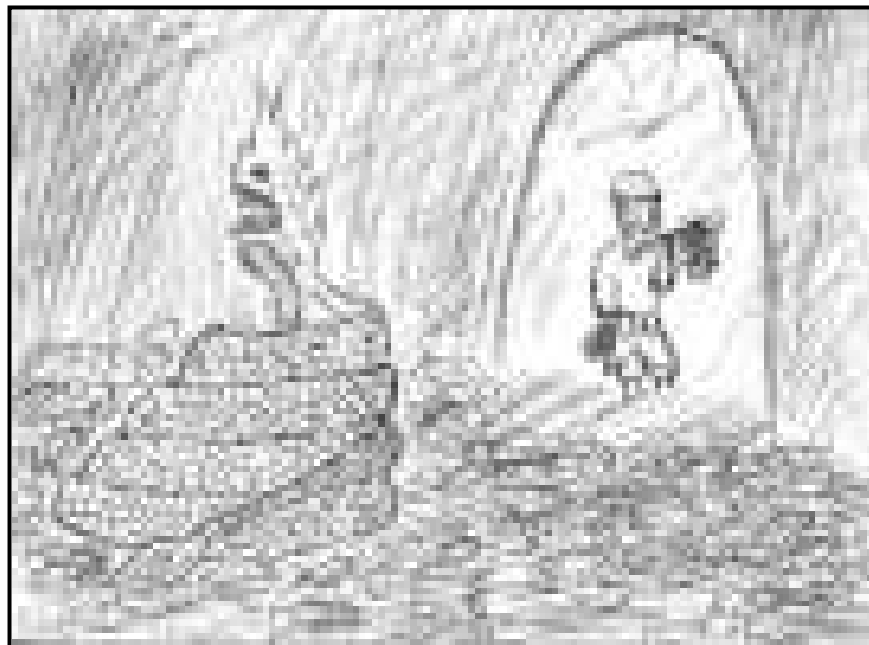
She went around the jungle, where Wiekzar lived, as a pretty girl. One day, she met Wiekzar in the jungle and they fell in love.



At that time, they lived together in a cave. Wiekzar went out everyday to find food and fruits.



One day, he came back to the cave from finding fruits and food and he saw a dragon sleeping there. He knew that his wife was really a dragon. He left the cave and never came back again, because he believed that a dragon and a human couldn't live together. They were of a different life.



The dragon princess waited for her husband for a long time. She found out that she was pregnant. However, her husband never came back, and at that time, she laid two eggs. She decided to go back to her country, so she left her eggs with a hermit.



Finally, the eggs became mature enough to crack. One of the eggs didn't crack very well. Therefore, the hermit had to peel it and take the baby from the egg. The hermit called that baby "Pa-O," because "pa" means "crack" and "o" means "peel" in our language. The baby in the other egg became "Karen."

So the Pa-O and the Karen are siblings, even now.



# THE SHELDRAKE BIRDS

Story by Teun Tai and Wong Lao

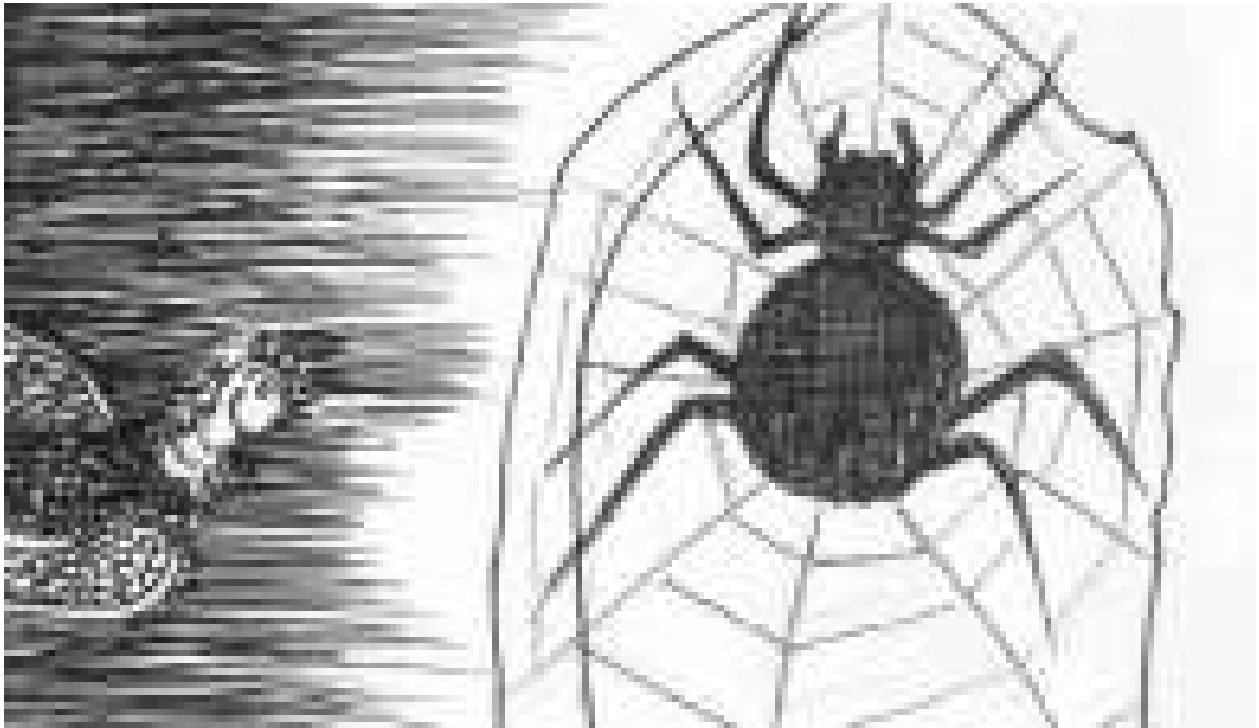
Illustrations by Wong Lao



Once upon a time, there were 90,000 sheldrake birds. They lived in a cave that was close to a river. When they went out to find food, they had to fly across the river and the river was very wide.

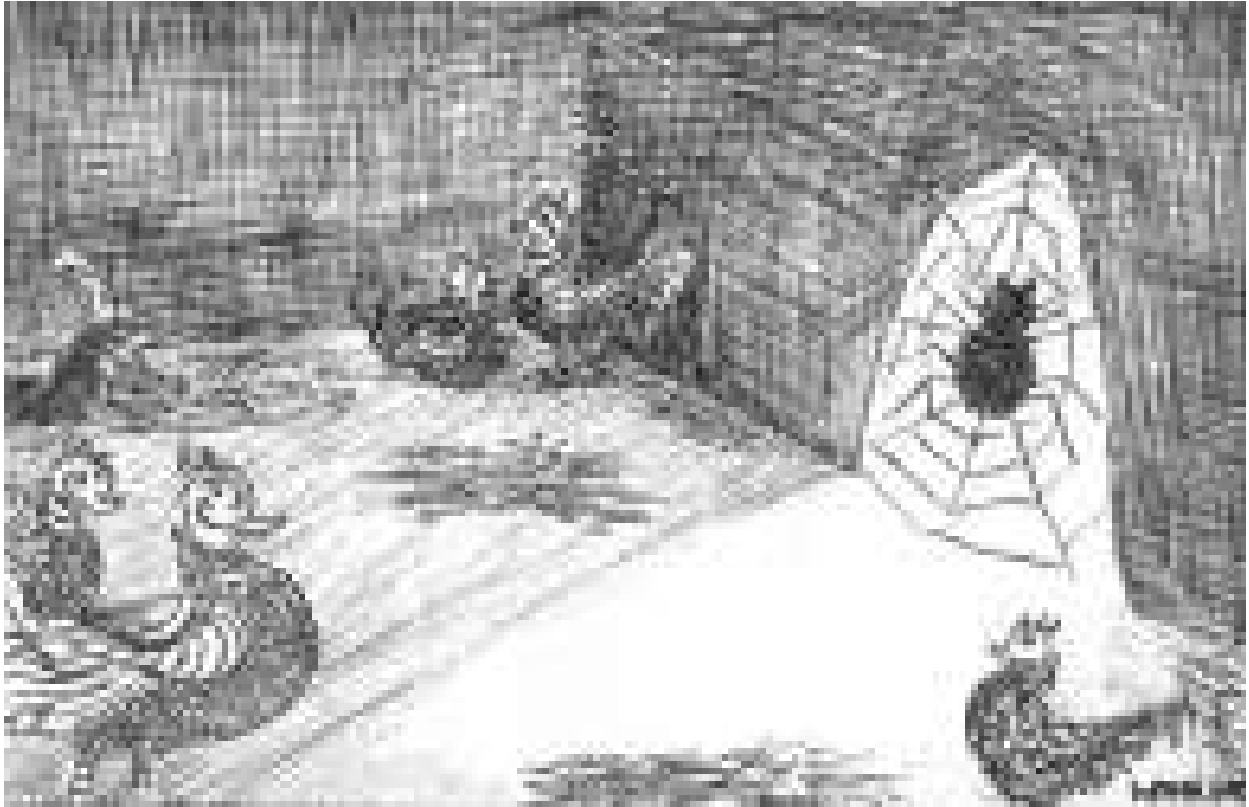
Before rainy season, they would find enough rice for the whole season and keep it in their cave. They did this because when it rained, their wings would get wet and they could not fly across the river.

There was also a big spider in the cave. When it was rainy season, he came to make a web at the cave's mouth. He made one web layer each month until the end of the rainy season.



When the rainy season ended and summer began, the sheldrake birds' food was gone. They would start going out to eat. The sheldrake birds' chief had the responsibility of destroying the web because he was stronger than the others. They had to do this every year.

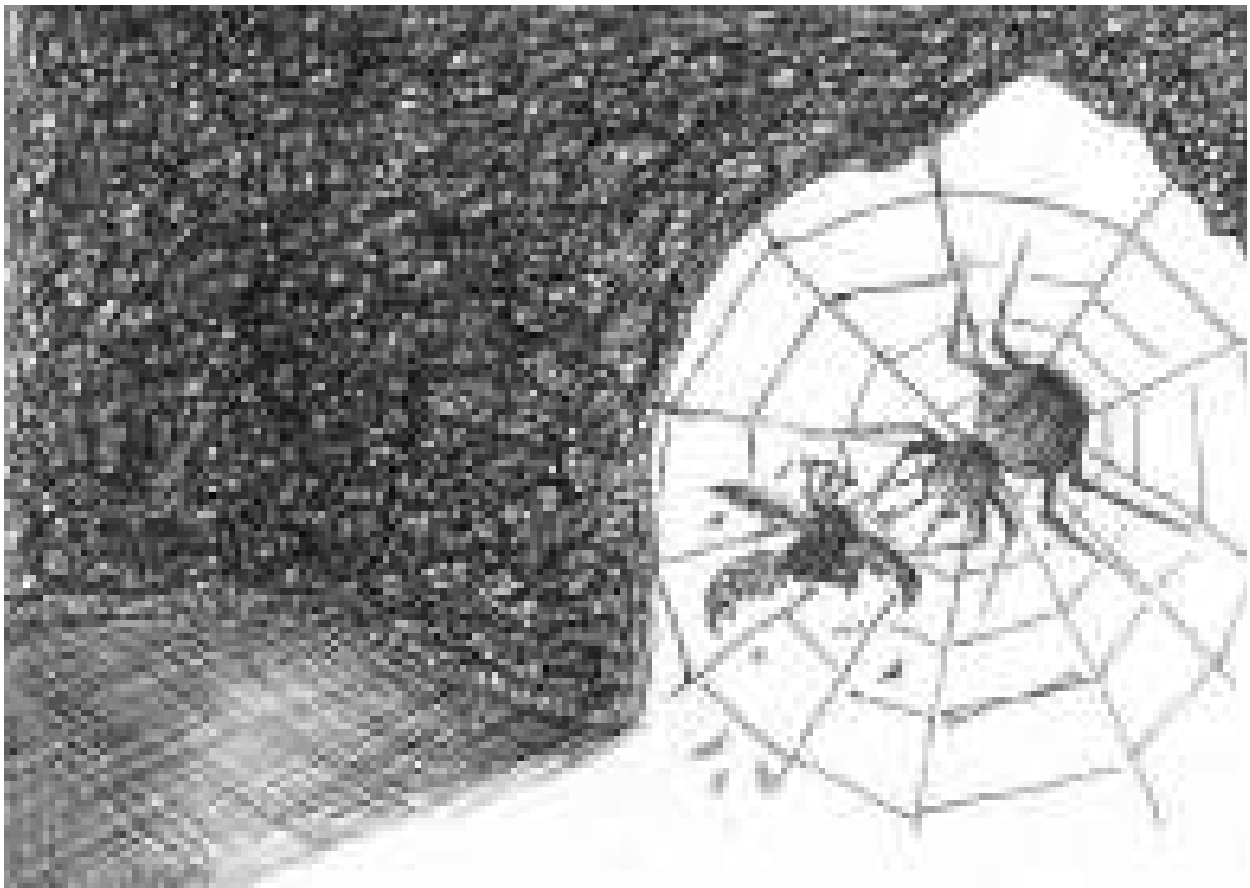
One year, there was so much rain that it didn't stop until the first month of summer. The food that the birds saved was gone and they could not go out because it was still raining. Since they had no food, they decided to eat their own children.



