

RAGS TO RICHES: DISCOVERING TRUE VALUE

VIDEO ONE

Wu was a good and wise chief.

Following the custom, he had two wives. Each bore him a daughter. His first daughter, Ye Xian, surpassed even her father in wisdom and gentleness. The second, Jun-Li, was selfish, proud, and jealous, just like her mother.

Ye Xian's mother died while she was young, but she was happy in Wu's care. Never were a father and daughter more close. She was generous, beautiful, and loved by the people, making Jun-Li and her mother jealous.

One year, a plague consumed the land. Wu cared for his tribe, but succumbed to death. So Ye Xian was left with her step-mother and sister, who enslaved and abused her. She was forgotten, her beauty and wisdom overlooked.

Only one happiness remained.

Washing clothes by the river, Ye Xian befriended a beautiful fish. Though she had little food, she shared what she had with the fish, who became her only companion.

One day, Jun-Li saw Ye Xian with the fish. Jealous even of this happiness, she told her mother, who disguised herself in Ye Xian's tattered dress, approached the fish and killed it.

As Ye Xian wept at the riverbank, an elderly man in white robes appeared. "Do not weep!" he said. "The fish was a guardian-spirit! Take the bones. When in need, call on them, and you'll receive help."

Telling no one, Ye Xian brought the bones home.

Every year, as was the custom, young men and women would dance at the New Year Festival. Relationships were formed. Marriages soon followed. Jun-Li and Ye Xian had come of age, her stepmother would not allow Ye Xian to attend. "She will catch the eye of too many suitors," she thought, "then how will my daughter Jun-Li find a wealthy husband?"

Desperate, Ye Xian called to the fish-spirit. Suddenly she was clothed in a gown of kingfisher feathers, with golden slippers on her feet.

At the festival no-one could ignore Ye Xian's beauty and grace.

Jun-Li complained. "This woman has caught everyone's attention! Who is she anyway? She looks like my older sister!"

Fearing she'd been recognised, Ye Xian fled, leaving a golden slipper behind.

The slipper came into the hands of a young king. He had heard the story of the remarkable woman at the New Year festival. He was determined to find and marry her, if she would have him. He sent ministers throughout the country, but whoever they found, the slipper never fit.

At last, they came to Ye Xian's village. No one believed the owner of the slipper would be found in such a place, but on they searched.

Eventually, Ye Xian came before the king. She was beautiful, gentle, and kind. Could this girl in rags really be the young lady for whom he so yearned?

As he watched Ye Xian placed her foot into the slipper. Suddenly the princess of the New Year festival stood before him...

The two were soon married, of course. And all who saw Queen Ye Xian rejoiced in her beauty, wisdom, and grace.