

## Story 1: A Family Story



Story shared by: *Huiyan*

Representing: *Chinese in Groningen*

### The Story:

So, my family's story is like one of those real-life folk tales, you know? I mean, I'm 30 years old now, but if you look at my grandfather's generation, they went through so much. They lived through this incredibly chaotic period in China. They experienced the Japanese invasion, the Civil War, the founding of the People's Republic, the Cultural Revolution, the land reforms—everything. And then on top of all that, the economic reforms, and now into the 21st century. It's crazy when you think about how much change they saw in their lifetimes.

My grandpa's story is like a good example. He grew up in this little village in Tianjin, and his family were these small-time landowners. Not huge, but enough that they had some property. But when the new government came, all that got swept away. The land was redistributed, and overnight, they went from being, well, comfortable, to having basically nothing. His family became really poor, and my grandpa had to figure something out. So, he went to the city and became an apprentice at this tailor shop.

Now, when he told me this, I couldn't believe how tough it was back then. He said they'd make him wake up at like 4 in the morning just to cook for his master and mistress, clean the house, do all the chores. They worked him like crazy, and that was before he even got to touch a needle. And the worst part? His master refused to teach him the actual craft because there was this saying: "Teach a student, starve a master." So, my grandpa had to sneak around and spy on him while he worked. He'd hide and watch through the cracks in the door to learn how to sew.

It took him years, but eventually, he figured it out. And right around then, private businesses were being merged into the state. So, my grandpa got a job in a state-owned garment factory, working as a



tailor. He was good at it, too. They promoted him to a team leader because his work was so precise, and he was super dedicated.

But there was always this tension between the city and the countryside. My grandma didn't have a city residency permit, so she had to stay back in the village. Plus, my grandpa was an incredibly honest and upright guy, and some of his coworkers didn't like that. Between the pressure at work and the struggles my grandma was facing in the village, he eventually made the decision to go back. He returned to the countryside and kept working as a tailor, but secretly.

You see, during the Great Leap Forward and later with the People's Commune system, people weren't allowed to do any private business. It was all collective farm work. But my grandpa—he was crafty. People would sneak over to our house late at night, creeping along the walls to avoid being seen, and my grandpa would let them in to measure them for clothes. He'd work by the light of a little oil lamp, sewing clothes with this old hand-cranked sewing machine. He did that for years, earning just enough on the side to give his kids a slightly better life than the rest of the village.

Thanks to that extra income, my dad's generation—my dad, his brothers, and sisters—they didn't grow up as poor as they could have. They were still farmers, but my grandpa's tailoring made things a bit easier. And eventually, three of his kids managed to go to university, which was a huge deal back then. They were able to get jobs in the city after graduation, and life slowly improved for the family.

By the time we hit the 2000s, things had changed so much. My dad was able to buy my grandparents an apartment in the city, and they spent the last 20 or so years of their lives living there. Can you imagine? My grandpa went from being a young boy on a small farm, to secretly sewing clothes at night to survive, to living in a modern apartment with a refrigerator, a TV, and air conditioning. It's hard to believe sometimes how much changed in one lifetime.

That's the story I wanted to share. It's not some big mythical tale, but for me, it feels just as important.

**Story Moral:** *Sometimes real life is a greater Folktale than anything you can imagine*

## Story 2: Senegalese Ancestor Story



Story shared by: *Mariama*

Representing: *Senegalese in Groningen*

### The Story:

My great-great-grandfather—or actually, it's even further back, my great-great-great-grandfather—has this legendary story that's been passed down in our family. It was during the time when the French were colonizing Senegal, and he became this larger-than-life figure for driving them out. People say he didn't just resist them in the usual way—he had these special powers. It's almost like he was untouchable.

There's this one part of the story that everyone talks about. The French, after seeing how powerful he was, threw him into a cage with lions. Can you imagine? They really thought that would be the end of him. But he came out of that lion's cage completely unharmed, as if nothing had happened. People still talk about that. In fact, some still believe our family has these mystical powers because of what he did back then. It's one of those stories that makes you proud, like a family legend you can never forget.

There are so many versions of this story floating around, but that's the one I remember best. And the message is always the same: my great-great-grandfather was this incredible hero, someone who played a huge role in resisting the colonizers and helping decolonize Senegal. It's not just a family story—it's part of our history.

Story Moral: *Unclear*





<https://digifolk.eu/>

## Story 3: Baba Yaga



Story shared by: *Viktoriia*

Representing: *Ukrainians in Groningen*

### The Story:

Once upon a time, in a small village next to a vast forest, a merchant and his kind daughter, Vazilisa, lived peacefully. On her deathbed, Vazilisa's dying mother gave her a magical doll for protection.

However, peace was short-lived as her father remarried a cruel woman who burdened Vazilisa with endless chores. One day, the stepmother extinguished the house's only candle and sent Vazilisa to fetch fire from the fearsome witch, Baba Yaga, hoping she wouldn't return. Approaching Baba Yaga's eerie hut on chicken legs, Fazilisa was tasked with impossible chores. With her magical doll's assistance, Fazilisa had completed all her tasks.

