

## A CLEVER BOY

Phun tshogs dbang rgyal ལུན་ཚོགས་དབང་རྒྱལ།

I was born in 1993 in Ska chung Village, Nyin mtha' Township, Rma lho (Henan) Mongolian Autonomous County, Reb gong (Huangnan) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Mtsho sngon (Qinghai) Province, PR China. I heard this story from my maternal grandmother (Mgon po mtsho, b. 1936), who I and my siblings and cousins call A ma che 'Big Mother'. She told me this story when I was about ten years old. When we had finished dinner, I and my siblings slept side by side near an adobe stove inside an enormous black yak-hair tent. I slept in Father's sheep-skin robe shared with my younger brother. We lay next to Grandmother on a wooden platform on the ground. My sisters, wrapped in their own robes, slept on carpets side by side. At that time, we could not easily go to sleep without Grandmother's stories.

Long ago, thick mountain forests surrounded a beautiful place. Nearby, colorful flowers blossomed on an infinite grassland as pure streams gushed in the valleys. Countless twittering birds provided nature's music.

A community led a very hard, difficult life amid this natural beauty. A boy who lived alone there was the poorest in this community. However, he was wise and honest so locals called him Clever.

The wealthy king was also called Clever. He was very selfish, only caring about his own benefit. When he heard that another man was also called Clever, he felt uncomfortable and commanded his servants to bring this other Clever to his palace.

When Poor Clever arrived, the king said, "Your name is Clever?"

---

"Yes, Your Majesty, the people of my community often call me Clever," the poor man said.

"I want to compete to see if you are cleverer than me. If you are, I promise this name will belong to you forever and I will also give you half of the jewels of my kingdom. If you lose, I will kill you," the king said arrogantly.

The poor man was very afraid and hesitated. He lacked the courage to challenge the king and could only agree with the king's command.

The king said, "This treasure around my neck is my life amulet. If you can steal it in three days, I will admit that you are truly clever, and I will give you what I promised. You only have three days."

The poor man returned home and pondered. Meanwhile, the king ordered his underlings to protect him. His mounted soldiers watched the gate of the palace, and some female servants stayed by the king all day and night. They were all very concerned about Poor Clever's plans.

The first night, they were all very cautious, but nothing happened. The second night all the king's guards were more careful than the first night, but the poor man did nothing.

Actually, Poor Clever intended to steal the king's treasure on the third night when the king's protectors were exhausted and unable to be vigilant.

On the third night, Poor Clever dressed as a woman bringing liquor to the king's palace. When the king's guards confronted him, he offered them some liquor and they were soon drunk. He then carried the guards to the top of the wall, where they slept drunkenly.

Next, Poor Clever went inside the king's castle, found the king's exhausted sleepy servants sitting back to back, and then carefully took the king's amulet from around his neck.

After this, he put a sheep's stomach very near the top of the king's head and then tied the now dozing female servants' hair

---

together. Once this was done, he ran out of the castle, screaming, "I stole it!"

The king woke up, discovered that his amulet was gone, and touched his head, which he felt had become very soft and bald because he was touching the sheep stomach. Nervously, he angrily yelled, "He stole the treasure from around my neck! Catch that poor man!"

The soldiers woke up from their drunken sleep. Still in a daze, however, they thought they were on their horses and flourished their whips. They then realized where they were when the castle walls they were astride did not move.

The female servants screeched and scolded each other, "Don't pull my hair!"

The next morning, Poor Clever visited the king and said, "Your Majesty, I won. Please keep your promise."

The king flew into a rage and commanded his soldiers to catch and kill the poor man.

When Poor Clever heard this, he threw the king's life amulet on the floor with all his might. It broke and thus the king died.

Poor Clever then became king, gave money and property to the poorest families, and they all then had happy, secure lives.

## NON-ENGLISH TERMS

a ma che ཨ་མ་ཚེ།

Henan 河南

Huangnan 黄南

mgon po mtsho མགོན་པོ་མཚོ།

mtsho sngon མཚོ་སྒོན།

nyin mtha' ཉིན་མཐའ།

phun tshogs dbang rgyal ཕུན་ཚོགས་དབང་རྒྱལ།

Qinghai 青海

reb gong རེབ་གོང།

rma lho ར་ལྷོ།

ska chung སྐ་ཚུང།