They started to eat the young birds. After the young were gone, they ate the old ones, and then the middle ones. The chief had to eat more than others because he had to destroy the web at the end of the rainy season.

This year, it rained for 5 months — more than in other years. So, spider had made five layers of web at the mouth of the cave. The sheldrake birds' chief destroyed four layers and then he was so tired, because he had not enough food and had destroyed the next generation of birds.

When he destroyed the fifth layer his energy was gone. He couldn't leave the web, so the spider ate him easily. After the chief was eaten, no other birds could destroy the web. All of them had to be the food of the spider.



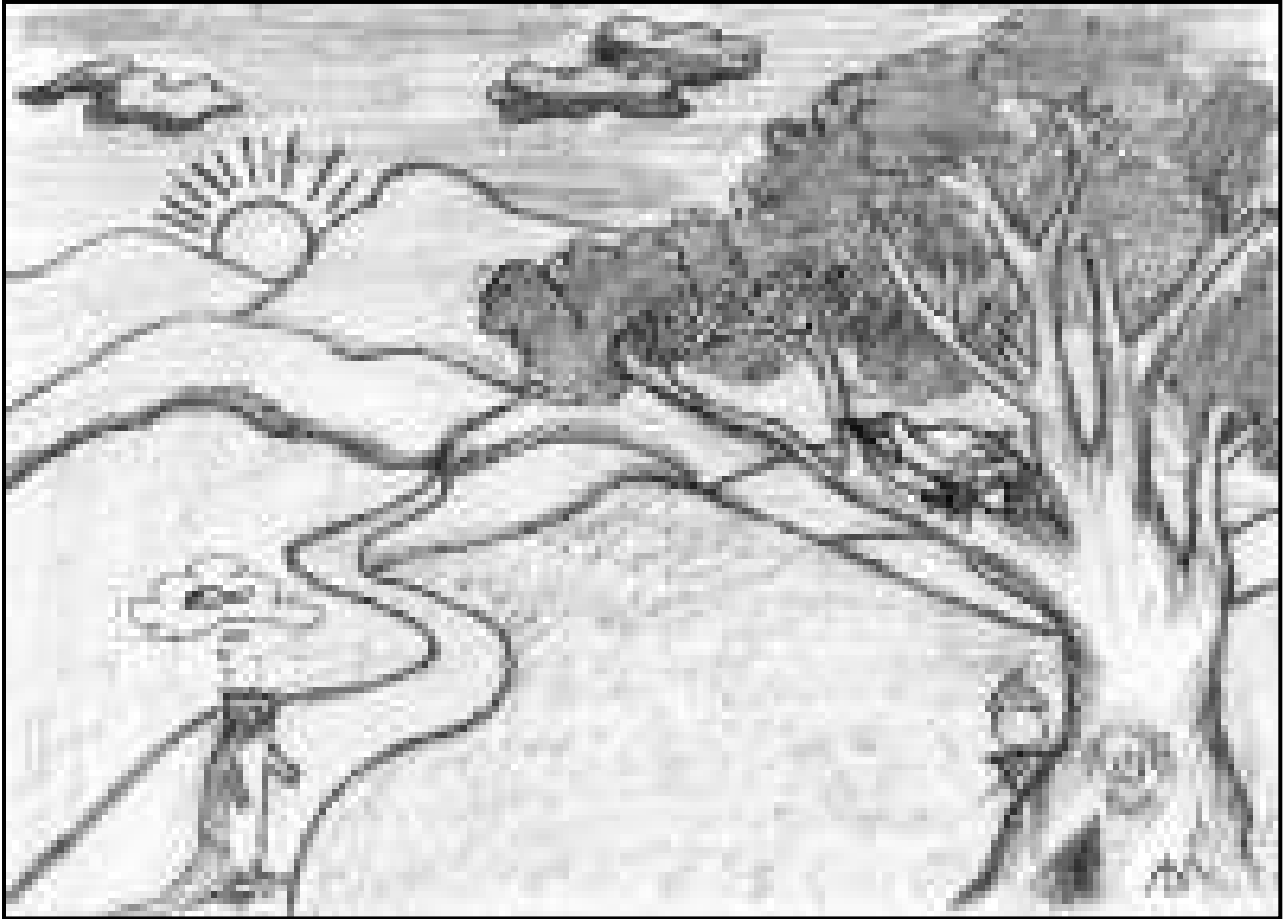
And that's how the sheldrake birds disappeared from the world.

*This story tells us if we destroy our community, we won't be able to fight our enemy. We know if we don't unite, we will also disappear like the sheldrake birds.*

# THE OTTER AND THE CROW

Story by Ah La Lahtaw and Hsur Awn

Illustrations by Lao Murng and Zawm Murng



Once upon a time, there was a young male otter and a big, egotistical male crow. The otter lived in the river and the crow lived in a tree near a village.

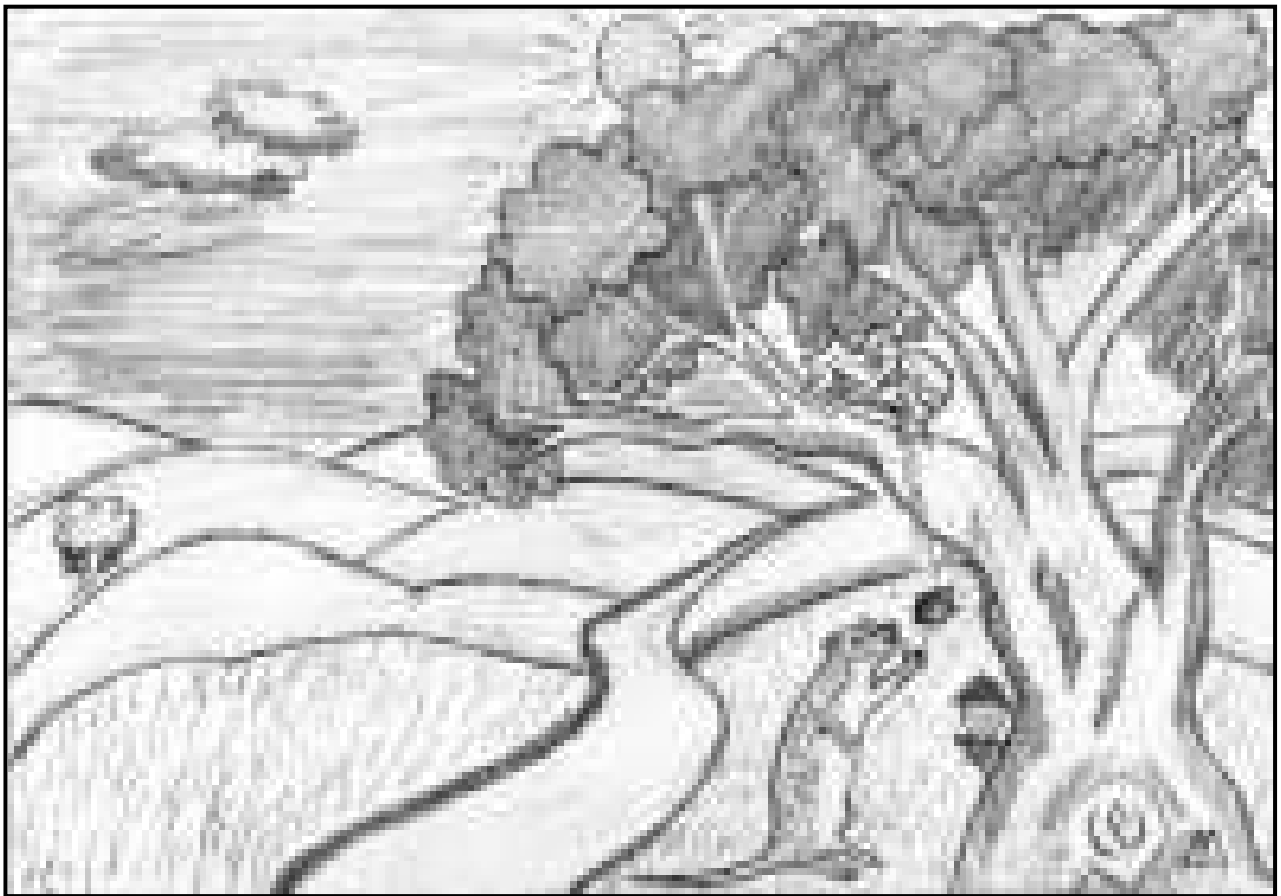
One day, the crow was very hungry and he was looking for food. Suddenly, he saw many pieces of meat at the home of one of the villagers. He took one of them and went back to his house in the tree to take a rest. He didn't eat his meat yet, because he was very tired.

At that time, the clever otter came and saw him in the tree with his meat. "Oh! What a delicious piece of meat," the otter thought.

"Hi, Mr. Crow!" said the otter. "I have heard you have the best voice in this area. So, can you sing now, please?" he asked.

"Of course I can," the crow replied, and opened his mouth suddenly. His meat fell down.

"You are stupid," the otter said, and ate the crow's meat immediately.



*This story's message is to not be egotistical and just follow others' praise. You should think well before you do something.*

# THE POOR MAN AND THE MICE

Story by Fon Kham and Sai Nyi  
Illustrations by Zawm Wan



Once upon a time, in the Wa land in Shan State, there was a young, poor man who lived in a hut. This man was so hungry he was shaking as he tried to eat some sticky rice. Before he could eat the sticky rice, it fell down into a mouse hole. In that hole, a mouse king lived with his followers. When the sticky rice fell down, one of the mice saw it and gave it to their king. Never before in his whole life had the king eaten sticky rice like this.

The Mouse King told his fellow mice to bring the man who sent the sticky rice into the hole. The mice went outside to find that poor man.

“Is it you who sent the sticky rice down this hole?” they asked him.

“I didn’t send it,” the poor man said. “The sticky rice fell down into the hole because my hand shook.”



“Can you go with me to see our king?” the mice asked. “He wants to meet you.”

“How can I go with you? This hole is very small,” the man replied. The mice told him not to worry and gave him a magic hat. The poor man arrived in the hole to meet the Mouse King.



“Thank you very much for sending sticky rice to us. I want to give you some presents. You can take whatever you want in this place, young man,” the Mouse King said. The poor man told the king that he didn’t want anything and went back to his hut.

The next morning when the poor man woke up, he saw a lot of golden coins under his bed. At that time, he became a rich man and had a happy life.



*If we do good things, they will come back to us.*

# THE RABBIT AND THE TURTLE

Story by Hom Lyo and Hseng Ging  
Illustrations by Zawm Wan and Larn Aon

Long, long ago, a rabbit and a turtle lived in the forest. Rabbit insulted other animals, but Turtle was honest. He never said bad things to the other animals.

One day, Rabbit wanted to race Turtle.

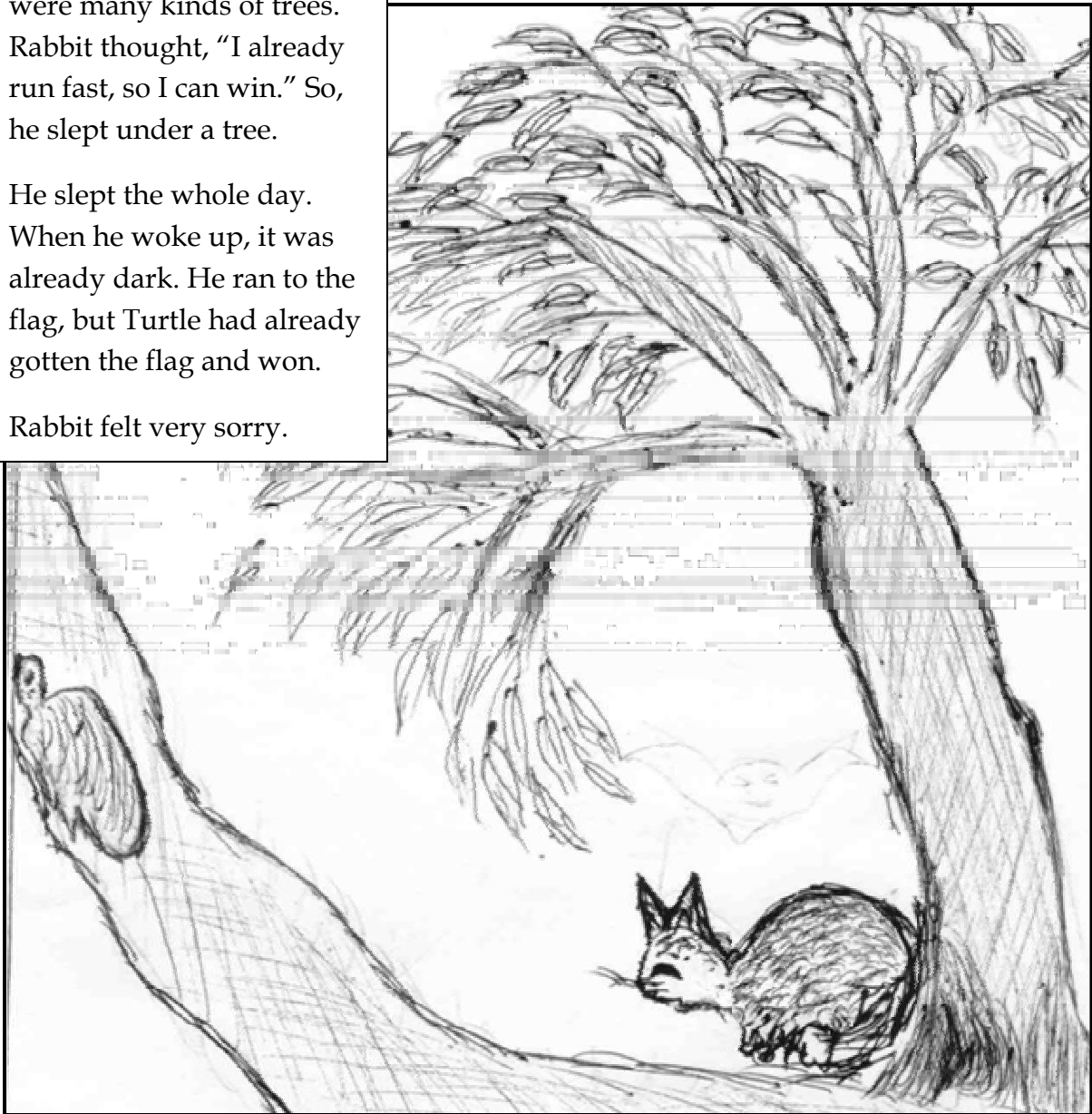
"Let's run," he said. "Whoever takes the flag first is the winner." The turtle agreed with him.