Baba Yaga watched in astonishment as she had never seen such determination and pure-heartedness. The witch called her over when she was done with her tasks. Moved by Fazilisa's preservance and kindness, she asked, How do you manage all my tasks so quickly? I have my mother's blessing, ' said Fazilisa. Get out of here, ' shrieks Baba Yaga. I don't need blessed ones under this roof.

Displeased, Baba Yaga expelled her, giving her a glowing skull for light. Fazilisa's return shocked her stepmother, who fled the village in fear. Her father, realizing his neglect, promised to always protect and cherish Fazilisa, allowing them to live happily ever after.





## Story 4: The Bodhisattva Story



Story shared by: *Hui Yan*

Representing: *Chinese in Groningen*

### The Story:

In a time long ago, a prince from the kingdom of Silla, now part of Korea, sought enlightenment. His journey took him far from his homeland, leading him to the vast lands of China, where he became known as Dìzàng Wáng Púsà, a Bodhisattva who had renounced his own enlightenment to aid others. With a heart full of compassion, he dedicated his life to guiding lost souls and easing their suffering. His journey eventually brought him to Jiuhua Mountain, in Anhui Province, where he felt called to establish a temple.

But Jiuhua Mountain was not free land; it belonged to a wealthy landowner. Dìzàng Wáng, ever humble, approached the man with a simple request. "Allow me a small piece of land," he said, "no larger than the size of my monk's robe."

The landowner, amused by the modest request, agreed. "How much land could a robe cover?" he thought to himself, seeing no loss in such a deal. But as Dìzàng Wáng spread his robe on the ground, something miraculous occurred—it began to stretch, growing far beyond its natural size, covering peak after peak of the mountain range. The landowner, astounded by the sight, could no longer deny



the Bodhisattva's power. Overcome with awe and reverence, both the landowner and his son renounced their earthly lives and became monks, devoting themselves to Dìzàng Wáng's teachings.

From that day forward, Jiuhua Mountain was known as the sacred domain of Dìzàng Wáng Púsà. Statues of the Bodhisattva were later created, depicting him alongside the landowner and his son, symbols of their newfound devotion and the transformation they had undergone.

Yet, the story of Dìzàng Wáng did not end with his earthly departure. When he passed away, his body did not decay, an extraordinary sign of his holiness. His preserved remains were placed in an underground chamber on Jiuhua Mountain, where they rest to this day. Rarely, during major Buddhist events, his body is displayed, a testament to his enduring presence.

Dìzàng Wáng Púsà had made a vow—"Hell will not be empty until I attain Buddhahood." He could have become a Buddha long ago, but he chose instead to remain, determined to save every soul from suffering. His unwavering commitment to easing the burdens of others lives on, a powerful reminder of selflessness and compassion.

**Story Moral:** *Compassion and Selflessness*



## Story 5: The Butterfly Lovers



Story shared by: *Name Withheld*

Representing: *Chinese in Groningen*

### The Story:

Once, in ancient China, there lived two young people, Liang Shanbo and Zhu Yingtai, whose story would be remembered for generations. Their love, much like that of Romeo and Juliet, was destined to face obstacles. But there was something unique about their tale.

Zhu Yingtai was a clever and determined girl, but in those days, girls weren't allowed to study alongside boys. So, she came up with a plan—she disguised herself as a boy and went to school. That's where she met Liang Shanbo, and the two became fast friends. They studied together, and over time, Zhu Yingtai's feelings for him grew stronger.

The problem was, Liang Shanbo didn't know she was actually a girl. No matter how many hints Zhu Yingtai dropped, he just didn't get it. Once, she even told him, "You should come to my house and meet my sister," when really, she meant herself. She tried and tried to let him know, but Liang Shanbo was too slow to figure it out.

Finally, the truth came out—Liang Shanbo realized Zhu Yingtai was the girl he had fallen in love with. But by then, it was too late. Zhu Yingtai's family had already arranged for her to marry another man. Heartbroken, Liang Shanbo couldn't bear it, and he died from sorrow. On the day of her wedding, Zhu Yingtai ran to his grave, crying her heart out. Right there, by his tomb, she chose to die too.

In the end, they were buried together, and the legend says that two butterflies emerged from their grave, flying side by side. People believed those butterflies were their spirits, finally united in a way they couldn't be in life.





<https://digifolk.eu/>

**Story Moral:** *Love will win at the end of fate*

## Story 6: Dragon Boat



Story shared by: *Jerry*

Representing: *Chinese in Groningen*

### The Story:

Long ago, in ancient China, there was a man named Qu Yuan, a famous poet and statesman who served the kingdom of Chu. He was deeply loyal to his country, always striving to protect it. But not everyone in power shared his vision. Some of the officials were jealous of him and, through deceit, managed to have him exiled from his homeland.

