

SAANHDDAALE'S THUMB
OR, THE CURSED WHITE THUMB

(Translated from the Somali original by Amina Adan)

Once upon a time, there was a creature that aroused great wonder. It got its name from its five paws.

This five-pawed creature was the type that ate without chewing; it simply swallowed its food the instant the food was in its mouth.

One day, so the story goes, it came across two sisters tending their sheep in the savana. One of the girls was clever, alert, and active. The other was not so much. "Look at this strange creature," the clever one told her sister. "Oh! it has five paws." She wasted no time mustering her sheep and dashing away. The stupid one, however, kept gaping at the creature until he told her, "Little girl, I'll eat all the sheep, and if you report on me, I'll eat you, too."

The stupid girl returned home without a single sheep. The family raged at her. When asked about the whereabouts of the sheep, she said, trembling with fear, "The five-pawed creature ate them." But the creature was outside listening as she told her family about what it did. And when she was left alone in the house, the girl fell into a frenzy, convinced that the five-pawed creature would not spare her life. She wondered if she had any possible means of escape. She saw a big creature with a container, Haan as it is called, opened it, and closed herself in. Soon, the five-pawed creature arrived, making farts as he walked, breathing in deep sighs. He opened the Haan and put on his most ferocious look, took the girl into his jaws and swallowed her instantly. He was in too much of a haste to even bother chewing her. As he stood up in order to resume his hunt, the girl's mother came home with the sheep after a long grazing day. The five-pawed creature took a quick exit. The mother reached out for the Haan to quench her long thirst. Empty! She took it to the nearby well for water.

The mother drank some of the water that she brought home. Without noticing it, she swallowed a thumb left from her daughter's body.

In a little while, the mother became pregnant and gave birth to a short creature, just the size of a thumb. So no name was more befitting the newly-born offspring than Thumb. When Thumb matured, his friends nicknamed him The Devilish Thumb, for he grew up to be mischievous and troublesome. Thumb contrived a plan one time of getting rid of everybody in the family. He dashed to his mother one day with a hideous lie. "Mother," he said with a solemn voice, "my father wants to slaughter all the calves." He sounded serious and earnest. The mother had no reason not to believe him. He next went to his father and

told him that the old lady was out of her mind and had slaughtered all the calves the family owned. Her reason was, said Thumb, that the father was about to marry another woman. The old man immediately grasped his spear, ran home and beat his wife to death. Thumb put on a crying show of bereavement. He went to his uncles and said, "The old man has just killed my mother. I know you are not capable of revenge but please come and at least bring your sister." One of the uncles could not control himself. He took a dagger and brought the old man's life to an end.

Thumb's sister started to cry and said, "Oh, Thumb! Oh, Devilish Thumb! Where are you?" "Behind the rid con," retorted Thumb.

Thumb ran into a neighbor girl and told her that his sister was boasting of being stronger than her. Anger struck the girl. She took a huge rock and hit Thumb's sister on the head. Thumb's sister died at once.

By now, Thumb's happiness knew no bounds. He was the sole member of the family. He began to drink his milk with jubilation. He kept drinking in excess until the last drop of milk fell on his belly button. He decided not to let that drop go to waste. In an attempt to lick off that last drop he bent forward till his stomach burst. Thus died Thumb, Thumb the Devilish!

THE WEDDING OF THE FOX

(Translated from the Somali original by Amina Adan)

Once upon a time there was a beautiful fox. In addition to her exquisite beauty she had a sense of pride verging on vanity. Many a male member of the animal kingdom asked for her hand in marriage. She declined them all to become a celebrity every one dreamed about but dared not to attain. She became the subject of every discussion.

One night, many of the youths gathered together. They were all seeking marriage and all had a bone bent for the fox. In their talk, they also mentioned her name. In the course of the talk the lion suggested that they go and look for the fox in the night. That sounded like a fine idea. Six of the youths put on their finest dresses, parted their hair in the side, and looked their best. They were Knight-Angel, the lion, the "weer," the "xoor," the hyena, and the squirrel.

Reaching the fox's house, they began to dance. Their chant reached the *shir* council. Their applause was deafening. Envious of the