

# Notscha

The Chinese Fairy Book

Chinese

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The oldest daughter of the Ruler of Heaven had married the great general Li Dsing. Her sons were named Gintscha, Mutscha and Notscha. But when Notscha was given her, she dreamed at night that a Taoist priest came into her chamber and said: "Swiftly receive the Heavenly Son!" And straightway a radiant pearl glowed within her. And she was so frightened at her dream that she awoke. And when Notscha came into the world, it seemed as though a ball of flesh were turning in circles like a wheel, and the whole room was filled with strange fragrances and a crimson light.

Li Dsing was much frightened, and thought it was an apparition. He clove the circling ball with his sword, and out of it leaped a small boy whose whole body glowed with a crimson radiance. But his face was delicately shaped and white as snow. About his right arm he wore a golden armlet and around his thighs was wound a length of crimson silk, whose glittering shine dazzled the eyes. When Li Dsing saw the child he took pity on him and did not slay him, while his wife began to love the boy dearly.

When three days had passed, all his friends came to wish him joy. They were just sitting at the festival meal when a Taoist priest entered and said: "I am the Great One. This boy is the bright Pearl of the Beginning of Things, bestowed upon you as your son. Yet the boy is wild and unruly, and will kill many men. Therefore I will take him as my pupil to gentle his savage ways." Li Dsing bowed his thanks and the Great One disappeared.

When Notscha was seven years old he once ran away from home. He came to the river of nine bends, whose green waters flowed along between two rows of weeping-willows. The day was hot, and Notscha entered the

water to cool himself. He unbound his crimson silk cloth and whisked it about in the water to wash it. But while Notscha sat there and whisked about his scarf in the water, it shook the castle of the Dragon-King of the Eastern Sea to its very foundations. So the Dragon-King sent out a Triton, terrible to look upon, who was to find out what was the matter. When the Triton saw the boy he began to scold. But the latter merely looked up and said: "What a strange-looking beast you are, and you can actually talk!" Then the Triton grew enraged, leaped up and struck at Notscha with his ax. But the latter avoided the blow, and threw his golden armlet at him. The armlet struck the Triton on the head and he sank down dead.

Notscha laughed and said: "And there he has gone and made my armlet bloody!" And he once more sat down on a stone, in order to wash his armlet. Then the crystal castle of the dragon began to tremble as though it were about to fall apart. And a watchman also came and reported that the Triton had been slain by a boy. So the Dragon-King sent out his son to capture the boy. And the son seated himself on the water-cleaving beast, and came up with a thunder of great waves of water. Notscha straightened up and said: "That is a big wave!"

Suddenly he saw a creature rise out of the waves, on whose back sat an armed man who cried in a loud voice: "Who has slain my Triton?"

Notscha answered: "The Triton wanted to slay me so I killed him. What difference does it make?" Then the dragon assailed him with his halberd.

But Notscha said: "Tell me who you are before we fight." "I am the son of the Dragon-King," was the reply. "And I am Notscha, the son of General Li Dsing. You must not rouse my anger with your violence, or I will skin you, together with that old mud-fish, your father!" Then the dragon grew wild with rage, and came storming along furiously.

But Notscha cast his crimson cloth into the air, so that it flashed like a ball of fire, and cast the dragon-youth from his breast. Then Notscha took his golden armlet and struck him on the forehead with it, so that he had to reveal himself in his true form as a golden dragon, and fall down dead.

Notscha laughed and said: "I have heard tell that dragon-sinews make good cords. I will draw one out and bring it to my father, and he can tie his armor together with it." And with that he drew out the dragon's back sinew and took it home.

In the meantime the Dragon-King, full of fury, had hastened to Notscha's father Li Dsing and demanded that

Notscha be delivered up to him. But Li Dsing replied: "You must be mistaken, for my boy is only seven years old and incapable of committing such misdeeds." While they were still quarreling Notscha came running up and cried: "Father, I'm bringing along a dragon's sinew for you, so that you may bind up your armor with it!" Now the dragon broke out into tears and furious scolding. He threatened to report Li Dsing to the Ruler of the Heaven, and took himself off, snorting with rage.

Li Dsing grew very much excited, told his wife what had happened, and both began to weep. Notscha, however, came to them and said: "Why do you weep? I will just go to my master, the Great One, and he will know what is to be done." And no sooner had he said the words than he had disappeared. He came into his master's presence and told him the whole tale. The latter said: "You must get ahead of the dragon, and prevent him from accusing you in Heaven!"