Qu Yuan was heartbroken. He loved Chu dearly and could only watch as it slowly fell into ruin, powerless to help. In his sorrow, he poured his heart into poems, expressing his frustration and despair. As the situation grew worse, the weight of his helplessness became too much to bear. In the end, Qu Yuan chose to end his life, throwing himself into the Miluo River.

The people of Chu admired Qu Yuan and were devastated by his loss. Fearing that the fish would devour his body, the local fishermen leapt into their boats and raced across the river, searching for him. To protect him, they tossed Zongzi—sticky rice wrapped in bamboo leaves—into the water, hoping to distract the fish and keep his body safe.

That is why, to this day, during the Dragon Boat Festival, people eat Zongzi. It's to remember that moment, when the people tried to save Qu Yuan. The dragon boat races we see each year also come from those fishermen, who paddled furiously across the river in search of him. Through these traditions, Qu Yuan's loyalty and dedication to his country are honored, even though his story ended in tragedy. Every year, the boats race, and Zongzi is eaten, keeping his memory alive.

**Story Moral:** *Remembrance*





## Story 7: Goha and the Donkey



Story shared by: *Anonymous*

Representing: *Egyptian/ MENA*

### The Story:

Once upon a time, an old man named Goha was traveling with his young son and their donkey, passing through several villages on their way to a distant place. At first, the young boy sat on the donkey while Goha walked alongside.

As they entered the first village, the villagers criticized the boy, saying, "Look at that selfish child! How can he let his old father walk while he comfortably rides the donkey?" Hearing this, Goha decided to switch places. Now, the father rode the donkey, and the son walked beside him.

But as they passed through the next village, the people there scolded the father: "What kind of man is this? How could he make his poor young son walk while he sits on the donkey?"

Frustratedly trying to avoid further criticism, Goha decided that both he and his son would ride the donkey together. But as they trekked through the next village, the gossip only continued. "Look at these two fools! They're both sitting on that poor donkey, burdening it with their weight. How cruel!"

So, Goha and his son got off the donkey and decided to walk alongside it instead. As they passed through yet another village, the people mocked them, saying, "How ridiculous! They have a donkey, but neither of them is riding it! What a waste." At the end of the journey, Goha turned to his son and said, "No matter what you do, people will always find something to criticize. You can't please everyone, so it's better to do what you think is right."

**Story Moral:** "No matter what you do, people will always find something to criticize. You can't please everyone, so it's better to do what you think is right."





## Story 8: Goha and the Poor Man

Story shared by: *Anonymous*

Representing: *Egyptian, MENA*

### The Story:

Once upon a time, in a small village, there lived a poor man who had little to his name. One day, while walking through the market, he passed by a bustling barbecue shop. The delicious aroma of grilled meat filled the air, and though the poor man couldn't afford to buy any, he stood nearby with his humble piece of bread, enjoying the smell of the meat as he ate.

As the poor man savored the scent, the owner of the barbecue shop noticed him and became furious. "How dare you enjoy the smell of my meat without paying for it!" the owner shouted. The poor man, confused, replied, "But I've only smelled the meat. I haven't taken anything from you."

The angry shopkeeper insisted that the poor man must pay for the privilege of smelling his meat. The two men argued back and forth, drawing the attention of the villagers. Unable to resolve the matter, they decided to seek the wisdom of Goha. The barbecue owner presented his case. "This man was eating his bread while smelling the meat from my shop. He owes me payment for enjoying the smell!" The poor man, still bewildered, tried to explain that he had done nothing wrong.

Goha listened patiently, stroking his beard as he thought. Then, with a glint of amusement in his eyes, he reached into his pocket and pulled out a coin. He held it up for both men to see and then, with a flick of his wrist, let the coin fall to the ground with a soft clink.

Turning to the barbecue shop owner, Goha asked, "Did you hear the sound of the coin dropping?" "Yes, of course I did," the shopkeeper replied. Goha smiled and said, "Well then, you've been paid! The sound of the coin is your payment for the smell of the meat."

The shopkeeper's face flashed a bright shade of red, and though he tried to think up a logical retort, there was nothing he could say in response. Instead, the poor man graciously thanked Goha for his skillful problem solving and turned on his heel to continue on his way. Goha winked at the shopkeeper with a knowing sparkle in his eye, and the two parted ways, leaving the humbled shopkeeper with considerably less arrogance than before.

**Story Moral:** *Be careful how you treat people, you may get a taste of your own medicine.*







## Story 9: Lullaby

### Котыку Сирень'куу Котику Сиренький

Ukrainian folk song



Ко-ты-ку си -рен'- кую, Ко-ты-ку би - лен'- кую, Кол-ку во-ло-кха- тую, Не kho-ды по kha - ти,  
Ко-ти-ку сі -рень-кий, Ко-ти-ку бі-лень-кий, Кот-ку во-ло-кха- тий, Не хо-ди по ха - ті

Ne kho-ды po\_kha - ti, Ne bu-ды dy - tya - ty, Dy-tya bu-de spa - ty, Ko-tyk vor-ko-ta - ty,  
Не хо-ди по\_ха - ті, Не бу-ди ди - тя - ти, Ди-тя бу-де спа - ти, Ко-тик вор-ко-та - ти

© bethsnotes.com

Оу на ко - та\_\_ vor - ко - та, На dy - ty - ну\_\_ dri - мо - та, а\_\_ а\_\_ а\_\_ а!  
Ой на ко - та\_\_ вор - ко - та, На ди - ти - ну\_\_ dri - мо - та, а\_\_ а\_\_ а\_\_ а!

