

Vietnamese Focus Group, story 2

R: This story was my favorite story when I was a little kid. My parents told me about it, and I also read it from books for moral teaching. I don't remember all the details, but the main idea . .

R: We have friends who will help.

R: Yeah, we have friends who will help, but basically there was a couple who was in the business of selling and buying things to earn a living. But they was not very honest, so when they make the balance, of mercury in the middle, the bar for the balance. It's empty in the middle.

R: Balances, the scale was empty?

R: In the middle, there's an empty tube, and they put mercury in it. There's a hollow tube. So they put the . . . and mercury was the metal that has the highest density. So when they buying something, they would try to make that it would weigh less so that they don't have to pay more. They use that . . .

R: Very scientific. Mercury will move it and . . .

R: Yes. And when they sell things they would try to tip the scale to the other side so that will weigh more, so the mercury will . . . It can flow easily. Remember mercury . . .

R: Nobody know.

R: It's a liquid metal, right, so . . .

R: It flows.

R: After a while, they got rich real quick, they bought houses and they had two sons. They was good, but it got to the point that they got so rich and then they knew that they was not being honest. And they tell each other that maybe because in ancient culture they believe in whatever deed you do, if you do bad deed, bad thing will come to you. Therefore, they say maybe now we are so rich, maybe we should stop doing that. So they decided to get rid of that scale. They chop it in half and inside they found a drop of blood. Not a drop but it's like a clump of blood. They were so terrified. After a while, the two sons dies. One die first and then the other one die too. One after the other. So they felt so bad for a few months. You know fairy tale, so they cry for a long time.

R: They mourn.

R: Yeah. The wizard . . .

Moderator: The Buddha.

R: No, I think there was another name for it. Not a wizard, the good fairy. The good fairy appeared to them and say it seem like because they'd been crying for months, after their two sons die. They'd been crying and they were very sad for two months. So afterwards the good fairy appear to them and say, "Now I can see that you really feel sorry for what you did. And don't

worry about it, the two sons that you lost, actually they are the evil children that was sent to you. Now don't worry, just continue being good and then you will have other children." And they did. So the moral story behind it is that they teach people to be honest.

Moderator: What's the title of this story?

R: The Mercury Balance. Or scale. I think it's a balance.

R: Back then we don't have electrical scale, we have like a . . . like a . . . adjusted we have the scale.

Moderator: Picture of where you have the two balances.

R: The scale where one heavier.

R: Kind of there's a long stick and there's a hook at one end and then when you weigh it you will put the weight on the other side. But the rod across, the horizontal rod, is hollow so you can put mercury in there.

R: The fairy is a Buddha thing. It's like the . . .

R: In Vietnamese, they call it But. Good fairy.

Moderator: Male or female?

R: Male.

R: Do you know like the one that you have at the store, where people put the dollar?

R: That's different.

R: I think that's for . . .

R: Could you spell that, please?

R: B-U-T . . . with a dot under.

Moderator: If you were to spell it phonetically, though? But an OO with a line at the top. Because if we see that, But, but if you do the Boot. Spell it phonetically so we can use it.

R: I don't know, most of the Vietnamese fairy tale the But is always the male. I don't know, maybe it's because of . . .

R: There's two good character, always happy people.

Moderator: Yeah, because the Westerns, they always said it's a female. So I want to make sure it's culturally right gender.

R: We have both. Fairy is female. But But is male.

R: To distinguish, we say . . . Actually, . . . always is the male. You don't even need to use this. But . . . that mean it's for the female. The good fairy is female, but is for male.

Moderator: And this is the female fairy [Bah] Tien.

R: But this I can't really do like that what I did on here.

R: Sometime just represent by a long bare person, no hair.

R: This is the male. [Bah] Tien.