In this forest, there was a beautiful river and there were many kinds of trees. Rabbit thought, "I already run fast, so I can win." So, he slept under a tree.

He slept the whole day. When he woke up, it was already dark. He ran to the flag, but Turtle had already gotten the flag and won.

Rabbit felt very sorry.



*This story tells us that we should not insult other people. Also, we should be modest.*

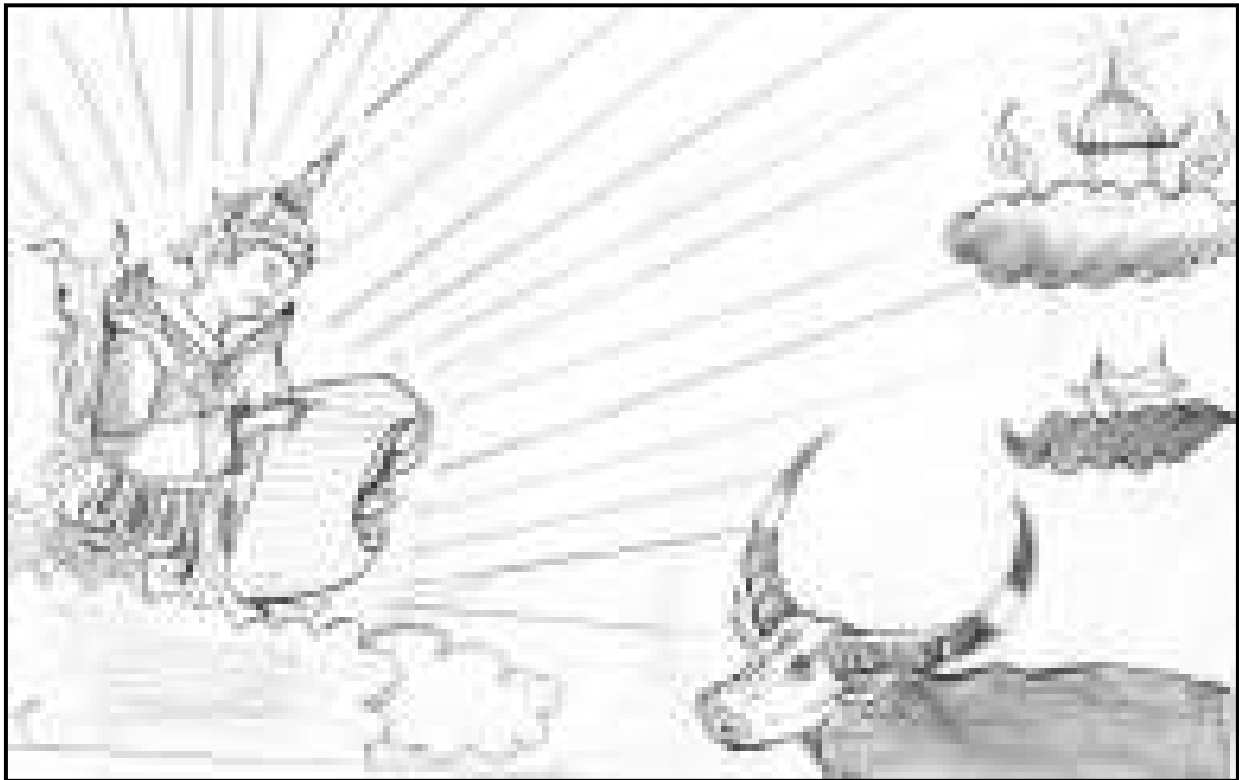
# BECAUSE THE BUFFALO MADE A MISTAKE

Story by Myo Oo, Si Wan and Zawm Wan

Illustrations by Zawm Wan

In the past, long ago, most four-legged animals lived in heaven. They were safe and happy and always had enough food. One day, God called the leader of the buffaloes to meet him. He told the buffaloes about a way they could help people to improve their lives.

“You should go to tell the people that they should start eating enough food to sustain themselves for three days at a time,” God said.



The buffalo had an obligation to go to tell the people what God had said. So the buffalo started his journey to the people. He had to walk a very long way. He saw and met many animals, but no four-legged ones. He was very amazed and surprised – he loved everything on the Earth. Birds were shocked to see him and flew out of bushes. He was shocked to see them, too.

Later, the buffalo saw many banana trees. There was a good place for a buffalo to sleep, he thought. He slept for such a long time. When he woke up he remembered his duty. He had to run quickly to get to the peoples' village.



"Listen carefully!" the buffalo shouted when he saw the people. "Here is a good chance for you to improve your terrible lives. People should eat three meals each day," he told them. "God said you should try this!"

The people followed what the buffalo told them and started eating three meals each day. And then the buffalo went back to heaven.

So, since then, people have used this plan. And people became hungrier and hungrier and their lives more and more terrible. God couldn't let people be like that. He called the buffalo.

“You said the wrong thing to the people,” God said. “I meant people should eat enough food to sustain themselves for three days, not to eat three meals each day. Now life is very terrible and difficult for them. So, you should go to help them with farming.”

So, since that time, buffaloes had to work for the humans. They were used for farming, and were like peoples’ slaves.



Buffaloes were very angry with the banana trees, where they slept so long. Whenever buffaloes see banana trees, they always destroy them all. And they remember when they were living in heaven.

# NANG LUNG HOM

Story and Illustrations by Phoy Aom and Tuen Leng Awng

In ancient times, there was a hermit living in a cave. He was always meditating in the cave and he only went out to pee. He didn't have free time. A deer came and drank his pee everyday.



After the deer drank his pee everyday, she became pregnant. Then the deer gave birth to a baby. It was a girl.



The hermit heard the baby crying. He came out and before he decided to give the child milk, he prayed.

“If this baby is mine, I will be able to give her milk from my finger,” he said. It was successful. He gave the baby milk until she grew up to become a young girl. The hermit named her “Nang Lung Hom,” which means “the favorite.” When she grew up, the hermit built for her a home, a place to live alone.

The mother deer went to another place in the kingdom and the King of Si Hseng wanted the authorities, or the prince, Kham Leng, to catch it.

“The person who lets the deer go is a person who will be killed,” the King said. If the deer escaped from a person, the person must follow the deer.



The deer escaped from the prince. He followed it in the very thick jungle. When he crossed the jungle, he always gave names to the hills or valleys. The name became a village, the name of a Shan word.

When he was near to Nang Lung Hom, there was darkness. He only saw the fire. He gave the name of the hill at nighttime "Thom Mong." That means he wanted light, because he was expecting tomorrow he will go on.

When the prince arrived at the place of the hermit's daughter, he was very happy and gave it the name "Ban Jai Oun," which means "warm-hearted village." And there he married Nang Lung Hom, the hermit's daughter.



# THE LION AND THE HUNTER

Story by Hseng Leun, Si Wan and Zawm Wan

Illustrations by Si Wan



Once there was a hunter living in the jungle to hunt animals to sell to the people in his village. His village was small and he always went into the forest for hunting.

One day, as usual, he went out to hunt a deer. But he waited for a long time and there weren't any deer. While he was still sitting under the tree, suddenly he heard a sound next to him. He picked up his gun, ready to shoot that animal.

But when he looked at it, it was not a deer. It was a big lion.



The hunter was shocked. "Please don't kill me!" he told the lion. The lion looked at him.

"Do you love your life?" the lion asked.

"Yes, I do," the hunter replied.

Then the lion gave him some words of advice.

"If you love yourself, don't kill the other life. They also love their life as you do," he said.

Finally, the hunter decided to leave the forest. He didn't hunt animals anymore and he tried to be a good person. He thought about the words that the lion taught him – to love ourselves as others also love themselves.

# AI HENG LOUNG, A STRONG MAN

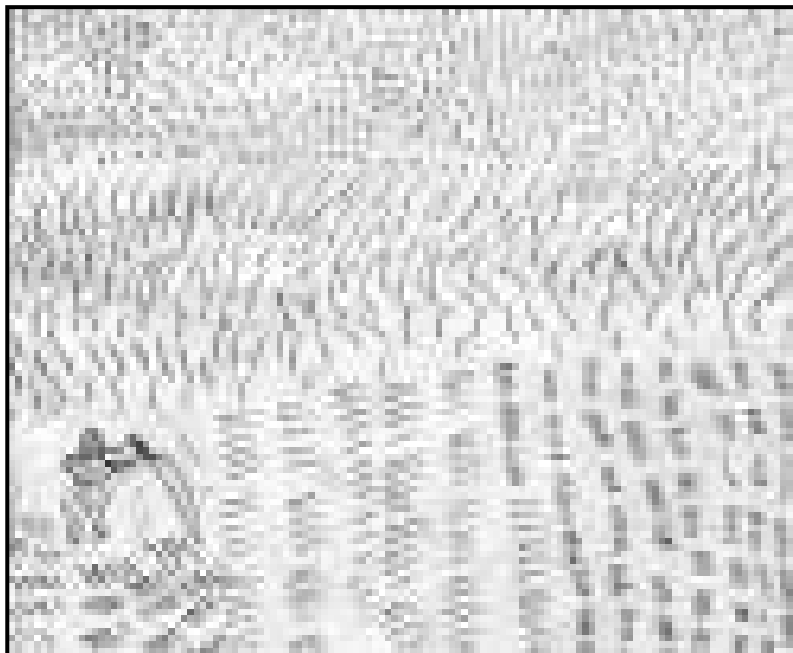
Story by Keo Noom Kham, Si Lont Leng and Zawm Murng

Illustrations by Zawm Murng

Once, there was an old couple who lived in a small village at the top of a mountain. They had one son and he was very strong. His name was Ai Heng Loung. He was the strongest young man and very righteous to his parents.



He made a big farm and earned a lot of money. His family became the richest in their village.



The villagers were jealous of them. They encouraged Ai Heng Loung's father to kill his son. So, Ai Heng Loung's father ordered him to kill a giant bird and take its eggs.



He obeyed the order of his father. He killed the female bird.

Then, the male bird came and took Ai Heng Loung's heart out and he died.



Before he died, he shouted at his father with a strong voice. Ai Heng Loung's voice became the strong wind in our world.

*This story tells us that jealousy can damage everything. Also, don't believe others so easily.*

# THE SMALL CHICKEN STARS

Story and Illustrations by Zawm Wan

*This is a story that my mum used to tell me when I was a child. When I heard my mum tell me, I was very sad with this story. This story is teaching the children to obey their mothers.*



Long ago, there was a farmer's house in the countryside. There wasn't a village or a forest there. The house was very far from the town. A hen and chicks were living there with their father, a rooster. They had eight members in their family.

The farmers were the owners of the house and the garden. The chicks' mother told them many times, "don't go to play in the garden." Their mother also told them about their father. He was killed by entering the garden. But the chicks never listened to that. For the hen, she never went into the garden.

Unfortunately, one day, important guests came to the home. It was evening. The owners had to serve dinner to the guests. They had some vegetables but they needed meat to make soup and eat with their sticky rice. It was too late in the evening to go to the town.

“We have a hen!” the woman said. “So, we can get the meat.” When the woman said that, the hen was listening. She knew she was going to die. She told her babies some last words.



“When I’m not here with you, don’t feel sad. And don’t be cruel to each other. Don’t steal things. Don’t go into the owner’s garden and house,” she said. “Please obey my voice. After here, we won’t see each other again and you won’t have your mother again.”

“Starting tomorrow,” she continued, “all of you have to find your own food and when you get cold, you have to hug each other to be warm.”

After she said this, the farmer took the hen to be hanged with a rope and cooked.