Then he did some magic, and Notscha found himself set down by the gate of Heaven, where he waited for the dragon. It was still early in the morning; the gate of Heaven had not yet been opened, nor was the watchman at his post. But the dragon was already climbing up. Notscha, whom his master's magic had rendered invisible, threw the dragon to the ground with his armlet, and began to pitch into him. The dragon scolded and screamed. "There the old worm flounders about," said Notscha, "and does not care how hard he is beaten! I will scratch off some of his scales."

And with these words he began to tear open the dragon's festal garments, and rip off some of the scales beneath his left arm, so that the red blood dripped out. Then the dragon could no longer stand the pain and begged for mercy. But first he had to promise Notscha that he would not complain of him, before the latter would let him go. And then the dragon had to turn himself into a little green snake, which Notscha put into his sleeve and took back home with him. But no sooner had he drawn the little snake from his sleeve than it assumed human shape. The dragon then swore that he would punish Li Dsing in a terrible manner, and disappeared in a flash of lightning.

Li Dsing was now angry with his son in earnest. Therefore Notscha's mother sent him to the rear of the house to keep out of his father's sight. Notscha disappeared and went to his master, in order to ask him what he should do when the dragon returned. His master advised him and Notscha went back home. And all the Dragon Kings of the four seas were assembled, and had bound his parents, with cries and tumult, in order to punish them. Notscha ran up and cried with a loud voice: "I will take the punishment for whatever I have done! My parents are blameless! What is the punishment you wish to lay upon me?" "Life for life!" said the dragon.

“Very well then, I will destroy myself!” And so he did and the dragons went off satisfied; while Notscha’s mother buried him with many tears.

But the spiritual part of Notscha, his soul, fluttered about in the air, and was driven by the wind to the cave of the Great One. He took it in and said to it: “You must appear to your mother! Forty miles distant from your home rises a green mountain cliff. On this cliff she must build a shrine for you. And after you have enjoyed the incense of human adoration for three years, you shall once more have a human body.” Notscha appeared to his mother in a dream, and gave her the whole message, and she awoke in tears. But Li Dsing grew angry when she told him about it. “It serves the accursed boy right that he is dead! It is because you are always thinking of him that he appears to you in dreams. You must pay no attention to him.” The woman said no more, but thenceforward he appeared to her daily, as soon as she closed her eyes, and grew more and more urgent in his demand. Finally all that was left for her to do was to erect a temple for Notscha without Li Dsing’s knowledge.

And Notscha performed great miracles in his temple. All prayers made in it were granted. And from far away people streamed to it to burn incense in his honor.

Thus half a year passed. Then Li Dsing, on the occasion of a great military drill, once came by the cliff in question, and saw the people crowding thickly about the hill like a swarm of ants. Li Dsing inquired what there were to see upon the hill. “It is a new god, who performs so many miracles that people come from far and near to honor him.” “What sort of a god is he?” asked Li Dsing. They did not dare conceal from him who the god was. Then Li Dsing grew angry. He spurred his horse up the hill and, sure enough, over the door of the temple was written: “Notscha’s Shrine.” And within it was the likeness of Notscha, just as he had appeared while living. Li Dsing said: “While you were alive you brought misfortune to your parents. Now that you are dead you deceive the people. It is disgusting!” With these words he drew forth his whip, beat Notscha’s idolatrous likeness to pieces with it, had the temple burned down, and the worshipers mildly reprovved. Then he returned home.

Now Notscha had been absent in the spirit upon that day. When he returned he found his temple destroyed; and the spirit of the hill gave him the details. Notscha hurried to his master and related with tears what had befallen him. The latter was roused and said: “It is Li Dsing’s fault. After you had given back your body to your parents, you were no further concern of his. Why should he withdraw from you the enjoyment of the incense?”

Then the Great One made a body of lotus-plants, gave it the gift of life, and enclosed the soul of Notscha within

it. This done he called out in a loud voice: "Arise!"

A drawing of breath was heard, and Notscha leaped up once more in the shape of a small boy. He flung himself down before his master and thanked him. The latter bestowed upon him the magic of the fiery lance, and Notscha thenceforward had two whirling wheels beneath his feet: The wheel of the wind and the wheel of fire. With these he could rise up and down in the air. The master also gave him a bag of panther-skin in which to keep his armlet and his silken cloth.

Now Notscha had determined to punish Li Dsing. Taking advantage of a moment when he was not watched, he went away, thundering along on his rolling wheels to Li Dsing's dwelling. The latter was unable to withstand him and fled. He was almost exhausted when his second son, Mutscha, the disciple of the holy Pu Hain, came to his aid from the Cave of the White Crane. A violent quarrel took place between the brothers; they began to fight.

