The swallow and the wasp

A long, long time ago, Khan Garid, King of the Feathered World, sent for a swallow and a wasp. “I command the two of you fly around the world and seek out the animal with the tastiest meat. In future, I will eat only that animal. Come back by nightfall with your news,” he ordered.

Early the next morning, Swallow and Wasp set out on their quest, each flying off in a different direction. As the sun rose higher and higher, Swallow sang happily as he soared through the blue skies, and soon forgot Khan Garid’s command.

Meanwhile, on the other side of the world, Wasp was carrying out the Khan’s orders. As the day drew to a close, they met before the palace. Swallow was now worried about the Khan’s anger. Hoping Wasp had discovered the tastiest animal, he asked, “Wasp, did you find out which animal’s meat tastes best?”

Wasp immediately answered, “Humans are the most delicious of all. From now on, our beloved Khan must eat only humans.”

This upset Swallow as he liked the people of the Earth. “How can I help those poor humans from being hunted by Khan Garid forever?” he thought.

Swallow cunningly asked Wasp, “How did you manage to taste the humans?”

Wasp proudly replied, “I pierced their skin and tasted their blood with my tongue.”

“Where is this powerful tongue of yours?” asked cunning Swallow. When Wasp opened his mouth to show his tongue, Swallow quickly pecked it out. Before shocked Wasp could react, they were summoned to Khan Garid.

“Tell me what you have discovered,” commanded the Khan. “Wasp, you speak first.” But a tongueless wasp cannot speak. All Wasp could do was fly round and round and round protesting with a loud buzzing sound.

“I can’t understand a single word!” roared the Khan. “Swallow, tell me whose meat is the sweetest.”

“With pleasure, your Majesty,” Swallow replied. “The tastiest meat in the world belongs to the snake.”

Khan Garid immediately vowed to hunt only snakes. And so, this royal tradition is carried on to this very day by eagles, the descendants of Khan Garid. As for wasps, they lost their voice forever and now can only make a whining sound of complaint.

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From Mongolian Folktales and Legends, collected by D. Tserensodnom, translated by D. Altangerel and adapted for Talk4Writing by Julia Strong

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Over two-thirds of the words in this story are from the 350 most common words in English (excluding the proper nouns Khan Gharid, Swallow and Wasp). The words that are not in bold are not in the 350 most common.