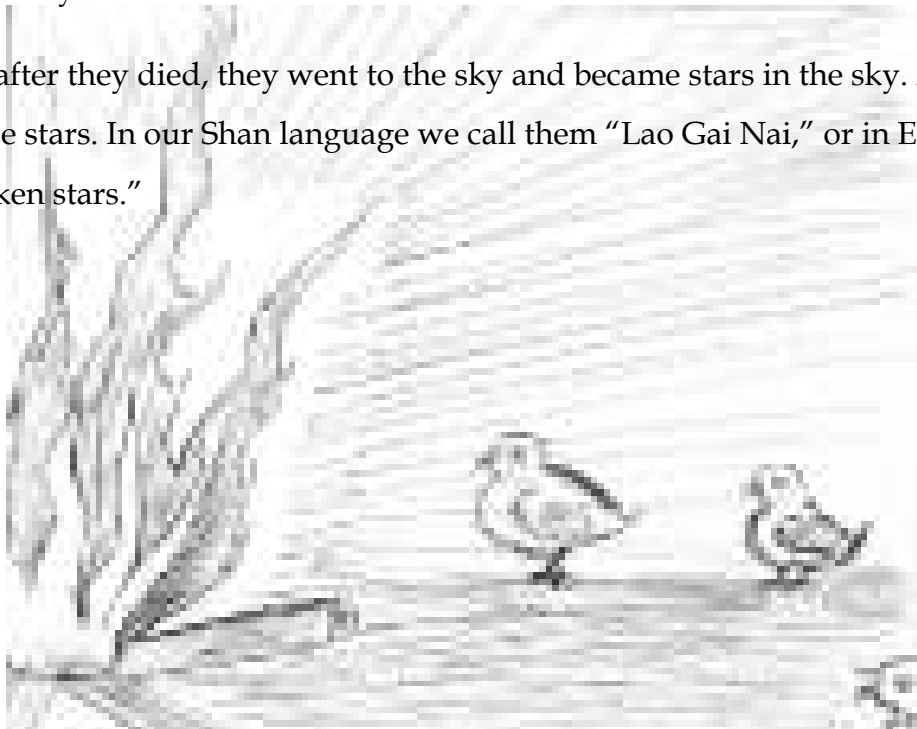




The chicks didn't have their mother. They couldn't find their food and they were upset about what their mum said to them. They always miss their mother. Day after day, they felt doleful. They thought about their mother giving them food and making them warm.

When the rainy season was coming, the rain was falling and they were very cold. They were also very hungry and weak. All of them jumped into the fire together. Before they jumped, they said, "Our lives without our mother is like a banana tree without branches." And they all died.

Finally, after they died, they went to the sky and became stars in the sky. At night we can see these stars. In our Shan language we call them "Lao Gai Nai," or in English, "the small chicken stars."



# THE MONK AND THE MONKEY

Story by Khun Htan Lay, M.E.C. and Larn Aon

Illustrations by Sai Khong

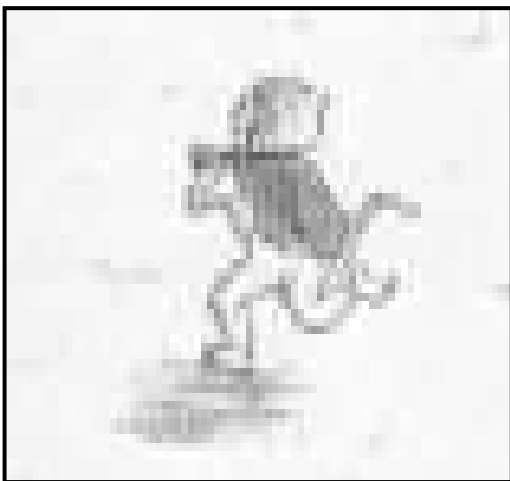
Long, long ago, there was a big banyan tree. A monkey lived in the banyan tree and his life depended on that tree for survival everyday. People took a rest under the tree when they were traveling on their journeys.



While they were resting, they talked to each other about trouble and their difficult lives. When the monkey heard about “trouble” from the people many times, he didn’t know what it meant. He wanted to know – what is trouble?



So, the monkey decided to find a monk to learn about “trouble.” When he met with the monk, he asked, “Oh Master, I often hear ‘trouble’ from the people while they are sitting under my tree. May I know what it means?”



“Ok, I can help you,” the monk agreed. “Now I will give you a bag. In the bag, I put ‘trouble.’ If you open it, you are going to know what is ‘trouble.’ But not now. First you need to go to the desert. When you arrive in the desert, you can open it,” he explained. The monkey decided to go to the desert.

When the monkey arrived in the desert, he started to open the bag. When he opened it, suddenly, a hungry tiger jumped out at the monkey from the bag. Because the tiger was hungry, he tried to kill the monkey for food. So the monkey had to run quickly from the tiger's danger.



He ran and ran and there were no trees to climb on. The monkey was so tired and so frightened. Actually, he was in "trouble" now! Finally he found a tree and climbed up and he escaped from the tiger. He understood well what is "trouble."

The monkey went back to his old life and was happy. He didn't look for trouble again.

# THE RABBIT ADVISORS

Story and Illustrations by Yawd Kawn Noom

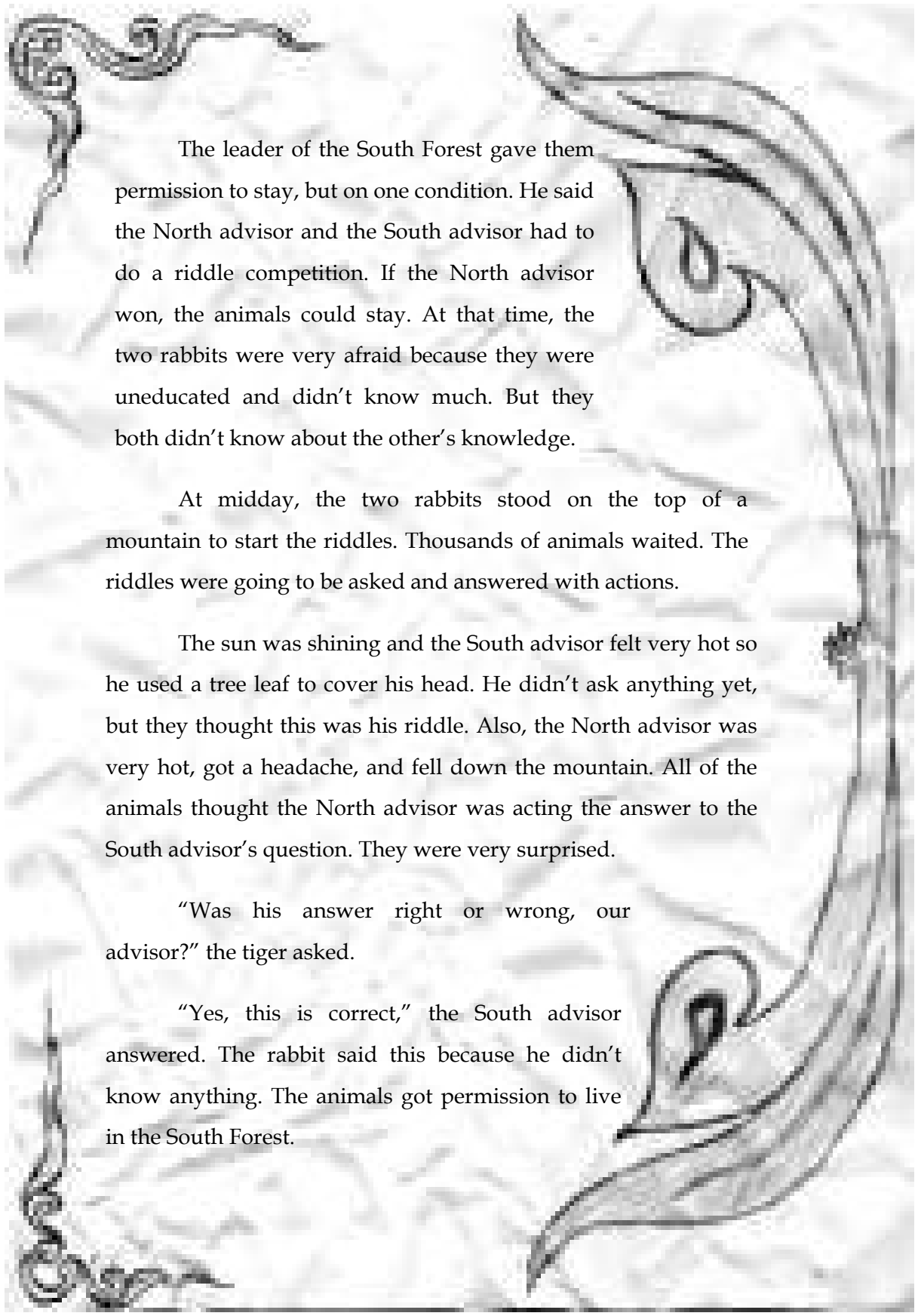
Long ago, in the deep forest, there were two groups of animals. They lived very far from each other. One group lived in the North Forest and one group lived in the South Forest. Each group had five hundred animals. Their leader was a tiger. Each group also had an advisor. Because they believed rabbits were educated, they gave them this position.

Unfortunately, one year in the summer season a forest fire started burning the North Forest. The animals lost their habitat and food. They went to their leader and told about their situation. The tiger went to his advisor, the rabbit.

"What should we do about the hot situation now, our advisor?" he asked.

"We must go to the South Forest and ask permission to live there until the forest fire is gone. We must cross a big river to arrive there," the rabbit said.

When they arrived in the South Forest, they told everything about their situation and what happened in their place. They said if the fire was gone, they would go back to their place.

A decorative border with stylized floral and leaf motifs surrounds the text. The motifs are rendered in a light, sketchy style, with some elements resembling large, flowing leaves and others as intricate scrollwork.

The leader of the South Forest gave them permission to stay, but on one condition. He said the North advisor and the South advisor had to do a riddle competition. If the North advisor won, the animals could stay. At that time, the two rabbits were very afraid because they were uneducated and didn't know much. But they both didn't know about the other's knowledge.

At midday, the two rabbits stood on the top of a mountain to start the riddles. Thousands of animals waited. The riddles were going to be asked and answered with actions.

The sun was shining and the South advisor felt very hot so he used a tree leaf to cover his head. He didn't ask anything yet, but they thought this was his riddle. Also, the North advisor was very hot, got a headache, and fell down the mountain. All of the animals thought the North advisor was acting the answer to the South advisor's question. They were very surprised.

"Was his answer right or wrong, our advisor?" the tiger asked.

"Yes, this is correct," the South advisor answered. The rabbit said this because he didn't know anything. The animals got permission to live in the South Forest.