Story shared by: *Viktoriia*

Representing: *Ukrainians in Groningen*

### The Story:

The cat is gray

The kitty is white

Shaggy cat

Do not go to the house

Do not go to the house

Do not wake the baby

The child will sleep

The cat will purr

Oh, purr cat

The baby naps

A a a a!

Story Moral: *Chill Pill*





## Story 10: Mami Wata



Story shared by: *Aminata*

Representing: *Senegalese*

### The Story:

Once upon a time, on a warm summer evening, two children sat eagerly at the foot of their grandmother's bed, excitedly discussing their plans for the next day. "Maam," said the eldest child, "we're so excited! We want to go to the lake tomorrow!" Their grandmother, a wise old woman, looked at them with concern. "To the lake? Oh, my dear grandchildren, you mustn't go too close to the water," she warned, her voice serious. "Don't you know what happened to your aunty?" The younger child frowned in confusion. "Our aunty? What happened to her, Maam?" "Yes," said the older child, eyes wide. "Tell us, Maam! What happened to her?" The grandmother sighed. "It happened many years ago, when I was a young girl just like you two. My sister and I were eager to visit the river, just as you are now. But that day, our plans did not go as expected." The children glanced at each other with worry in their eyes as the grandmother began her story...

Long ago, in a small village nestled by the river, two young girls played in the heat of the afternoon sun. One of them was their aunty, a lively, adventurous girl with bright eyes and a love for exploring. Beside her stood her sister, their grandmother as a young girl, more cautious but equally curious. "It's so hot today," said their aunty. "Let's go to the river and play!" The young version of their grandmother hesitated. "But we're not supposed to go near the water," she said, looking nervously towards the river. "It's dangerous..." "Don't worry," said her sister, brushing off the concern. "We're just going to cool off. What could be dangerous about that?" After a moment's hesitation, young Maam nodded. "Alright. You always seem to know best. Let's go." So the two girls made their way through the village. The sound of rushing water grew louder as they neared the river. When they arrived, the girls wasted no time, splashing around in the shallow water, laughing and playing as the coolness of the river washed over them.

After a while, a flash of movement under the water caught their eye. "Did you see that?" their aunty asked, "It looked like a huge fish! I want to get a closer look." But young Maam wasn't so sure. "I don't know," she said, her voice uneasy. "What if it's dangerous? I'd rather stay here in the shallow water." But her sister paid no mind to the thought. Without another word, she waded deeper into the river.



When she reached the point that was too deep to stand, something magical happened: a figure began to rise from the depths of the water. Mami Wata, the water spirit, emerged with shimmering skin and flowing hair, her beauty beyond anything the girls had ever seen.

Mami Wata stood tall and graceful, her presence both enchanting and dangerous. Young Maam watched, her heart racing with fear, as her sister froze in shock. Next, Young Maam watched in horror as the water spirit's tentacles reached out, creating a whirlpool in the water. "Sister! No!" young Maam cried. "Come back!" But it was too late. The whirlpool spun faster and faster, pulling her sister deeper into the river's depths. Her body disappeared beneath the waves, swallowed by the water as Mami Wata took her away to her watery realm. The river was calm once again, but Maam's sister was gone, lost forever to the mysterious spirit.

Upon finishing the story, the grandmother's eyes were sad as she looked at her grandchildren. "And that is how your aunty was lost to Mami Wata. The children sat in silence, the tale of their lost aunty settling heavily in their minds. They now understood the danger their grandmother had warned them about, and knew they would never forget her words.

**Story Moral:** *Be very careful around water.*

## Story 11: New Years Monster



Story shared by: *Jerry*

Representing: *Chinese in Groningen*

The Story: Long ago, in the mountains, there lived a huge, terrifying beast called Nian. Every year, without fail, Nian would descend from its mountain home and wreak havoc on the villages below. It destroyed everything in its path—people, homes, crops—nothing was safe. The villagers were terrified, powerless to stop the destruction. No matter what they did, they couldn't fight back against the monster.

But Nian, for all its ferocity, had weaknesses. It feared loud noises, and even more strangely, it was terrified of the color red. So, when the New Year approached and Nian's return was near, the villagers would prepare. They covered their homes and doors with red banners, wore red clothes, and surrounded themselves with the color, hoping to ward off the beast. When the time came, they'd make as much noise as possible. People banged on pots and pans, lit firecrackers, and shouted into the night—anything to scare Nian away.

