

The Flood – A Hmong Folk Tale

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A very long time ago, the universe turned upside down and the whole world was flooded with water. All living beings were killed except one boy and his sister, who had taken refuge in an unusually large wooden funeral drum.

The flood waters had risen higher and higher until they reached the sky. Then this drum bumped against the land of the sky and made a sound like NDOO NDONG! NDOO NDONG! Sky people heard the sound and said, "Why is the earthly world making this noise? What could be happening?"

Some sky people were sent down to find out what was happening, and they saw that the water had already covered the earth and reached up as high as the sky. The sky people said, "Let us use copper lances and iron spears to puncture holes in the earth so that the water can flow away."

So the sky people hurled the lances and spears into the earth and the water flowed down and away. Finally, the big drum came back to the surface of the earth.

The brother and sister heard the noise when the drum came back to the earth, and they knew they had reached land. They broke open the drum and climbed out.

"Where are all the people?" the girl asked.

"Dead," said the boy.

"Are all the animals dead too?"

"Yes. There is only you and me."

They were both full of despair. "Marry me," said the boy. "We can have a baby. We can make more people."

"I cannot marry you. You are my brother," said the girl.

The next day the boy asked again, "Marry me."

The sister would not listen to him. But after many days of her brother asking her to marry him, she finally said, "If you really want to marry me, we must each bring a stone and climb up on the mountain. When we get to the top, we will roll your stone down one side of the mountain and roll mine down the other side. The next morning, if both stones have gone back up the mountain and we find them lying together on the mountain top, then I will agree to marry you. But if the stones do not go back up the mountain, you will stop asking me to marry you."

Each carried one stone up to the top of the mountain. The sister rolled her stone down one side and the brother rolled his stone down the other.

The boy wanted to marry his sister very much, so that night he went to the mountain. He carried his stone back up the mountain and put it on the grass. Then he went down the mountain again and carried his sister's stone back up.

In the morning the sister said it was too bad there was no one to come along as a witness. The two of them went to the top of the mountain. "Look at the stone," said the brother. "They have come back up the mountain and are together in the same place. Now we can be married."

When the sister saw this, she said, "We are really brother and sister, but these stones have come back and are lying together. Therefore we can be married, if you wish it to be so."

The sister and brother married and lived together as husband and wife. After a while, they had a baby, but it did not look like an ordinary baby. It was like a big soft egg, and it had no arms and no legs. "What kind of baby is this?" they said to each other. "Maybe it is a baby seed. Let's cut it into pieces."

So they cut the baby seed into little pieces and scattered the pieces in all directions. Two pieces fell on the goat house (pronounced "ngua chee") and these became the clan Lee. Two pieces fell in the pig pen, (pronounced "ngau mbua") and those became the clan Moua. Two pieces that landed in the garden (pronounced "va") turned into the clans Vang and Yang.

Three days later, the village was full of houses for every family. People were making fires and smoke was curling above every roof.

But this wonderful baby seed not only created people. Pieces also turned into chickens, pigs, oxen, buffaloes, horses, all sorts of insects, rodents, and birds. This is how the world was once again filled with living beings.

The brother and sister said, "Now we aren't sad because we are not alone any more."