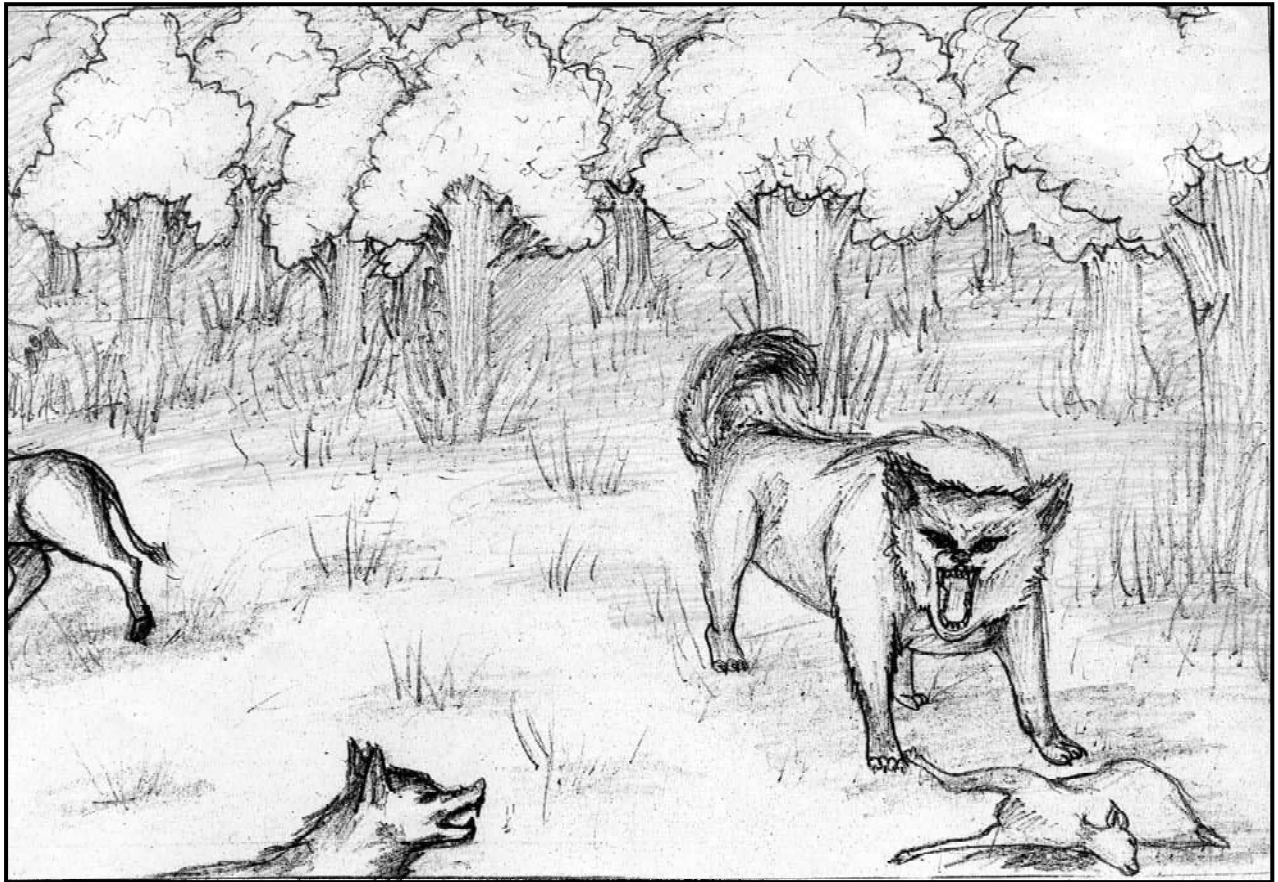
# THE DOG HOLDING THE MOON IN HIS MOUTH

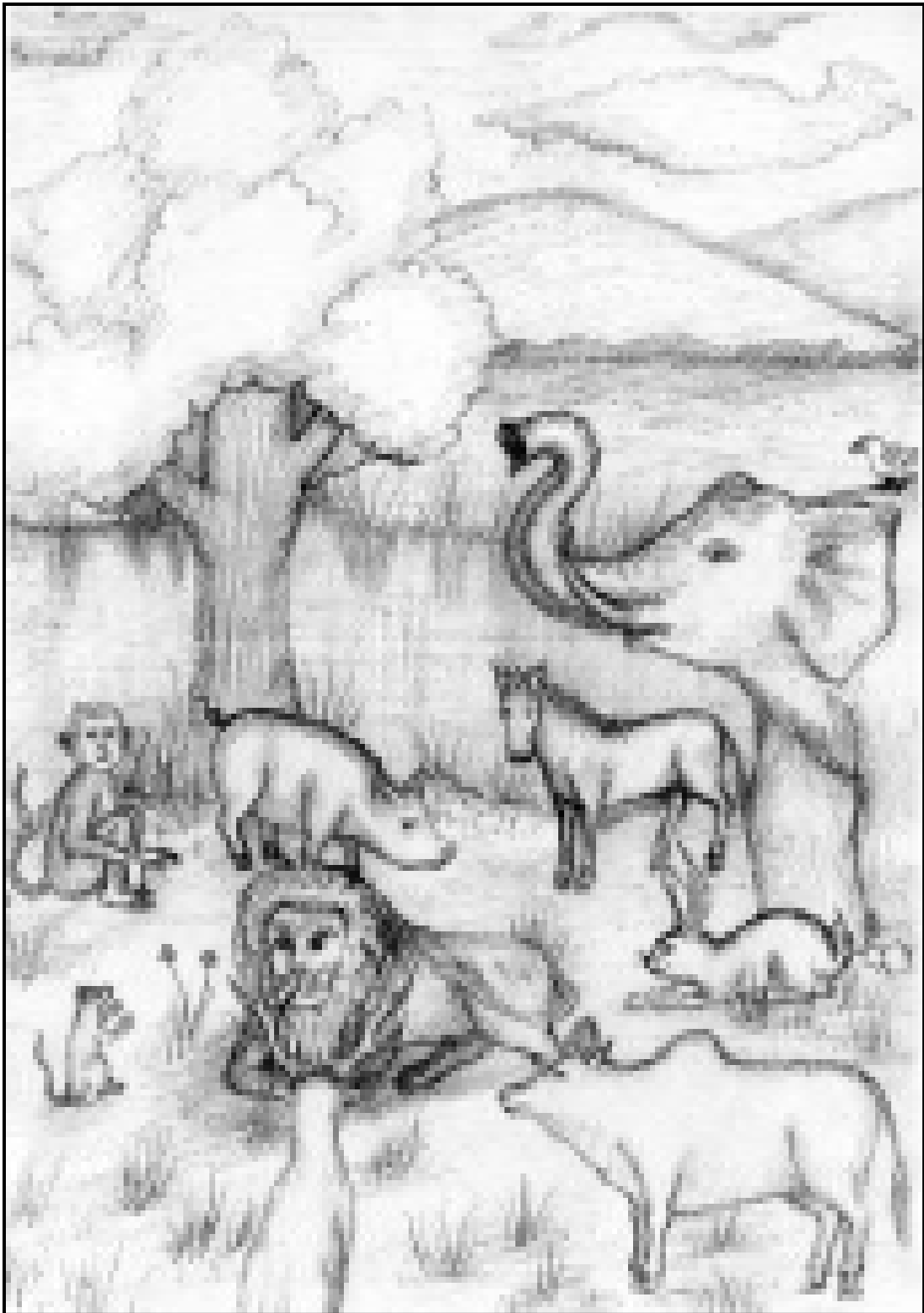
Story by Myo Oo and Tsawm San

Illustrations by Lao Murng

Long, long ago in the forest there was a big dog. He was strong and bad-tempered. He lived there in the forest with lions, elephants, tigers, and many small animals.

But the problem was that the big dog liked to fight other animals. He fought with the lion, the elephant, and the tiger. He always won because he was very strong. Sometimes he abused other animals, took all of their food and ate it all. So none of the animals liked him.





One day, all of the animals in the forest met secretly and made a plan to make the dog leave from the forest. They discussed for a long time to get a good idea. The next day they called the big dog. The lion represented all the animals and spoke to him.



“If you want to be a king in this forest, you must catch the moon for us,” the lion said.

The dog was very angry and jumped into the sky to follow the moon. But the moon was very fast. Sometimes he caught the moon in his mouth, but he lost it, so the moon became dark for a short time.



Our Shan people believe that when the moon becomes dark for a short time, it is the big dog holding the moon in his mouth. Modern people say it is the sun eclipsing the moon. But the dog follows still follows it, even now.

# New Folktales

# THE PARROT'S REWARD

Story and Illustrations by Khun Htai Hto

Nan San was a widow in the Mwe Taw village. When her husband died, her children were still young. At that time, her tears did not come out because she thought she should be strong and use her energy for the future of her sons.

She was working day after day. Before she went to the farm, she sent her three children to the monastery to get an education. Nan San had no education, but she didn't want her children to be the same as her.



One day, as she dug the soil at the farm, she heard a sound of a bird, like “ki...ki...ki...” Then she tried to look around until she found that bird.

“Oh! A parrot with blood on its body!” she said. She picked up the bird. The border of her farm was near the forest, so she found a plant to help stop the blood. She squeezed the plant’s water out and tried to carefully and gently put it on the wound on the bird’s body.

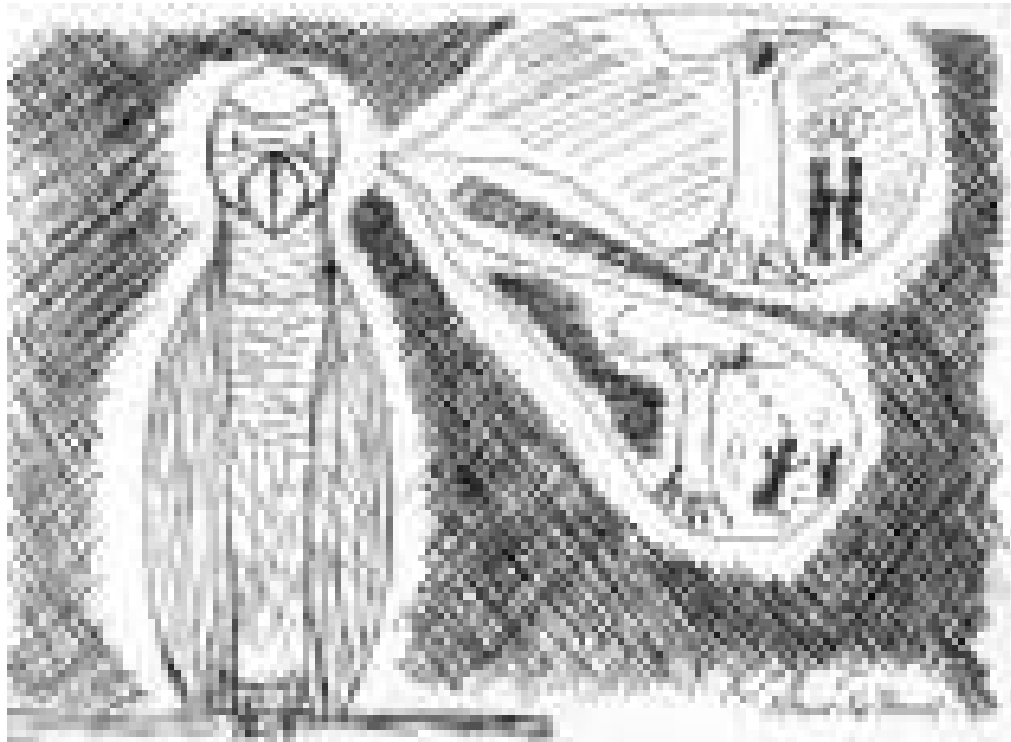


When she took the bird back home, her children were very happy. After two or three weeks, the bird became strong and healthy. It didn’t go anywhere and the children tried to teach it human language. After just two or three months, the bird could say a lot of words. It stayed nearly one year with Nan San’s family.

The bird thought about Nan San's family.

"What can I do for them?" he thought. "I want to make their family become rich. If they become rich they will protect me. Also, their family likes animals so much and they will never kill or eat animals. They are a very kind family."

Suddenly, the parrot remembered the two people who shot him on the day he was hurt. They had buried a bag of money under the tree near Nan San's farm.



The parrot whispered to Nan San after her children fell asleep.

"Mom," he said, because he called her mom, "you know, I have an idea to tell you..."

The next day, Nan San came back home before her sons woke up and in her hand there was a parcel. Sure enough, her family had become rich and they bought the forest near their farm because they wanted animals there to stay alive. Also, she donated money to the monastery.

*Try to help other people if they face some problems. If you do, you will not lose benefits for yourself.*

# HOLDING BY ONE HAND

Story and Illustrations by Moet Moet

Lay Bwar and Swee Nager were lovers. Both of them were from rich and royal families. Their parents agreed for them to marry. But Swee Nager had a secret girlfriend. He never talked about the secret girlfriend to his parents. In the winter of December, Swee Nager married. But the marriage party was not for Lay Bwar – it was for Swee Nager and his secret girlfriend. Lay Bwar was very angry.



“Someone leaves me, then I feel lonely,” she thought. “This means I have no choice. So, I will try a way that is better for me.” So Lay Bwar became a strong woman, who wanted to take responsibility for women through love.

After a few months, she met Phyu Zin. Phyu Zin was a very beautiful woman. Lay Bwar didn't want beautiful girls to be lost to men like Swee Nager. She wanted to live with Phyu Zin and work together the whole life. Phyu Zin didn't accept this. She wanted to marry her boyfriend and make a peaceful life with him.

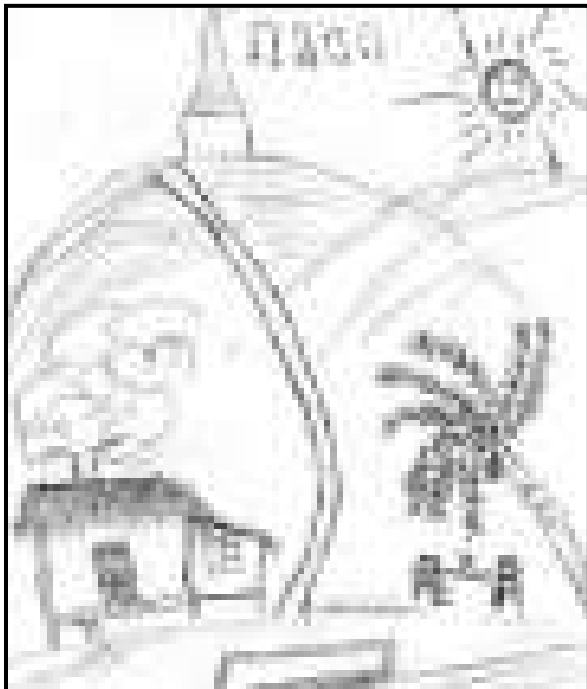
"Find a better life for you," Phyu Zin said. "I can't stay with you forever, but I will never change. You are my friend forever."

"Don't be so upset," Lay Bwar said. "I will never live with you as friends, but I will respect you for your whole life."

Lay Bwar tried to explain day after day. Phyu Zin tried to accept it, but she left.

Three years later, she came back to Lay Bwar.

"I'll never leave you," Phyu Zin told her. "Let's work together and live a peaceful life."



So they left home and took nothing. Their parents were so angry at them. They lived at the bottom of a mountain. At the top of the mountain, there was a golden pagoda. This place was very quiet and every morning the birds sang their song, the snow fell, and there was a song of bells.