Each time the villagers survived another year, they'd celebrate with joy. And from that, the tradition of Chinese New Year was born. The custom of wearing red and setting off firecrackers all started because of Nian. Even the tradition of wearing red underwear is said to trace back to those times, a way to keep the monster's fear alive.

Story Moral: *Resourcefulness and Ingenuity*





## Story 12: Newroz



Story shared by: *Alla*

Representing: *Kurds in Groningen*

### The Story:

A long time ago, in the mountains of Zoroastrian lands, there lived a blacksmith named Kawa. Back in those days, each village had its own ruler or king, most of whom were just and kind. But then, a king came to power who was truly evil, ruling with cruelty and fear.

This king had fallen under the influence of a sorcerer, a wicked man with dark intentions. The sorcerer convinced the king that in order to stay in power, he needed to do something horrifying—he had to eat the brains of two children every day. And the sorcerer didn't stop there. He placed two snakes on the king's shoulders, telling him that only the brains of children could ease the pain they caused.

So, every day, two children were taken from their families to be sacrificed. Kawa, a blacksmith with many children, was heartbroken when some of his own were taken by the king. But when the time came for another child, Kawa couldn't bear the thought of losing more. Instead of handing over his daughter, he hid her away and offered the king the brain of a sheep, pretending it was that of a child. Kawa wasn't alone—he convinced other families to do the same, saving many children by fooling the king.

Those hidden children, the story says, would grow up to become the first Kurds.

But the pain and suffering couldn't last forever. Kawa, fueled by the loss of his children and the suffering of his people, decided to take action. He led a rebellion against the king, and with his hammer—his trusted tool as a blacksmith—he struck down the evil ruler. The people were finally free from the king's tyranny.

Kawa became a hero, celebrated for his courage and his victory. After the king's death, Kawa is said to have taken the throne himself, ruling with justice and compassion. In Kurdish culture, Kawa is remembered both as a historical figure and a symbol of hope. His rebellion is celebrated during Newroz, the Kurdish New Year, which falls on the spring equinox. It's a day that marks renewal and the end of suffering, just as Kawa's victory brought new life to his people.





<https://digifolk.eu/>

**Story Moral:** *Good things are rooted in courage and sacrifice*



## Story 13: The Pear Story



Story shared by: *Xiang Lu*

Representing: *Chinese in Groningen*

### The Story:

When Kong Rong was a little boy, he lived with his large family, being the youngest of his siblings. One day, his parents placed a plate of pears on the table, all of different sizes—some large, some small. Like any child, most would think the biggest pear was the best, and naturally, you'd expect the kids to reach for the largest one. But when it was Kong Rong's turn to pick, he didn't do what everyone expected.

Instead of grabbing the biggest pear, Kong Rong chose the smallest one. His parents, curious about his choice, asked him why he had picked the smallest pear when he could have had any one he wanted.

Kong Rong, in his youthful wisdom, replied, "I am the youngest, so I should take the smallest. The biggest pears should go to my older brothers and sisters."

His parents smiled, impressed by his thoughtfulness. Kong Rong's action showed respect for his siblings and demonstrated that he wasn't greedy. It became a story told over generations, known as Kong Rong Rang Li, used to teach children about kindness, selflessness, and respect for family.

Over time, the story found its way into countless families, passed down from one generation to the next. But as times changed, some began to see the story differently. In modern times, especially in the West, some people might wonder: why should the youngest always take the smallest pear just because he's younger? Kong Rong had the first choice, so why shouldn't he take the biggest one if he wanted to?

The story raises questions about fairness, about how much we should prioritize others over ourselves, and whether the values it teaches still hold the same meaning today. But no matter how it's viewed, the story of Kong Rong and the pears remains a cherished lesson in kindness and thoughtfulness, one that has shaped the way many children learn to respect those around them.

**Story Moral:** *It is best to know one's role and be humble towards one's seniors*





<https://digifolk.eu/>

## Story 14: The Brothers of Balcad



Story shared by: *Unknown*

Representing: *Somalia*

### The Story:

Many years ago, two brothers left the vibrant city of Mogadishu, eager for an adventure. They set off to explore the world, walking for days until they came upon a city called Balcad. It was unlike any place they had ever seen, filled with sounds and sights that intrigued them. Drawn by loud noises coming from a large building, the brothers couldn't resist peeking inside. To their amazement, they entered a grand hall packed with people. At the center stood a king upon a grand stage, captivating the crowd with his words. But the brothers quickly realized that the king was telling lies about morals and values, and yet the people cheered him on. One of the brothers, unable to stand it any longer, stood up and boldly interrupted, telling the king to stop lying. The hall fell silent, and all eyes turned toward him. Enraged, the king ordered the boy to be imprisoned. No one had ever dared to speak against him.

