

THE TORTOISE WHO LIKED TO BOAST

There were three good friends, a tortoise and two birds, who lived by a lake in Tibet. One year, there was no rain. Day by day, the water in the lake became less and less. The three friends did not know what to do.

The two birds told the tortoise. "Everyone is moving to the Lake in the Sky. I think we had better move too, otherwise we shall die of hunger and thirst. What do you think?"

"How can I travel so far?" replied the tortoise. "You can easily fly there but I have no wings."

The tortoise cried so hard that the birds felt sorry for him.

"All right," they said. "We can take you with us."

"How can you do that?" asked the tortoise.

"We can hold two ends of a stick in our mouths. You can hold on to the middle. We can then all fly together to the lake in the sky."

"Yes, yes." The tortoise cried. "What a good idea!"

"But you must be careful not to open your mouth while we are flying."

"Of course not." Replied the tortoise. "If anyone speaks to me, I shall not answer to them."

So they started on their journey the next morning. The birds held the two ends of the stick. The tortoise held the middle of the stick with his mouth.

Soon they were on their way, flying over high mountains covered with snow, over dark forests, and farms.

On the earth, some farmers planting rice pointed up at them. "What a clever tortoise! He lets the birds carry him."

Neither the birds nor the tortoise said anything. The tortoise felt very happy to hear the farmers praise him.

They flew on and on towards the Lake in the Sky.

Some children looking after some cattle, on a hill shouted at them.

"What clever birds! They are carrying the tortoise to the Lake in the Sky."

The birds did not say anything but the tortoise felt angry.

He wanted answer the children, "Stupid fools! Don't you know that it was I who thought of the idea? I'm much more clever than the birds," so he opened his mouth to shout back at them, "Hi...."

As soon as he did so, he fell straight to the ground.

Source: Favourite stories from ASIA by Leon Comber
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