

# THE MAGIC PEARS



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# THE MAGIC PEARS

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# *INTRODUCTION*

Most parents today are concerned with not only raising their children to become economically sufficient, but also helping them to find meaning in life. Much sustained effort is needed to achieve this. More than anything else, it is important to help the child develop his (or her) inner resources so that he can acquire a strong sense of identity and self-confidence. Psychologists now believe that only when a person knows himself can he adequately secure his well-being and make a commitment to other people and issues.

We live in a society in which the conditions of life are constantly changing, diversifying, and perhaps disrupting our expectations and beliefs. One of the forces of change is the emergence of multiculturalism as a fact of our society. Children of many different backgrounds have much to be confused about and very little to anchor their experiences as they grow up. Parents can facilitate their children's developing sense of identity by providing a warm and secure environment in which they can be exposed to and explore different kinds of experiences and relationships. Even more important, parents must provide a link between the child's present and his ethnocultural heritage. This is perhaps best done by personal example and daily living. In addition, reading folk tales and fables to children can help them to develop a sense of where they have come from and how other peoples live, as well as of imagination and fantasy. Thus, the best gift parents can bestow to their children is a well-developed interest in and love of literature.

These twenty classic stories from China cover a wide range of subjects and periods in Chinese history. Some are very ancient myths about how the universe began. Other stories portray the gods in heaven and how their activities have affected mankind. Still others show ordinary people going about their daily tasks and striving to cope with familiar

problems. Together, the stories reflect the imagination and wisdom of the original authors, the lives and cares of the Chinese people throughout history, and a philosophy that shows the harmony and interrelatedness of heaven and earth.

This publication is sponsored by the Multiheritage Community Alliance of Toronto. We would like to thank the Ministry of Citizenship and Culture of the Government of Ontario for their financial support. Our thanks also go to Lana Kong for her copy editing, and to Wong Ying for her delicate and colourful illustrations. It is our ardent hope that by presenting in English these classic Chinese tales which have been passed down many generations, we will add to an increasingly diverse and imaginative body of literature that reflects the richness of our common multicultural legacy.

S.L.K.  
Toronto,  
1986.

## *PANGU OPENS THE UNIVERSE*

At the beginning of time, the universe was a great mass of nothingness, unformed, like the inside of an immense egg.

In this egg-like mass of undefinable matter rested a being called Pangu. He remained unconscious for thousands of eons, slowly growing and taking form.

Finally, the dark mass exploded outwards into a million pieces. The pure elements, which were light, floated upwards to form the sky, while the impure and heavier substances sank down and formed the Earth.

Pangu was awakened by the very loud explosion. He became concerned that the pieces of the chaotic universe might close together again, so he supported the sky with his hands and braced his feet against the ground, standing like a pillar. In this position, he continued to grow. He went through changes nine



times a day. His intelligence grew and his abilities multiplied, until he became the most powerful being in the universe.

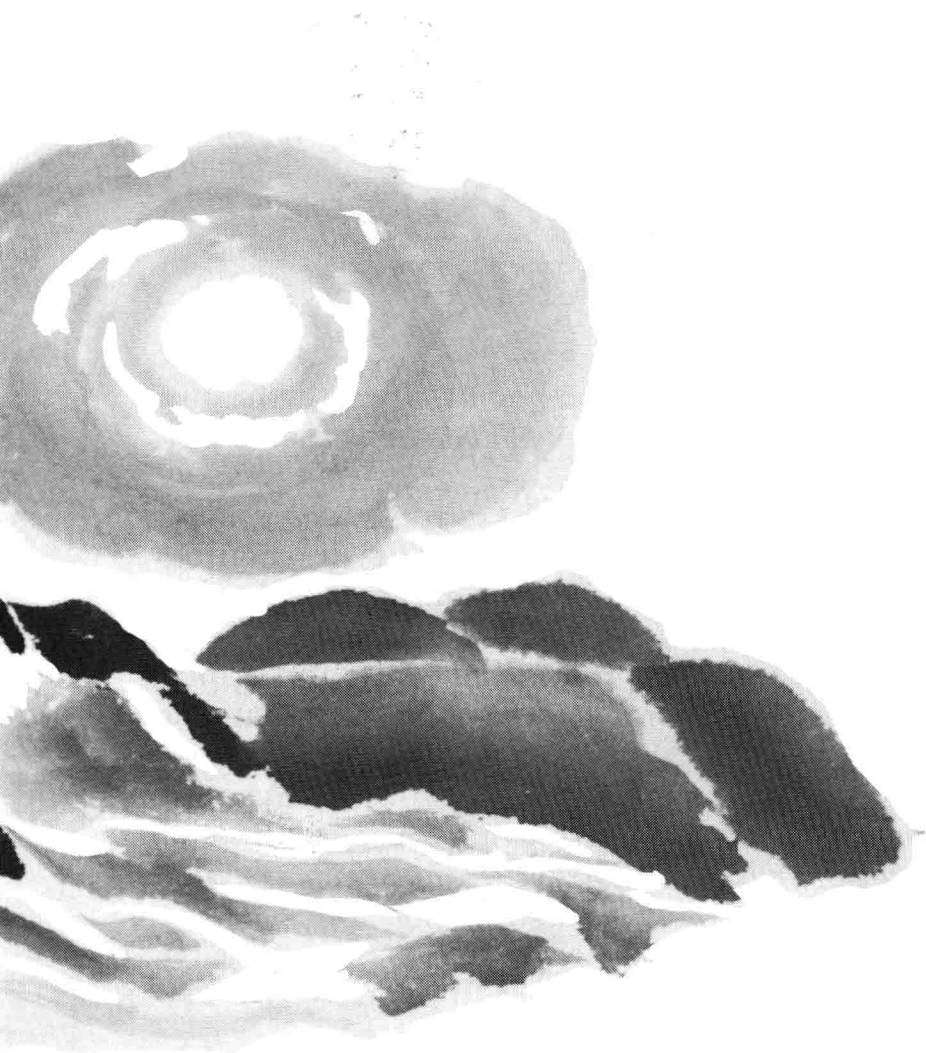
As Pangu grew, so did the universe. Each day, the sky rose ten feet higher, and the Earth became ten feet thicker. Pangu also increased in size by ten feet a day.