The other brother, heartbroken and determined, vowed to rescue him. He left Balcad and returned to Mogadishu, dedicating himself to studying and learning for two long years. He aimed to become a better person and leader, determined to make a difference. When the time was right, the educated brother returned to Balcad. He arrived to find the same scene as before: the king deceiving the people. Without hesitation, he climbed onto the stage and interrupted the king's lies. He spoke with great passion, sharing the truths he had discovered during his studies, urging the people to listen. The king, shocked by the challenge, suffered a heart attack and collapsed on the spot. The crowd, now swayed by the young man's wisdom, declared him the new king of Somalia. Overwhelmed with happiness, his first act as king was to free his imprisoned brother. The two brothers, reunited at last, promised to rule with fairness and wisdom, bringing hope and a brighter future to the land of Somalia.

**Story Moral:** *Education is very valuable as knowledge is power.*





## Story 15: The Fox



Story shared by: *Oksana (and family)*

Representing: *Ukrainian*

### The Story:

There was once a great forest, and in this forest, there was a fox. This was not just any fox, but a fox who had a pet chicken. The pair wandered through the thicket, making their way around branches and bushes until the sun went down. When darkness set upon the land, the Fox began to realize that she had nowhere to sleep that night. But just as the thought struck, she looked down her path and saw a small cottage nestled between the trees, just a short stroll away.

The fox made her way to the house, with the chicken following closely behind. As they finally made it to the front door, the fox balled her paw and knocked. Moments later, a man opened the door. The fox sweetly explained that she had nowhere else to go, and wondered if he would host her for the night. "Sure!" The man said, "but I do not have much space. You will have to sleep on top of the oven, which will keep you nice and warm." The fox gratefully accepted, and followed the man inside to get comfortable.

She rested and lazed on the oven until the man was soundly asleep. That was when her stomach began to rumble. "There's my cue," she thought to herself, and hopped down from the toasty oven. She then ate her chicken, hiding its bones outside in the forest before finding her place back on the oven. When she awoke the next morning, the fox stepped off of the oven and furiously confronted the man, claiming that her chicken was missing, and that he must be responsible for stealing it. "I did not take your chicken," stated the man in confusion, "but I have a coop full of ducks, maybe it is in there?" "No," the fox replied, "my chicken is not there. To repay me for this, you will have to give me a duck." The man reluctantly obliged, and the Fox continued on her way through the forest.

As the sun set on the second night, she and her duck stumbled upon another cottage, with a whole gaggle of geese in the backyard! The fox knocked on the door, explained her situation, and kindly accepted the man's hospitality. Once again, she waited for him to fall asleep before sneakily eating her duck and hiding the bones. In the morning, she angrily complained about the theft of her duck, demanding a goose in exchange. The homeowner begrudgingly gave her a goose, and she continued on her way through the forest.



The sun went down once again, and the fox approached the next nearest home, asking for a place to sleep. The man opened his door to her, showing her where to sleep. In the night, she waited to hear him snore before eating her new goose, hiding the bones, and going to sleep. She awoke the next morning and made her usual accusation, this time receiving a lamb in return.

The Fox walked her lamb through the forest until the light started to dim when she casually approached the nearest home, once again requesting a stay for the night. The man said “yes of course, but I have a big family and little space. You must put your lamb outside in the cow pasture.” “No matter,” the fox replied, and settled into her home for the night. When the house was quiet and she was sure that everyone was asleep, the fox got up, yet again, and ate her lamb. The next morning, she told the man of her missing lamb. Growing confident in her scam, the fox slyly said, “Someone here has stolen my lamb! Now you owe me. To pay your debt, you must give me your son's wife!” “Fine.” the man said, handing her a big bag with something large, and live inside. Little did the fox know, however, that the man had a trick up his sleeve. Instead of his son’s wife, he had put two large hounds in the bag. The fox left, happily accepting her prize. As the fox made her way through the forest, however, she grew suspicious of the dog-like barking sounds coming from the bag. Out of curiosity she opened it, only to be chased into a hole by two wild and aggressive hounds!

The fox sat in the hole in a state of shock and terror. “Feet, what were you doing when I was running away from those hounds?” she cried, to which they responded “we were running as fast as we could so that the hounds would not eat your beautiful, golden fur!” “Wow, Feet, you are so nice, I will buy you a pair of golden shoes in return,” she said gratefully. “Eyes, what were you doing when I was running away from the dogs?” the fox asked next. “We were looking out so that you could run as fast as you could!” And the fox asked each of her body parts what they were doing while she ran away from the hounds before finally reaching her tail. “Tail, what were you doing while I ran from the hounds?” she asked. But this time, the tail got offended. “You know what? I was trying to get you stuck in the trees so that your golden fur would be torn apart, and the hounds would eat you!” “I HATE YOU,” replied the fox, sticking her tail out of the hole and telling the hounds to bite it off. But the hounds were one step ahead. They grabbed the fox by the tail, pulled her out of the hole, and ate her for dinner.

