

## **The Buffalo**

a tale from the Uighurs, given by Dirk Nowakowski  
to Tellers without borders

Once upon a time, high up in the mountains, there lived a young boy alone in his bamboo hut. He had no parents and no relations.

Next to the hut there was a little field where he planted rice. One day after the harvest, he went down to the city market to sell his two bundles of rice.

After he had sold them he wandered around the market. He gazed at all the splendid carpets, exquisite silverware and he stood before the market stand where fine brushes, bowls, painting colors, charcoal, pencils and fine rice paper were sold.

Oh, he thought, I'd love to draw, but the two copper coins which he owned were not enough for painting colors and paper. Then he thought again, perhaps I have enough for some charcoal - and yes he did. He asked the Merchant if he could have a piece of charcoal.

He raced home, took a leaf from his banana tree and began to draw. When he was drawing, he thought how nice it would be to have a little buffalo - like the one he had seen on the market.

With his charcoal he began to draw his buffalo - first his head, then his body, his fur, finally the horns, but, oh dear, there was only space for one horn. He drew one, however and was very content

with his drawing. He hung it up in his hut and went outside. He stood there perfectly still because before his very eyes a buffalo was standing who looked at him out of his faithful brown eyes and on his forehead he had only one horn. He dashed back into his hut to look at his drawing but the banana leaf was bare. He knew therefore that it was his buffalo, the one, he had drawn. From that moment on they lived happily together. During the day they worked in the rice field and in the evening they slept close and warm together.

One day soldiers of the emperor came marching up the mountains, they were hungry and when they saw the buffalo they called out together: "Hey, look at this splendid buffalo, he will taste good. Although the boy begged the soldiers to leave the buffalo alive because he is his best friend, they caught the buffalo, killed and fried him. In despair the boy went onto his hut and wept bitterly. Some time later he heard the soldiers say, "here, this is the rest of your buffalo friend and they threw him the bones and the horn in front of his hut. Laughing they left the place. Deeply said, the boy gathered the bones, buried them next to his hut, the horn, however, he hang up in his hut. A few days later, however, just where he had buried the bones a little little bamboo plant was beginning to grow. It grew and grew and grew till it became a strong slim tree. Every day the boy lent on his trunk and listened to the whispering of its leaves, till one day the top disappeared into the clouds.

"How tall it grows", said the boy. I will climb to the top and see what is there. He put his arms around the trunk and began to climb. He climbed and climbed till he got dizzy but went on till he finally found himself on a white cloud. He pushed it aside and found a blue door through which he went. Oh, he could smell flowers and saw the blue sea where little ships were carrying beautiful fairies. One of them he found the most beautiful. He gazed at her - suddenly she gazed back and called out in fright. In this moment the bamboo tree became smaller and smaller till it reached the earth and the boy was standing before his hut. He gazed into the heavens, longing to see his beautiful fairy again - her lovely face and smile. Day and night he thought only about her and longed to take her as his wife but the tree had disappeared and the heavens were high and far away. He couldn't sleep and eat for thinking on her.

One night he dreamed that his friend the buffalo came to him, looking out of his wise eyes and said, "why are you so sad? - Have you forgotten that you can draw? If you want to find your beautiful fairy and draw her - when the picture is finished blow into my horn. As soon as he awoke, he raced outside, picked a banana-leaf and drew his fairy till she gazed at him out of his drawing. He took the horn and blew into it. The air trembled, a wonderful scent filled the hut and his fairy stood before him in raying light. Smiling shyly she gave him her hands,

"I would love to be your wife. We will enjoy each other and live happily together."

From this moment on bliss and love entered his hut. The boy had no more wishes.

One day, however, the soldiers and the emperor marched up the mountains and when they saw the beautiful fairy they called, "Hey, you are just the right bride for an emperor. He will like you very much. In spite of tears and lamentations the soldiers led the fairy roughly out of the hut. The boy remained alone on the hut crying bitterly.

Suddenly he jumped up with a wonderful idea, raced out of the hut to get a banana leaf.

He took his charcoal and began to draw a tiger, baring his teeth with great wings and he blew in his horn and the tiger sprang out of his picture. The boy jumped onto his back and they flew to the emperor's palace.

The guards were horrified as they saw the tiger.

They shut the gate and fled into the palace where the emperor was about to marry the fairy. The tiger roared, flew over the wall, into the hall, beat his tail on the floor, opened his mouth very wide as to attack the emperor and his servants and soldiers.

The boy slipped off the tiger's back, raced to his fairy, picked her up and together they jumped onto the tiger's back. He took flight - flew over the palace gate and headed towards the mountains.

When they arrived at the hut they thanked the tiger who disappeared into the woods. No one ever dared to attack this couple again And they got children and grandchildren and grandgrandchildren and so on till our days. And here ends the story.