After years and years, their life did not improve. Their life became eat to work and work to eat, but they were still happy with their life.

One day, Lay Bwar saw Phyu Zin crying under a tree. She asked what was wrong.

“Are you sick or do you feel sad?” she said.

“I am very sad. I want new clothes, but I can’t get them,” Phyu Zin replied.

When Lay Bwar heard that, she thought, “I’m afraid to see Phyu Zin feeling sad. I will find the best way I can to get new clothes for Phyu Zin.”

The next morning, Lay Bwar left home very early – 3 a.m. – to get clothes for Phyu Zin. When she arrived at the shop, she looked around, and got inside. She took only one set of clothes. At that time, there was no light in the shop so she could see nothing. When she left, the shopkeeper saw her.

“Thief! Thief! Thief!” he shouted. The shopkeeper called the police and the police put Lay Bwar in jail.

“I want to go back home for a moment,” she said. So the police followed her. When she arrived at home she talked to Phyu Zin.

“Don’t be sad without me and take care of yourself. Stay in this place for me. Don’t leave me – I will come back as soon as I can, ok?” she said.

Lay Bwar stayed in the jail for two years. One night she dreamt about Phyu Zin and she was very happy because she could leave the jail like that.

One morning, Phyu Zin went to the pagoda at the top of the mountain to pray. This morning was very peaceful. The snow was falling and the sound of the bells was very sweet.

When she got back to the bottom of the mountain, she thought about Lay Bwar.





“How can I find money to pay the jail?” she thought. Then, she saw a snake under a stone blocking the road. She tried to kill the snake but it got away. Under the snake’s hiding place, she saw gold.

“Tomorrow I can meet Lay Bwar and we can be together for our whole lives!” Phyu Zin said.

The next morning she went to pay for Lay Bwar’s release so she could leave the jail. They stayed in their small house and had a peaceful life again.



# SAI WAN'S STRUGGLE

Story by Ngao Hseng

Illustrations by Wong Lao

Sai Wan was 10 years old. He always arrived at school late because he had to cook and carry water from the well. His parents always made a fuss about him, saying that he was lazy.

"You waste your time when you go to school. I also have to pay money for your books," they said. "I don't think you have to study to get a job. But you do have to work hard on the farm."

Sai Wan's parents didn't support him to go to school. He wanted to study very much, but his teacher scolded him when he was late. It made Sai Wan not want to go to school even though he wanted to study.



When Sai Wan got upset, he liked to go and sit on the tree and talk to birds or be by himself. He built a hut on the tree too, to relax and sleep sometimes, because his parents argued with each other all the time about money and food.

One day, Sai Wan's father was drunk. He hit his mother when his mother got angry about his drunkenness. Sai Wan's mother was unconscious. When Sai Wan saw his mother was being hit by his father, he cried. He didn't know what to do. Then, he ran to the house of his neighbor, Ying Harn, to get help. He told Ying Harn's parents about his mother and how she was unconscious in their house.



Ying Harn's parents went to help Sai Wan's mother. They took her to the clinic. Sai Wan thanked them, and after they had all gone, he went to look at his mother and he was silent. He felt pity for his mother. That afternoon, he went to the tree-hut he had built and he cried.

"I want to help my parents. I want to study. I want to have many friends to talk to. When I grow up, I want to be a doctor. Who can help me? Please, can someone help me? Birds, do you understand what I say? I want some friends to talk with!" he said. He sighed a deep sigh.

Suddenly, he heard a voice.

"You have to try to reach your goal. If you don't try to do something, you will get nothing. But I think I can help you."

Sai Wan was shocked and surprised. "I don't see anyone here," he thought. Then he asked, "Who is that? Don't joke with me."

"I am your friend who always listens to you. When you have a bad time, you always talk to me. Look in front of you," the voice said.

"Oh! Bird, is it you?" Sai Wan asked. The bird said it was her. She thanked Sai Wan. Because of his hut, she had a place to hide from the hard rain. Then the bird gave Sai Wan a small green bag.

"Don't look at it until you arrive home. If you don't follow this rule, you will lose your chance," she said. Sai Wan thanked her and went back home happily.

But there, he saw his father crying.

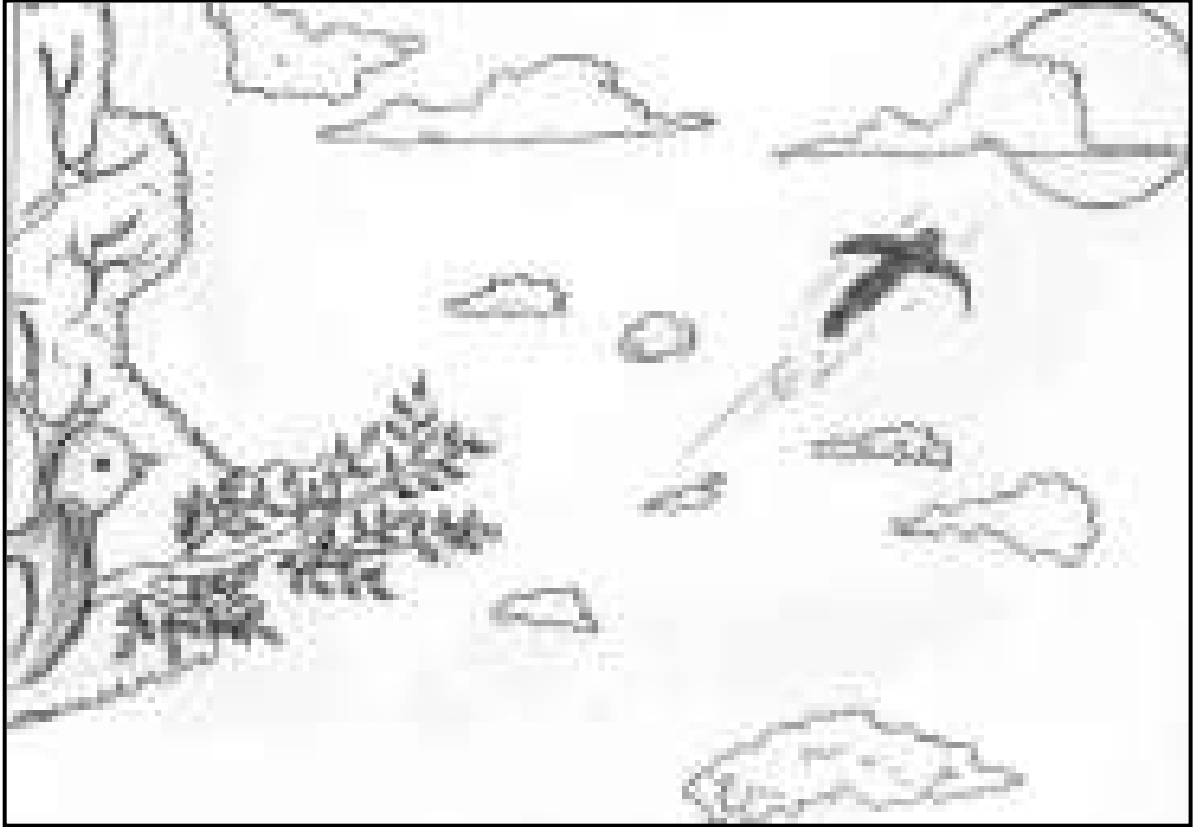
"I'm so sorry I hit your mom," he said. "I feel miserable. I won't ever drink again." Sai Wan saw that his father knew he was wrong and had learned a lesson.

He remembered the bird's green bag. He told his father about the bird. His father looked in the bag. It was gold.

Sai Wan and his father went to see his mother at the clinic. After Sai Wan's mother got well, they went back home and his father told his mother about the gold. His mother felt upset because she didn't allow Sai Wan to go to school. She understood education was important. They decided to go to town and sell the gold. Sai Wan could then attend school in the town.



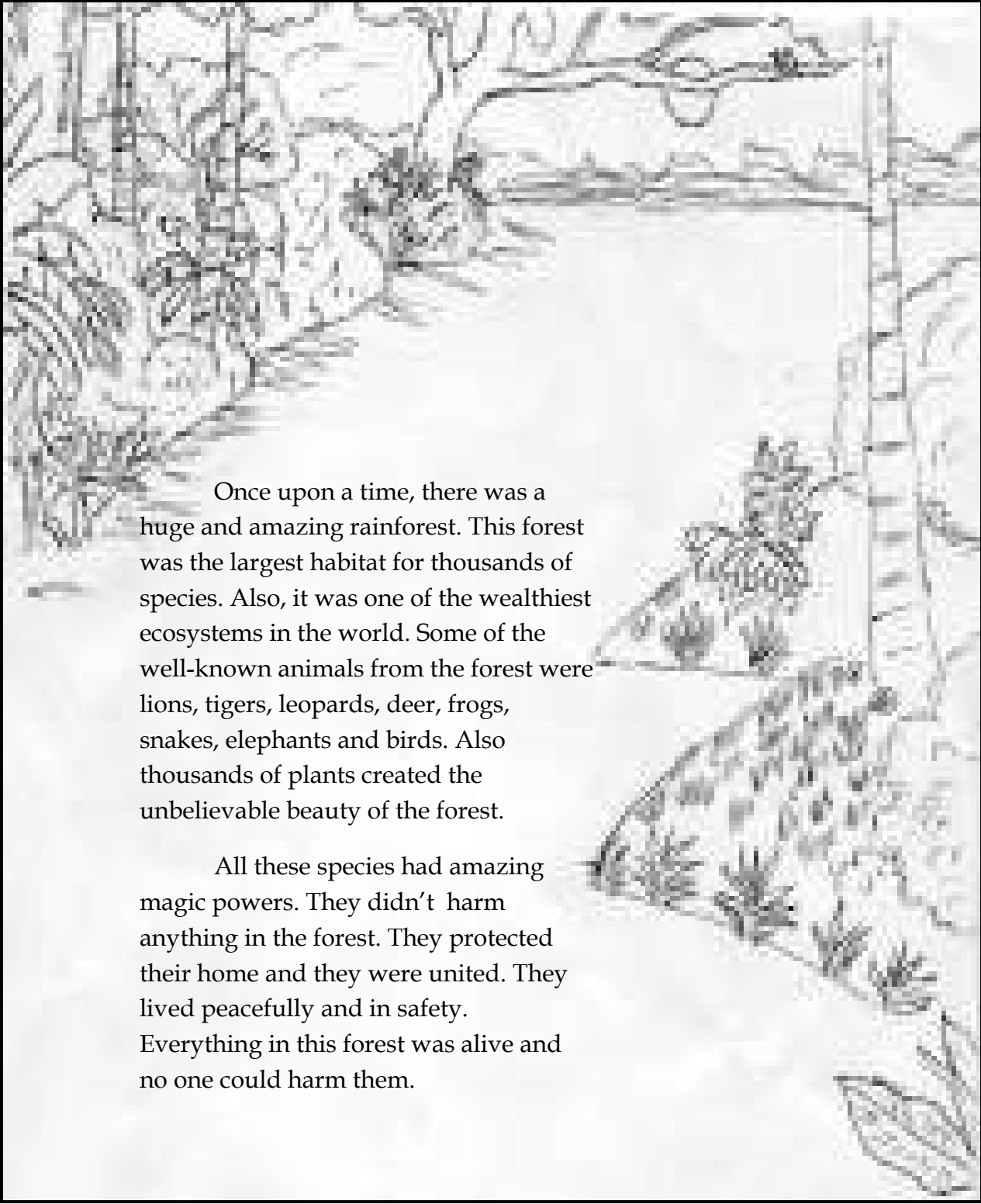
Sai Wan was very happy. When he left the village to go to the town, he went to say thanks and goodbye to the bird. The bird gave him wings – Sai Wan flew into the sky and went to town to study. His life was like a caterpillar changing to a butterfly – he successfully got his goal. His family never fought again.