**Story Moral:** *Be wary of your cleverness, your luck may run out.*

## Story 16: The Kolobok



Story shared by: *Anna*

Representing: *Ukrainian*

### The Story:

Once upon a time, in a cozy, quaint cottage planted in the countryside, lived an old woman who spent her days alone. One day, she discovered the last remaining portion of flour and decided to bake herself a kolobok, a delightful bread. She gathered all the ingredients and mixed the dough with care, kneading it into a perfect circular shape. She then placed the dough in the oven and waited patiently, watching as heat from the fire baked it into a beautiful, golden bun. Once it was ready, she placed it on the windowsill to cool, allowing the soft breeze from the window to gently cool the golden bun. The kolobok laid there for a while, basking in the sunlight while listening to the cheerful birds, and whispering rustle of leaves from trees nearby.

As it observed the world outside, a sense of adventure began to awaken within the kolobok. “Why should I just sit here when I could be observing the world?” The kolobok thought to himself. Then, with a sudden burst of determination, the Kolobok crawled off of the windowsill, onto the bench that sat below, tumbled to the ground, and finally found itself in the great, magnificent world. He rolled down the dirt path, and suddenly came face to face with a hare! “Kolobok, Kolobok, I’ll eat you up!” He taunted. “Don’t eat me up, I’ll sing you a song!” The Kolobok replied. “Well go on then...” The hare suggested.

“I am Kolobok, I am Kolobok,  
I have a nice and brown crust.  
From the barrels I was scraped,  
I was mixed with cream, then on the window I was placed,  
And from Grandma I escaped,  
And now from you, Hare, I will escape.”



And just like that, the Kolobok was able to continue on his way. He kept on rolling and rolling until suddenly meeting the fox. “Kolobok, Kolobok, I’ll eat you up!” The fox threatened. “Don’t eat me, I’ll sing you a song!” The Kolobok pleaded. “A song?”

“I am Kolobok, I am Kolobok,  
I have a nice and brown crust.  
From the barrels I was scraped,  
I was mixed with cream, then on the window I was placed,  
And from Grandma I escaped,  
And from the hare I escaped,  
And now from you, Fox, I will escape.”

And, just like that, the Kolobok continued on it’s way. He kept rolling until he encountered a bear. “Kolobok, Kolobok, I’ll eat you up!” Said the bear. “Don’t eat me, let me sing you a song!”

“I am Kolobok, I am Kolobok,  
I have a nice and brown crust.  
From the barrels I was scraped,  
I was mixed with cream, then on the window I was placed,  
And from Grandma I escaped,  
From the hare I escaped,  
From the fox I escaped,  
And now from you, Bear, I will escape.”

Once again, the kolobok continued on his path. That was before suddenly meeting the gray wolf who said “Kolobok, Kolobok, where are you rolling? Wait up! Please sing me a song?” Once again, the kolobok began.

“I am Kolobok, I am Kolobok,  
I have a nice and brown crust.  
From the barrels I was scraped,  
I was mixed with cream, then on the window I was placed,  
And from Grandma I escaped,  
From the hare I escaped,  
From the fox I escaped,  
From the bear I escaped,





And now from you, Wolf, I will escape.”

But just as the kolobok started to leave, the wolf said, “you have such a beautiful voice, but I don't hear it very well. Get up on my nose and sing it again.” So the kolobok slowly rolled onto the wolf's snout as they stared into eachothers eyes. The kolobok began to sing,

“I am Kolobok, I am Kolobok-”

But just before it could finish the song, the wolf threw the Kolobok in the air and, “NOM!” Swallowed it whole.

**Story Moral:** *Do not trust strangers.*

## Story 17: The Rusalka

Story shared by: *Viktoriia*

Representing: *Ukrainian*

### The Story:

In a quiet village by the edge of a dark, deep lake, there was a legend about the Rusalka, a mermaid-like creature known for her beauty and danger. They were mischievous and deadly, with voices as sweet as honey and faces as beautiful as the moon. One day, a young man from the village, still grieving the tragic loss of his beloved girlfriend, wandered by the lake. As he walked, he heard a song drifting across the water, more beautiful than anything he had ever heard. He followed the sound and, to his astonishment, saw a stunning woman sitting on a rock. To his shock, she looked exactly like his lost love. The young man's heart ached with hope and longing. He couldn't believe it—his girlfriend, whom he had loved so deeply, was right in front of him. Overcome with emotion, he begged her to leave the lake and live with him in the village. But the Rusalka, still wearing the face of his beloved, smiled sadly. She told him she could not live on the land; the water was her home, and she could never leave it. Instead, she asked him to join her beneath the waves, promising they would be happy together in the depths. The young man hesitated, remembering the villagers' warnings. "She cannot be trusted," they had said. "She will lure you into the water, and you will never return." But as he looked into her eyes, the same eyes he had loved so much, he could not resist. How could he doubt her? Ignoring the warnings, he took her hand and stepped into the lake. As they waded deeper, the Rusalka's song grew sweeter, wrapping around him like a dream. He followed her without hesitation, drawn by her beauty and the promise of a love he thought he had lost forever. The villagers waited for him to return, but he never did. The Rusalka, in the guise of his lost love, had taken him, just as she had taken many before. Her haunting song continued to echo across the lake, luring more men into the depths, forever lost to her enchantment.

