



Favorite of Fortune and the Child of Ill Luck

The Chinese Fairy Book

Chinese

3 min read

Once upon a time there was a proud prince who had a daughter. But the daughter was a child of ill luck. When it came time for her to marry, she had all her suitors assemble before her father's palace. She was going to throw down a ball of red silk among them, and whoever caught it was to be her husband. Now there were many princes and counts gathered before the castle, and in their midst there was also a beggar. And the princess could see dragons crawling into his ears and crawling out again from his nostrils, for he was a child of luck. So she threw the ball to the beggar and he caught it.

Her father asked angrily: "Why did you throw the ball into the beggar's hands?"

"He is a favorite of Fortune," said the princess, "I will marry him, and then, perhaps, I will share in his good luck."

But her father would not hear of it, and since she insisted, he drove her from the castle in his rage. So the princess had to go off with the beggar. She dwelt with him in a little hut, and had to hunt for herbs and roots, and cook them herself, so that they might have something to eat; and often they both went hungry.

One day her husband said to her: "I will set out and seek my fortune. And when I have found it, I will come back again and fetch you." The princess was willing, and he went away, and was gone for eighteen years. Meanwhile

the princess lived in want and affliction, for her father remained hard and merciless. If her mother had not secretly given her food and money, no doubt she would have starved to death during all that time.

But the beggar found his fortune, and at length became emperor. He returned and stood before his wife. She however, no longer recognized him: She only knew that he was the powerful emperor.

He asked her how she were getting along.

“Why do you ask me how I am getting along?” she replied. “I am too far beneath your notice.”

“And who may your husband be!”

“My husband was a beggar. He went away to seek his fortune. That was eighteen years ago, and he has not yet returned.”

“And what have you done during all those long years?”

“I have been waiting for him to return.”

“Do you wish to marry some one else, seeing that he has been missing so long?”

“No, I will remain his wife until I die.”

When the emperor saw how faithful his wife was, he told her who he was, had her clothed in magnificent garments, and took her with him to his imperial palace. And there they lived in splendor and happiness.

After a few days the emperor said to his wife: “We spend every day in festivities, as though every day were New Year.”

“And why should we not celebrate,” answered his wife, “since we have now become emperor and empress?”

Yet his wife was a child of ill luck. When she had been empress no more than eighteen days, she fell sick and died. But her husband lived for many a long year.

Note: “The Favorite of Fortune and the Child of Ill Luck” is a traditionally narrated fairy-tale. The dragon is the symbol of imperial rule, and the New Year’s feasts, which old and young celebrate for weeks, is the greatest of Chinese festivals.