*He or she who does good things will get a good life and succeed in the future.*

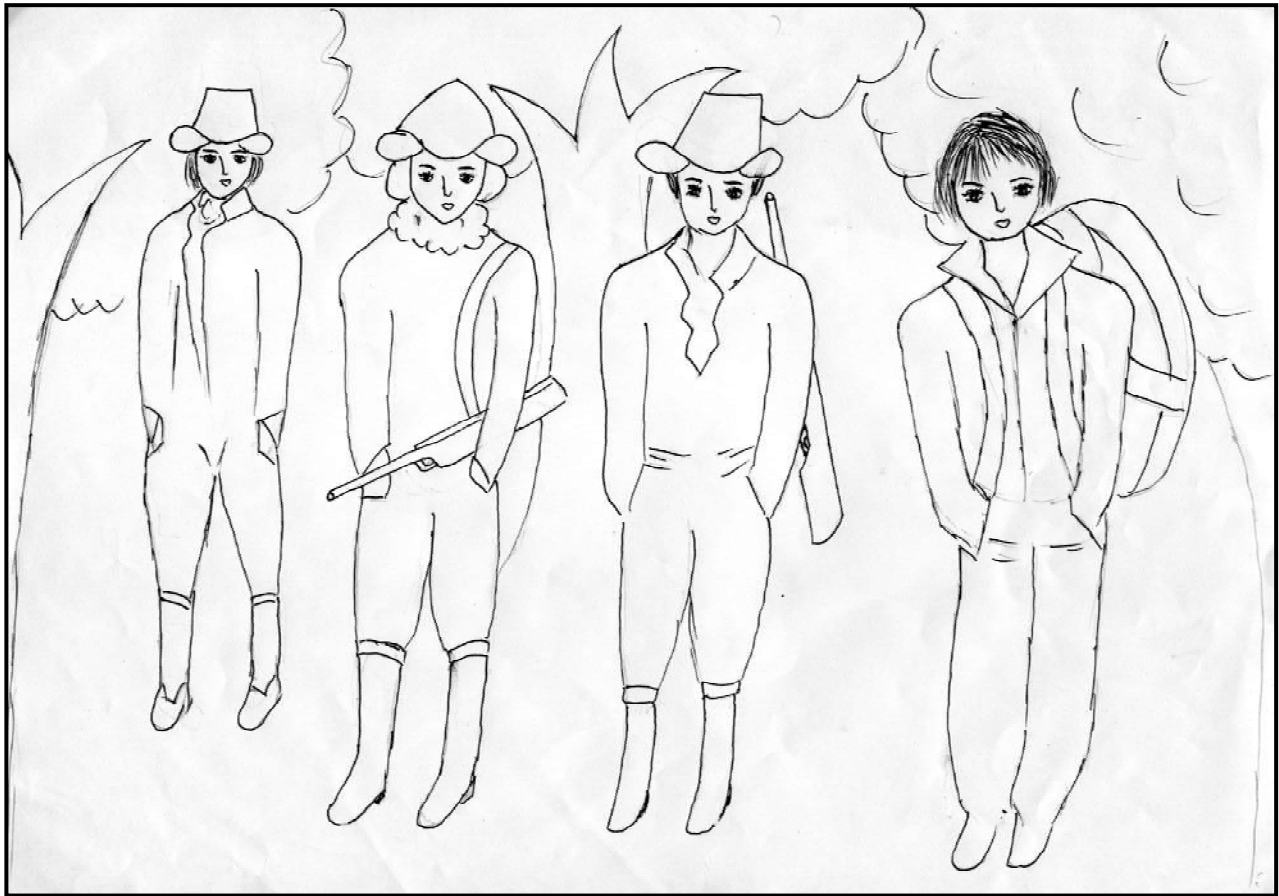
# THE HUNTERS AND THE MAGIC FOREST

Story and Illustrations by Aung Ja



Once upon a time, there was a huge and amazing rainforest. This forest was the largest habitat for thousands of species. Also, it was one of the wealthiest ecosystems in the world. Some of the well-known animals from the forest were lions, tigers, leopards, deer, frogs, snakes, elephants and birds. Also thousands of plants created the unbelievable beauty of the forest.

All these species had amazing magic powers. They didn't harm anything in the forest. They protected their home and they were united. They lived peacefully and in safety. Everything in this forest was alive and no one could harm them.



But one day, an unfortunate thing came into their forest accidentally. Many hungry hunters came to try to hunt the animals from the forest. Before they arrived, they had to travel on a long journey, so they were very tired and they felt ill. Some had coughs and headaches.

But when they entered their forests, their diseases disappeared. The smell of the forest made the hunters feel active and refreshed. It removed the bad things that the hunters brought.

A hunter who had a cough shouted, “Hey, the smell from the forest is really strange, isn’t it? Did you smell it?”

“I can’t believe it!” he said again. “Where is my cough? Where has it gone? Wow. Really, really strange!”

The hunters could feel the strangeness from their senses. When they touched the leaves of trees, the leaves spoke out.

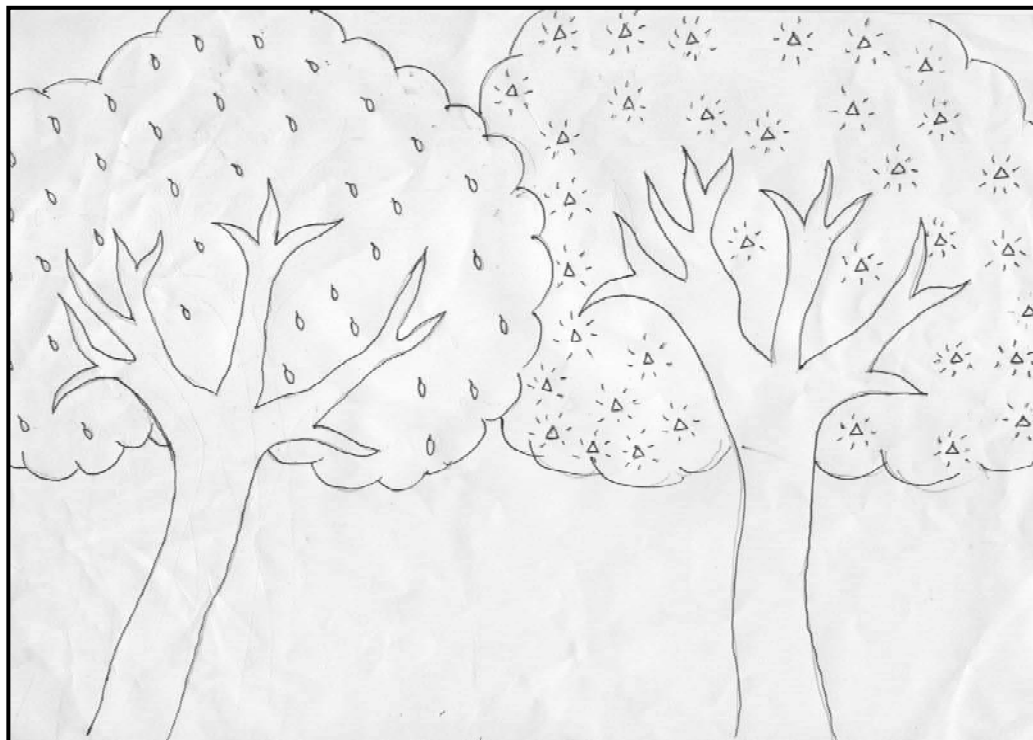
“Arrrrrrr,” the leaves said.

The hunters saw that some of the trees were golden trees and had golden leaves with golden fruits. Some of the trees were diamond trees and had diamond leaves with diamond fruits. They wanted to take them and they touched the leaves. At that time, their hands couldn’t move anymore.

“Hey, look at my hands, they don’t work anymore! What’s wrong with my hands? Oh God, help me!” one hunter shouted.

“What kind of forest this is, I don’t know,” another hunter said. “You should apologize to the tree.”

Then, when they realized their minds were greedy, they were released from this magic. They were very surprised. They continued their journey with many questions in their mind.





The hunters arrived at another strange garden. There, they saw various different flowers and insects around the place. There was a stream flowing through the center of the garden. When they saw all this, the hunters couldn't breathe and stopped walking. They looked at them with open mouths. They felt they had arrived in heaven. They wanted these flowers and touched these flowers.

Then, the hunters changed into flowers! They didn't know how to become human again, but at least they could still speak to each other.

"What should we do? No one can help us!" one hunter said.

"We have to think of a way to escape from this situation. Someone *will* help us." another one said.

The wind was blowing on them and they heard it speaking to them.

"Apologize to the forest, and leave the forest," it said. "Don't take anything."

They did what the wind said, and they were released from being flowers. Finally, they returned home peacefully.

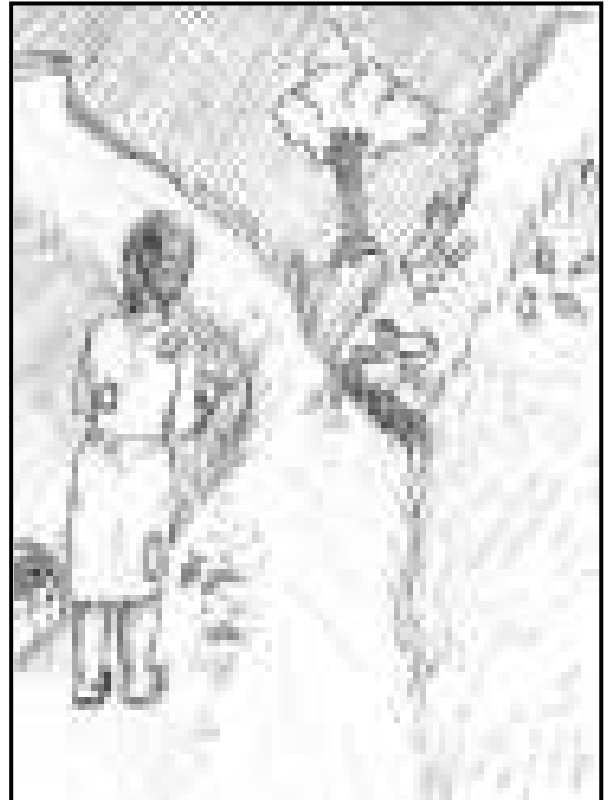
# A PRESENT FROM A FISH

Story by Ah La Lahtaw

Illustrations by Lao Murng

Long, long ago in a village, there was a fatherless child called Zau Mun Aung. His father died long ago and his mother had been a widow for many years. Zau Mun Aung and his mother lived in a small hut in their village. His mother couldn't see very well and had lots of pus in her eyes all the time. So he felt ashamed to introduce his mother to other people.

Once a year, his village always caught a lot of fish together. They blocked one of the branches of the delta with big stones and leaves then they started to catch the fish when the water dried out. Zau Mun Aung's friends were catching fish with their families, but Zau Mun Aung didn't join his mother, even though she was there too. She collected the small fish that the other people didn't like. He stayed away from her—he didn't want people to know she was his mother.



Zau Mun Aung got many big fish, but he gave them to one of his friends' mothers. His own poor mother collected some small fish for her son even though she couldn't see very well. When the sun was going down, the people went back and prepared their dinners. Zau Mun Aung's mother also prepared a meal for dinner, but he was waiting at another person's house, waiting for them to invite him for dinner. But his friend's mother only took her own children to the kitchen to have dinner. No one invited him for a meal.

He was so sad that he laid down on the ground. He heard the sound of his mother calling him, so he ran away, thinking that his mother would punish him. He didn't give any fish to his mother and stayed away from her.

A few minutes later, he took a rest near the stream. He heard a sound and looked into the water. There was a big fish coming to talk to him.

"Why do you look so tired? What's the matter?" the fish asked. Zau Mun Aung explained everything to the big fish. "Don't worry my friend," the fish replied. "I will help you. But you have to apologize to your mother first." The big fish gave him another fish as a present.

"Give this fish to your mother and tell her you regret what you did. Your mother won't punish you, maybe she will be grateful. Parents never leave their children, even though they make mistakes or cause trouble," the big fish continued. "You ought to promise that you won't do this kind of thing again. She will be so happy for your understanding."

When Zau Mun Aung went back to his house, his mother was waiting for him to have dinner with her. She cooked some of the small fish that she collected from the stream.

"Come to me my dear son," she said. "Let's have a happy dinner with Mom." He was so sad and ashamed.



“Mom, I’m so sorry about today. I won’t do anything like this in the future. Please forgive me,” Zau Mun Aung said. His mother was so happy and she blessed him many times. That night, they had dinner together.

The next morning, he got up earlier than his mother and started trying to prepare a meal for breakfast. He remembered that the big fish gave him another fish as a present.

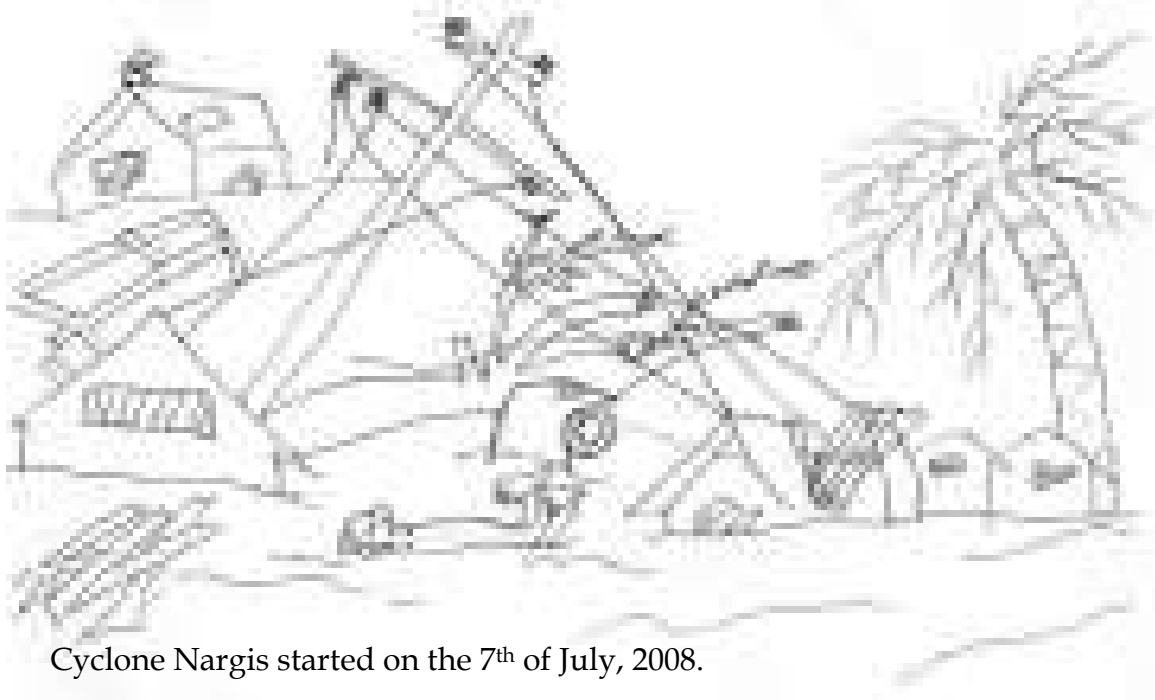
He opened the bag, but there was no fish. He saw a very bright thing in the bag, like a stone. As he carefully opened it, he saw that the fish had become a big diamond.