At the height of his extremity, however, the holy Wen Dschu of the Hill of the Five Dragons, the master of Gintscha, Li Dsing's oldest son, stepped forth and hid Li Dsing in his cave. Notscha, in a rage, insisted that he be delivered up to him; but Wen Dschu said: "Elsewhere you may indulge your wild nature to your heart's content, but not in this place."

And when Notscha in the excess of his rage turned his fiery lance upon him, Wen Dschu stepped back a pace, shook the seven-petaled lotus from his sleeve, and threw it into the air. A whirlwind arose, clouds and mists obscured the sight, and sand and earth were flung up from the ground. Then the whirlwind collapsed with a great crash. Notscha fainted, and when he regained consciousness found himself bound to a golden column with three thongs of gold, so that he could no longer move. Wen Dschu now called Gintscha to him and ordered him to give his unruly brother a good thrashing. And this he did, while Notscha, obliged to stand it, stood grinding his teeth. In his extremity he saw the Great One floating by, and called out to him: "Save me, O Master!"

But the latter did not notice him; instead he entered the cave and thanked Wen Dschu for the severe lesson which he had given Notscha. Finally they called Notscha in to them and ordered him to be reconciled to his father. Then they dismissed them both and seated themselves to play chess. But no sooner was Notscha free than he again fell into a rage, and renewed his pursuit of his father. He had again overtaken Li Dsing when still another saint came forward to defend the latter. This time it was the old Buddha of the Radiance of the Light.

When Notscha attempted to battle with him he raised his arm, and a pagoda shaped itself out of red, whirling clouds and closed around Notscha. Then Radiance of Light placed both his hands on the pagoda and a fire arose within it which burned Notscha so that he cried loudly for mercy. Then he had to promise to beg his father's forgiveness and always to obey him in the future. Not till he had promised all this did the Buddha let him out of the pagoda again. And he gave the pagoda to Li Dsing; and taught him a magic saying which would give him the mastery over Notscha. It is for this reason that Li Dsing is called the Pagoda-bearing King of Heaven.

Later on Li Dsing and his three sons, Gintscha, Mutscha and Notscha, aided King Wu of the Dschou dynasty to destroy the tyrant Dschou-Sin.

None could withstand their might. Only once did a sorcerer succeed in wounding Notscha in the left arm. Any other would have died of the wound. But the Great One carried him into his cave, healed his wound and gave him three goblets of the wine of the gods to drink, and three fire-dates to eat. When Notscha had eaten and drunk he suddenly heard a crash at his left side and another arm grew out from it. He could not speak and his eyes stood out from their sockets with horror. But it went on as it had begun: six more arms grew out of his body and two more heads, so that finally he had three heads and eight arms. He called out to his Master: "What does all this mean?"

But the latter only laughed and said: "All is as it should be. Thus equipped you will really be strong!" Then he taught him a magic incantation by means of which he could make his arms and heads visible or invisible as he chose. When the tyrant Dschou-Sin had been destroyed, Li Dsing and his three sons, while still on earth, were taken up into heaven and seated among the gods.

Note: Li Dsing, the Pagoda-bearing King of Heaven, may be traced back to Indra, the Hindoo god of thunder and lightning. The Pagoda might be an erroneous variant of the thunderbolt Vadjra. In such case Notscha would be a personification of the thunder. The Great One (Tai I), is the condition of things before their

separation into the active and passive principles. There is a whole genealogy of mythical saints and holy men who took part in the battles between King Wu of Dschou and the tyrant Dschou-Sin. These saints are, for the most part, Buddhist-Brahminic figures which have been reshaped. The Dragon-King of the Eastern Sea also occurs in the tale of Sun Wu Kung (No. 74).

“Dragon sinew” means the spinal cord, the distinction between nerves and sinews not being carefully observed. “Three spirits and seven souls”: man has three spirits, usually above his head, and seven animal souls. “Notscha had been absent in the spirit upon that day”: the idol is only the seat of the godhead, which the latter leaves or inhabits as he chooses. Therefore the godhead must be summoned when prayers are offered, by means of bells and incense. When the god is not present, his idol is merely a block of wood or stone. Pu Hain, the Buddha of the Lion, is the Indian Samantabharda, one of the four great Boddhisatvas of the Tantra School. Wen Dschu, the Buddha on the Golden-haired Mountain Lion, (Hou), is the Indian Mandjusri. The old Buddha of the Radiance of the Light, Jan Dong Go Fu, is the Indian Dipamkara.

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