

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

attention the dancer's got at the time, the lion, who possessed a great voice, started to sing:

Oh! Charming, oh gold-like  
 these dancing men  
 Are all your age  
 Are of your status too  
 Oh! Fox, the peak of beauty  
 Please come out at once.

For a while many girls showed up. Among them was the fox. She had a bent for dancing, and as she could not resist the temptation, she even woke up many of the other foxes around her.

But as soon as the youths saw her they forgot all about the other foxes. The competition for the fox's heart started. As the dancing progressed and gained in beat and intensity, the Knight-Angel began to sing:

This is the man, *galow*  
 has two---on his shoulders  
 has a strong shield with him  
 could run away with ten camels

So Fox, would you marry him. The lion was angered by their question. Galow was supposed to be the least attractive of all the male animals. Since he sang first, lion could not resist letting his voice go:

There is a galow in a tree  
 Galow is a gum-filled tree  
 with dark interior  
 out there is no galow  
 that has camels to own.

Turning his attention to the fox, the lion resumed singing:

I'll go into the *prugh*  
 And the hills of *saraar*  
 will be your shoulder's saches  
 of fat and juice  
 you enjoy each in turn  
 Knight-Angel in fomali.

So fox, would you marry me?

The *xoor* sang next:

I go into the mole-hills  
will burst a big fart  
you get honey as a result  
so, would you marry me, fox?

Hyena, angry that his turn came late, began to sing:

Oh! Me with dusty shoulders  
and you clear and clean  
In out a godly match  
so, would you marry me, fox?

Next came the squirrel, more alarmed at not being left whined rather than missing the first chance:

Oh! it's me  
who in rainy season  
or dry  
say camels know no thirst  
Hundred give birth this autumn  
Hundred remain dark-hided  
And my fragrant no know hunger  
would you marry me, fox?

Now the fox had to decide. All attention was centered on her. The lion was supposed to be the most likely choice. Others, like the hyena, stood good chances too. But to everybody's surprise, the fox chose the squirrel. In her deciding song, she said:

Oh! The Squirrel of the male  
Righteous with white spots  
I choose you  
and only you I marry.

The lion could not control his rage. He wanted to beat the squirrel with his strong paw. He missed, though, and the squirrel made a quick dash to one of his holes. The rest of the animals dispersed, especially as fighting started and when the lion threatened that he would kill any one who dared to marry the fox.

The fox thus lost her chance for marriage. She and the squirrel are both afraid of the lion. In secret, however, they meet. And up until now, if you ever see them together they quickly run apart, thinking that you are the lion.