

# The Strange Pot

a folktale from China

retold by Julia Perry

Late one afternoon, an old woodcutter was trudging home through the forest. He had worked hard and was very tired.	20
Before long, he spied something shiny behind a big tree stump.	31
It was a huge, old brass pot—the biggest pot the woodcutter had ever seen.	42
“This would be a fine pot for my wife,” he thought. “But how can I carry something so big and heavy?”	55
The woodcutter thought and thought. Finally, he had an idea. First, he dropped his ax into the pot. Then he tied one end of his rope through the pot’s handles and the other end around his body. Pulling and tugging with all his strength, he was able to drag the pot to his cottage.	57
“What a wonderful pot!” his wife exclaimed happily. “This must have been your lucky day. And you found another ax too.”	69
The woodcutter looked surprised. “Oh no. I only have one ax.”	78
“But there are two axes in the pot,” his wife said. “Where did you find the other one?”	87
Puzzled, the woodcutter peered into the pot. Sure enough, there was a second ax just like the one he had carried. As he reached down to take it out, his cap fell into the pot. Right before his eyes one cap became two!	101
The old couple became very excited. The old brass pot must possess unusual powers! But how could they test it?	113
“I have our poor supper prepared,” said the wife. “Let’s put our meal into the pot and see what happens to it.”	125
When they did the simple meal doubled in size.	132

With this, they realized that the pot could make them rich. 287  
 The old couple had a few coins stored in a cloth bag. They 300  
 eagerly emptied the coins into the pot and watched as the 311  
 number of coins doubled. Again and again, they put the new 322  
 batch of coins into the pot. Before long, every box, bag, bowl, 334  
 and basket—every pot, pan, plate, and pocket—was filled 344  
 with coins. 346  
 “We’re rich!” cried the woodcutter. “Now we can build a big 357  
 house and plant a fine garden.” He picked up his wife and 369  
 twirled her around and around. But in his excitement he 379  
 accidentally dropped his wife into the pot! 386  
 “Oh my,” said the woodcutter as two women who looked 396  
 exactly alike climbed from the pot. “How can I have two wives 408  
 at the same time?” 412  
 “You can’t!” said the first wife. 418  
 “You can’t!” said the second wife. 424



The two wives put their heads together and came up with  
an idea. They each grabbed one of the woodcutter's arms and  
tossed him into the pot.

Two woodcutters climbed out of the pot. They looked at  
one another. Then they looked at the two wives. "Oh no! Now  
there are four of us in one house!" they cried.

Fortunately, the clever wives had the answer. They were so  
rich that each couple was able to construct a big house and  
plant a fine garden.

But from that time on, they were very careful about what  
went into the pot!