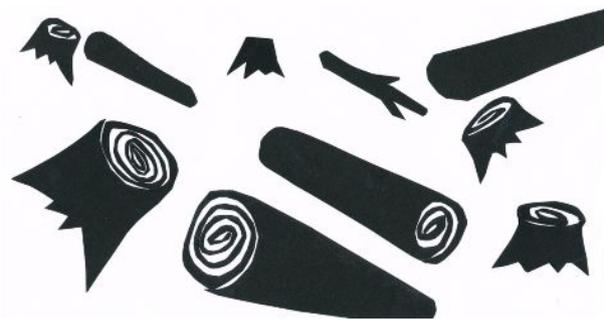


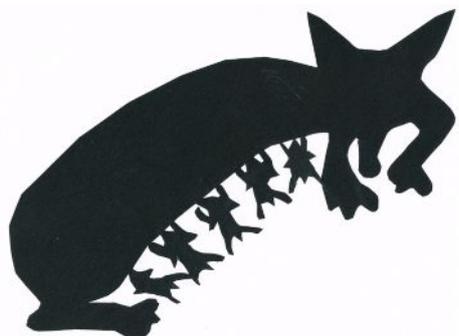
The Poor Wolf Family

Once upon a time, there was a wide, rich forest at the foot of Mt. Eboshi. In this forest, there lived foxes, tanukis, bears and wolves. There were moles, squirrels and rabbits, too. All the beasts lived in harmony until people moved in to live where the forest was. These villagers wanted to

make more rice fields and began to cut down the forest. They cut down tree after tree and dug up the roots, leaving less and less for the animals of the forest. Soon there were wide, rich rice fields at the foot



of Mt. Eboshi, and the forest was narrow and tight. With no food to be found, many animals left the forest.



One day, a wolf gave birth to five small puppies.

To feed her babies, the Mother Wolf would go without food. The Mother Wolf's stomach grew smaller and smaller, but still it was not enough. Her children needed more food as they grew. One day, the Mother

Wolf set off to the fields in search of more food for herself and her puppies.

She went back and forth, stealing more chickens and rabbits for her children. The



farmers were furious to find the wolves stealing their food and shouted, “You wolf! We’ll kill you!”

One day, the Mother Wolf went in search of more food at the farmers’ village.

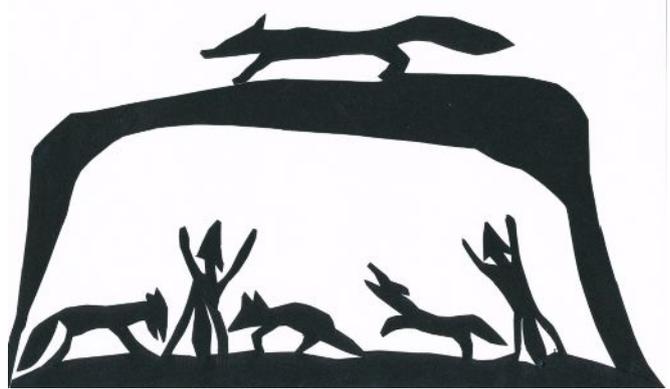
She found a farmer who was working out in a new rice field. Soon she came upon a baby sleeping nearby in a cradle. “Ah!” the Mother Wolf thought to herself, “What a delicious little thing that is!” The wolf picked up the sleeping baby and quickly went back to her puppies.

Soon the baby woke up and began to cry. The farmer and his wife were surprised when they heard their baby cry out and panicked when they saw a wolf running away with their baby in her mouth. Frantically, they chased after the wolf.



Other farmers, bringing their picks and hoes, helped chase after the wolf. The Mother Wolf, realizing she could not escape the farmers while holding the baby, dropped it behind a rock and ran away into the forest. The farmer saw the wolf had dropped his baby and quickly went to get it. However, upon picking up his baby, he found the child dead. The farmer and his wife cried for many days. The other farmers hated the wolf very much and thought up a way to catch and kill it.

They dug a hole that was two meters wide and covered it with branches. They left out a dead chicken on top of their trap as bait. The puppies, blind with hunger, jumped on the chicken and fell into the hole. They cried out in surprise,



barking and yipping. The Mother Wolf, hearing her puppies' cries, quickly came to them. She found her children trapped at the bottom of a very deep hole. The Mother Wolf laid down on her belly, stretching out her paws in hopes of being able to reach them. During an attempt to free them, she fell into the trap herself.

After a short while, the wolves' cries could no longer be heard. The farmers went close to their trap to see what had happened. At the bottom of the hole, they found the five puppies and the Mother Wolf holding them close, all dead. Her face looked so kind even in death.

The farmers realized that the Mother Wolf was just like them. She wanted to protect her children till the end. Soon they began to feel sorry for the Wolf family and made a grave for them. The farmers put fresh flowers and some meat at the grave as an offering.

Since that time, no wolf has been seen or heard of in Noheji.