Zau Mun Aung and his mother became very rich. He never left his mother, even though her seeing got worse and worse. After his mother died, Zau Mun Aung’s life never changed. He was still very rich and polite. He always talked about how much compassion parents have and how people shouldn’t misunderstand that. He told the people many times that even if we have regrets, parents are always ready to bless us.

# GIFT FROM GOD

Story and Illustrations by Nang Nu Wai



Cyclone Nargis started on the 7<sup>th</sup> of July, 2008.

Today was the fifth day after Cyclone Nargis had finished. Even though the storm was weak now, there was raining everyday in Rangoon.

My family arrived in this monastery that saved the people who escaped from Cyclone Nargis. The monastery was not so big and the monks and nuns saved and took care of the people as much as they could. They gave us medicine and also food, like biscuits, instant noodles and drinking water. There were not many people in this place. After the cyclone had finished, people didn't get help from the government immediately. Neither did my family.

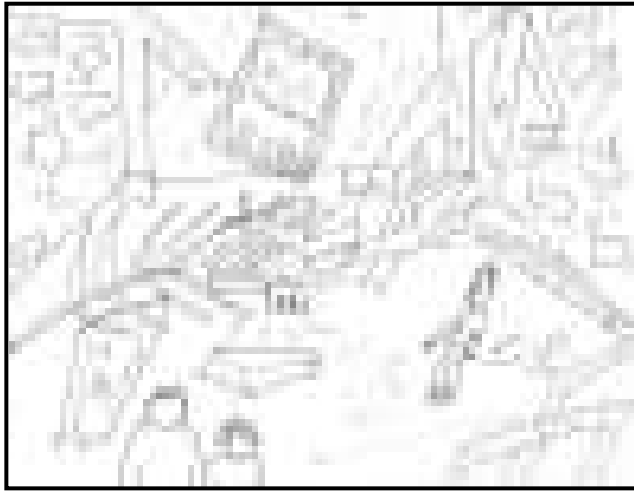
I am Aung Moe. There are five people in my family. My parents are U Aung and Daw Moe. I have one younger brother and one younger sister. They were still studying. I graduated university last year but I had no job. Our family lived in Long Kar village near Taunggyi, Shan State. Our village was peaceful and pleasant and most of the villagers were farmers. They grew rice, potatoes, onions and garlic, but the garlic was the main crop. My family lived in the village happily, but our happiness was not so long.

One day, when my father came back from the city, he had some bad news. “We couldn’t sell our garlic,” he said. My mother asked why. “Because the garlic prices were very low everywhere. If we tried to sell our garlic, we could lose our money,” said my father sadly.

“However, we need to sell that garlic,” said my mother. “We couldn’t pay for our children’s school fees if you didn’t sell it.” So my father went to the city and sold the garlic. He returned with a little money. Not only my family, but all the villagers were unhappy about the situation. They could not grow garlic anymore and the village’s economy decreased.

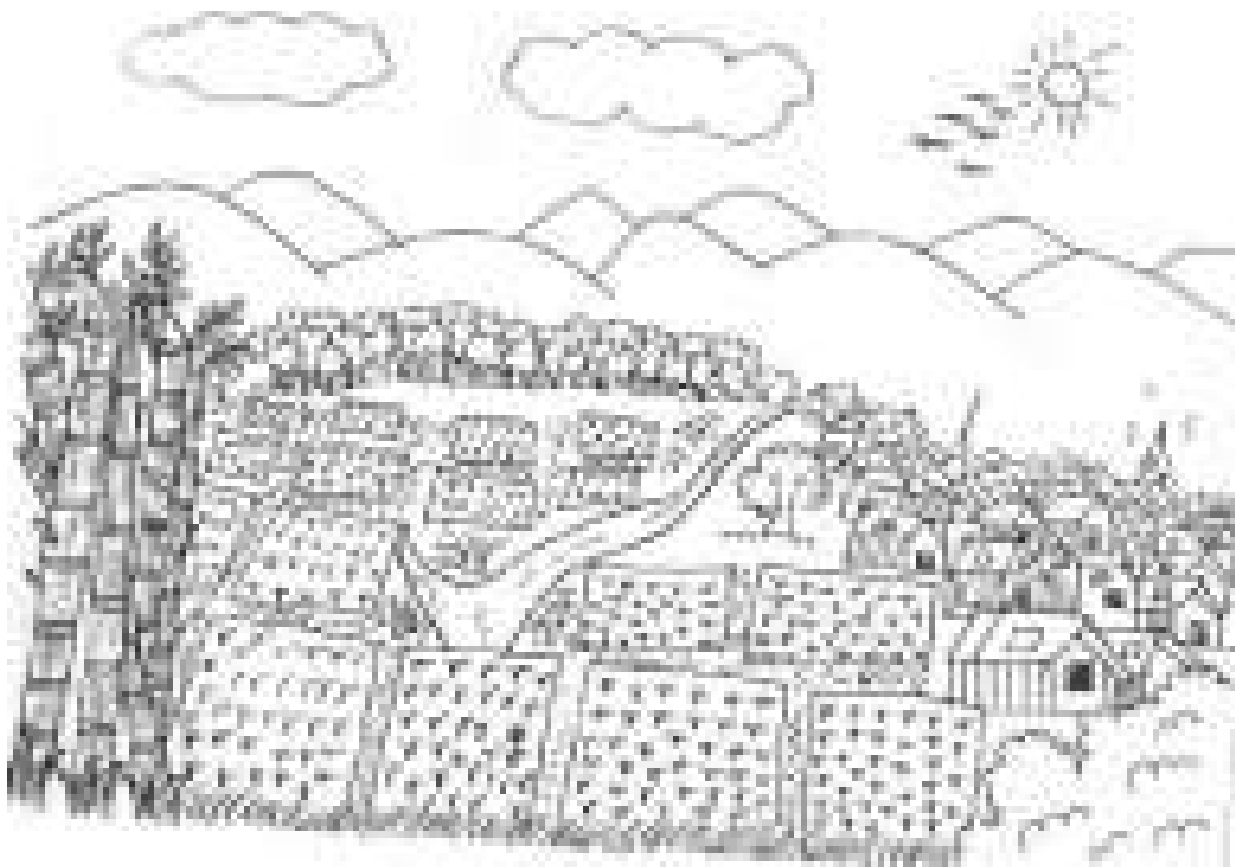
My father sold our house and farm when the economics were low and my family moved to Rangoon. Meanwhile, we faced the Cyclone Nargis and got a lot of troubles. That’s why we stayed in the monastery for a short time. But at that time, a lot of other people were displaced by the storm, so we had to find another place for them.





There was an empty house near the monastery that was not completely destroyed. We went there and cleaned it. Suddenly, I saw a small bag under an old box and brought it to my family. When we opened the bag, we were surprised because we saw two high-quality diamonds. We sold those diamonds and we donated half of our money to the monastery. Then we went back to Taunggyi.

This time, our journey was full of happiness.



## About the School

The School for Shan State Nationalities Youth (SSSNY) was founded in 2001 by a group of youth from Shan State. Unlike other displaced ethnic nationalities who have access to established refugee camps, refugees from Shan State are not recognized as refugees by the UNHCR and therefore have difficulty accessing basic support such as food, shelter, healthcare and education.

SSSNY offers a 9-month in-depth Social Justice Education Program (SJEP) for displaced Shan State youth to provide them with basic skills and education necessary to take an active role in the struggle for human rights and democracy in Burma. Together with other Shan community-based organizations, SSSNY works with the Border Teacher Support Program to assist with teacher training, curriculum development, and the strengthening of the educational systems of displaced communities.

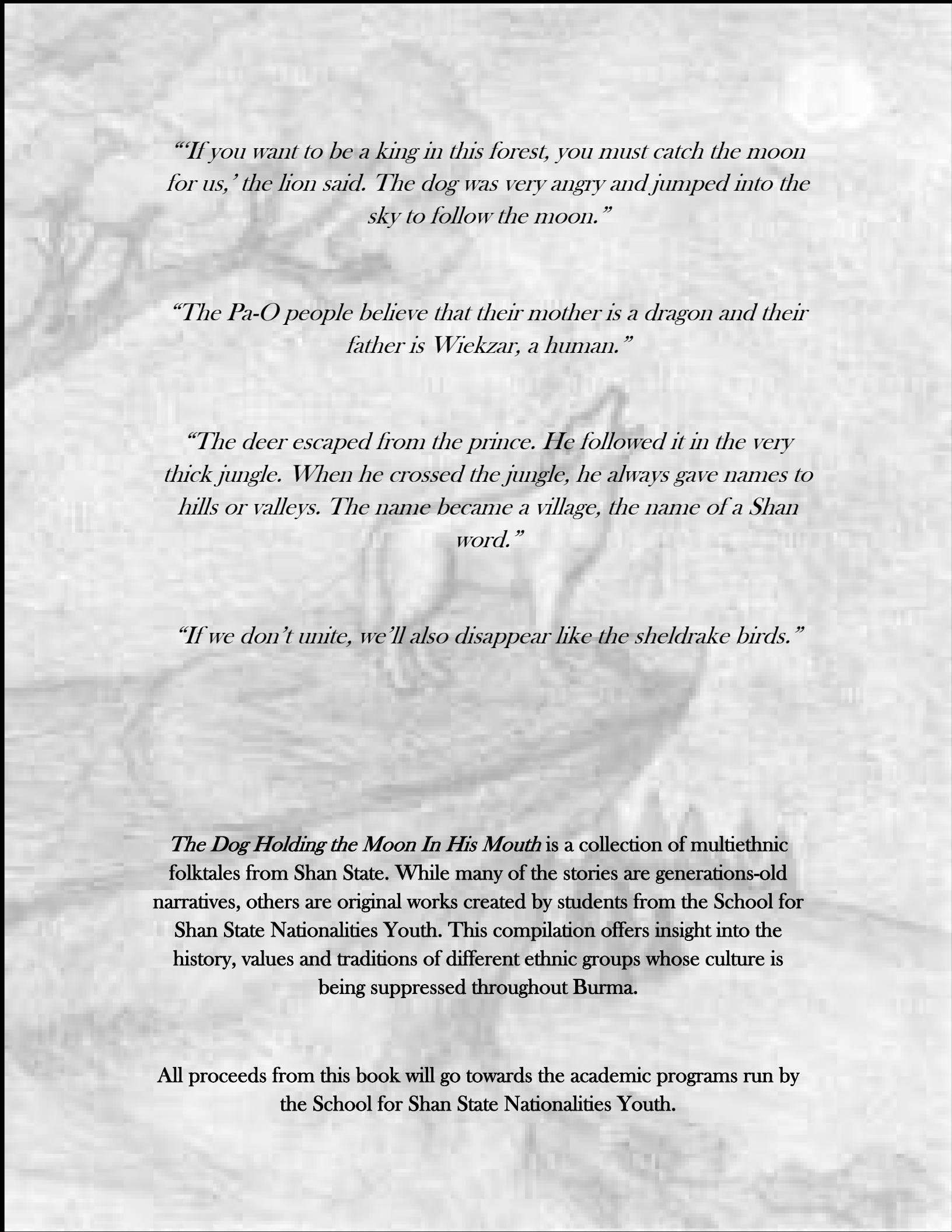
Since 2001, over 200 youth from Shan State, Burma, have graduated from SSSNY. They are now actively participating in social and political change in Burma.

For more information about SSSNY, please visit our website at [www.sssny.org](http://www.sssny.org)



**Education is a Right**





*“If you want to be a king in this forest, you must catch the moon for us,’ the lion said. The dog was very angry and jumped into the sky to follow the moon.”*

*“The Pa-O people believe that their mother is a dragon and their father is Wiekzar, a human.”*

*“The deer escaped from the prince. He followed it in the very thick jungle. When he crossed the jungle, he always gave names to hills or valleys. The name became a village, the name of a Shan word.”*

*“If we don’t unite, we’ll also disappear like the sheldrake birds.”*

*The Dog Holding the Moon In His Mouth* is a collection of multiethnic folktales from Shan State. While many of the stories are generations-old narratives, others are original works created by students from the School for Shan State Nationalities Youth. This compilation offers insight into the history, values and traditions of different ethnic groups whose culture is being suppressed throughout Burma.

All proceeds from this book will go towards the academic programs run by the School for Shan State Nationalities Youth.