**Story Moral:** *Be wary of who you trust, and do not let your hopes and desires blind you.*

## Story 18: The Story of Saint Barbara

Story shared by: *Janine*

Representing: *Lebanese/ MENA*

### The Story:

Long ago, in the early Middle Ages, there lived a beautiful princess named Barbara in the mountains of Lebanon. She was the daughter of a powerful nobleman, who kept her locked within the high walls of his castle in hopes to shield her from ill-intending men. Barbara grew up isolated from the world, with her father guarding her fiercely, determined that no one would ever come near her. Despite her father's strict protection, Barbara's heart longed for more than the confinement.

One day, a servant slipped a Bible into her room, and as she read its pages, a deep faith took root in her soul. She embraced the teachings of Christianity and became devoted to her new-found beliefs. When her father discovered that Barbara had converted to Christianity, he was furious. In his eyes, this was a betrayal of his authority and everything he believed. His anger knew no bounds, and he decided that his only option was to kill her.

Fearing for her life, Barbara fled the castle under the cover of night. As she ran, she found herself in the midst of vast wheat fields. The tall, golden stalks of wheat swayed in the wind, hiding her from her father's men who pursued her. Protected by the fields, she continued her escape. Disguising herself with a variety of garments and cloaks, Barbara roamed from village to village, begging for food and shelter. The people who took her in didn't recognize the noble princess, but they showed her kindness nonetheless. She lived in hiding, her faith guiding her through her perilous journey, until she finally found a place to settle and practice Christianity in peace.

**Story Moral:** *Stay true to your faith in the face of challenge/adversity.*

## Story 19: The Story of the Simb

Story shared by: *Mariama*

Representing: *Senegalese*

### The Story:

Long ago, when Senegal was covered by thick forests and wild animals roamed free, there lived a brave hunter. One day, deep in the forest, the hunter came face-to-face with a fierce lion. Before he could react, the lion roared and pounced at him. In that terrifying moment, something strange happened—the hunter let out a roar just as powerful as the lion's. His body began to change. Fur sprouted on his skin, his teeth sharpened, and his hands turned into claws. The hunter was becoming more like the lion with each passing second.

Shocked and afraid, the hunter ran through the forest, faster and wilder than ever before. He no longer felt like a man but like a beast, driven by instincts and hunger. Days passed, and the hunter, now half-lion, wandered the woods. He no longer thought like a human, living like the wild animals he used to hunt.

When the hunter didn't return to the village, his people grew worried. They knew something terrible had happened. The village elders gathered and remembered an ancient spell called Jat, special words accompanied by the beat of drums which could heal those trapped between two worlds. They believed this was the only way to save the hunter.

The villagers prepared for the Jat. Drummers gathered around a large fire in the village center, and as night fell, the rhythm of the drums began to fill the air. The steady beat echoed through the forest, reaching the hunter's ears. Even in his lion-like state, he was drawn to the sound of the drums and returned to the village.

When he arrived, the villagers gasped at his appearance. The drums grew louder, and the hunter began to move, his feet tapping to the rhythm. Slowly, the Jat took over and he began to dance. With each step, the lion spirit inside him weakened. His fur began to disappear, his claws turned back into hands, and his roar softened.

By the end of the night, the hunter had returned to his human form. The villagers rejoiced, knowing the power of the Jat had saved him.

**Story Moral:** *unknown/unspecified, the story accompanies an actual Senegalese practice.*





## Story 20: The Three Fools

Story shared by: *Cheikh*

Representing: *Senegalese*

### The Story:

Once upon a time, three men were walking down the street, each determined to prove that he was the smartest of the group. As they strolled along, they began to discuss how they might settle this question once and for all. One of the men had an idea. "Let's test each other's intelligence by asking about something simple—like how to drive a car!"

The others agreed, and so the first man asked the second, "How does a car start?" The second man thought for a moment before confidently replying, "A car starts if you fill it with water. Once it's full, you just turn the faucet, and off it goes!" The third man burst out laughing, shaking his head. "No, no, that's not how a car starts!" he said. "Everyone knows you need to put the key into the exhaust pipe and blow into the tailpipe to get the car moving. The more air you blow, the faster it goes!" The first man grinned, certain that he could outsmart both of them. "Well," he said, "I'm the smartest because I can actually show you how to start a car!" With that, he reached into his pocket and pulled out his hand, completely empty, but waved it around like it held something important. The other two stared at him, puzzled. "But you don't have a key!" they both exclaimed.

The first man looked down at his hand and shrugged. "Huh. I guess that explains why the car never starts."

And so, the three men continued their walk, each convinced that they were the cleverest of the bunch, even though none of their answers made any sense. They laughed and joked, happy in their shared madness, leaving anyone who overheard them to wonder who, if anyone, was truly the smartest of them all.

From that day forward, the people in the village would tell stories of the three fools, each time coming up with new and funnier variations. It became a game—who could tell the most ridiculous version of the tale? And though the details changed with each telling, the laughter it brought always stayed the same.

**Story Moral:** *Do not brag about being the smartest, stay humble.*