Eons passed. By this time, the sky was at an immeasurable height above the Earth, while Pangu's body was transformed, creating the world as we now know it. His breath formed the wind and the clouds. His voice became thunder. His left eye became the sun, while his right one turned into the moon. His body and limbs spread out to become the land masses and mountain ranges. His blood turned into



flowing rivers, and his veins into roads. His flesh became soil, while his hair and beard were transformed into the stars. His skin and body hair became the Earth's vegetation. His bones and teeth emerged as metals and gems, his marrow as pearls and rocks. Even his sweat was transformed and became rain and the bodies of water.

Thus, the world was created by Pangu, the first being in the universe.



## *NUWA, THE MOTHER OF HUMANKIND*

When the universe first began, the Earth was inhabited by gods and mystical creatures instead of by man.

One day, Nuwa, the Mother Goddess, descended to Earth and strolled leisurely about the planet, which was decorated with flowers and trees. She felt very happy to be in such a beautiful place.

Nuwa had a beautiful, human-like face and upper body, but the lower portion of her body was that of a python. When she approached a small lake, she saw her reflection in the water. Never before having seen such a thing, she was curious. After a while she began to play with the image in the water, playing hide-and-seek with it.

The face smiled back when she smiled at it. It laughed when she did. In fact, it mimicked every expression she made.



“How wonderful it would be to have the company of beings with such a face,” she thought. “Why don’t I make more of them?”

So she scooped up a lump of mud from the shore and kneaded it into a miniature figure of herself. Instead of a python tail, she formed two appendages for the figure which she called “legs”.

After completing the figure in careful detail, she put it on the ground. Immediately, it sprang into life, dancing and singing, and calling Nuwa “mama”.

She was extremely pleased with her creation, and went about making several more. She took a branch from a nearby willow tree, dipped it into the mud, and flicked the branch in the air. Every time she did this, a human being was created where a drop of mud fell. Each person had his or her own individual characteristics.

Nuwa called these creatures “ren” (people), and taught them how to live and marry so that they could propagate life by themselves.

Thus, human beings were born into the world.





## *THE DOWNING OF THE NINE SUNS*

When the world began, Dijun the Sun God and his wife had ten sons. These sons were winged birds of fire and served as suns in the sky.

Dijun worked out a schedule so that only one of his sons would be perched on the Fusong Tree each day, giving off just the right amount of heat and light to the Earth. When it was not their turn, the nine other sons rested in the sea.

One day, having had enough of the monotony of sitting alone in the tree all the time, the ten sons rebelled against their parents and flew up in to the tree together.

This brought disaster to the Earth, as the combined rays of the ten suns seared and scorched its surface.

The heat and light were so intense that the Earth's inhabitants had to hide in deep, dark holes. Even the

rocks and metals were slowly melting away. Nothing could escape the burning rays.

The people of Earth prayed to the gods for help. The Sun God and Goddess tried to persuade their children to stop their nonsense, but to no avail.

However, there was a god by the name of Yi who was very concerned about the plight of the people. He asked Dijun if he might have permission to shoot the rebels down.

At first, Dijun was extremely reluctant to allow his sons to be treated this way. However, when nothing else worked, he finally consented.

He gave Yi a magic bow and a quiver of red arrows. "Do what you must," he told Yi, "but please do not hurt my children any more than is necessary."

Yi was the best archer of the universe. He was also a compassionate god, and proposed shooting down the sun birds only because it was the last resort to stop the suffering on Earth.

Yi went down to Earth and climbed the highest mountain. He showed the sunbirds his magic bow, but they ignored his warning as they had ignored all the others.

Left with no alternative, Yi fitted an arrow to his bow. He took aim and let the bolt fly.

An instant later, a ball of fire hurtled down to the ground. The sunlight was dimmed slightly and the heat was less overwhelming. When people went to examine the fallen bird, they saw a huge, three-footed raven lying in a crumpled heap on the ground.

Yi shot down two more suns before he paused. Even though three of their brothers had been rendered useless, the other firebirds refused to give up.

Yi was angered by their stubbornness, and fired



arrow after arrow at the dazzling sources of light in the sky.

When his fury had subsided, the people on Earth counted nine dead ravens on the ground. Yi had one more arrow in his quiver. If he had used all ten arrows, the people realized that there would have been no suns left, and no more light or warmth. What a close call that had been!

The last sun left in the sky learned his lesson from this unnerving event. From then on he never disobeyed his parents.