

The Seven Chinese Brothers

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Narrator 1:

Once upon a time, when Ch'in Shih Huang was emperor of all China, seven remarkable brothers lived together on a beautiful hillside. They walked alike, they talked alike, they even looked so much alike that it was hard to tell one brother from the brother next to him. All the same, each brother had something special about him. Each brother had one amazing power that was all his own.

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Narrator 2:

First Brother's amazing ears could hear a fly sneeze from a hundred miles away, while Second Brother's amazing eyes could look right across the hundred miles and see the fly sitting on the Great Wall of China, sneezing and feeling very sorry for itself. Third Brother was a man of unusual strength. He could walk across China in a straight line, lifting up any mountains that got in his way and putting them carefully back behind him. Fourth Brother was strong too, for he had bones of iron that wouldn't break, buckle, or bend.

Narrator 3:

Fifth Brother had legs that could grow as tall and thick as tree trunks, while Sixth Brother never, ever became too hot, no matter how hard he worked under the summer sun. As for Seventh Brother, he was the baby of the family, and all his six older brothers tried to keep him smiling and happy. For he was their youngest brother, and when he was unhappy he wept great big warm salt tears, and each tear was large enough to drown an entire village.

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Narrator 4: The seven brothers lived very happily together, and Seventh Brother never once had anything to cry about. But one day as they worked on their hillside, First Brother lifted his head (with amazing ears on either side of it) and said,

First Brother: "I can hear such a moaning and a groaning one hundred miles away, by the Great Wall of China. Second Brother, take a look and tell me what all the trouble is about."

Narrator 1: Second Brother turned his far-seeing eyes toward the Great Wall.

Second Brother: "Ai ya!"

Narrator 1: he cried.

Second Brother: "There is an enormous hold in the Great Wall of China! I see a hundred poor men working, working day and night, night and day. They look so tired and weak. Perhaps they are not allowed to sleep or eat until the hole in the Great Wall of China is repaired."

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Seventh Brother: "Ai ya! I can't bear it,"

Narrator 1: cried Seventh Brother, who was always hungry himself. He looked as if he might begin to cry in sympathy with the poor hardworking men.

Third Brother: "Don't cry! I'll go and help them."

Narrator 1: said Third Brother quickly. Off he went as quickly as he could, and got there in half a minute, less than no time.

Narrator 2: He set to work at once, tossing great stones from one hand to the other as if they were feathers. By the time darkness came, the hold was completely filled. Then Third Brother lay down to take a nap.

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- Narrator 3: But when the emperor heard that a single man had repaired the hole in one afternoon, he was not at all grateful. Indeed, he looked very worried.
- Emperor: "A man as powerful as that is more trouble than he's worth. Strong men can be very useful to an emperor, but this one is too strong. One army may not be enough to catch him. I had better send two."
- Narrator 3: thought the emperor to himself. When Third Brother woke up from his nap, he found himself surrounded by two armies!
- Generals (2): "By the command of the Celestial Emperor (whose face is more dazzling than the rising sun) you are to be executed in the morning,"
- Narrator 3: proclaimed the general of the two armies.
- Generals (2): "Take the prisoner to the palace of the emperor!"
- Narrator 3: they ordered. When he heard this, Third Brother burst into tears.

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Narrator 4: A hundred miles away on the beautiful hillside, First Brother heard Third Brother crying.

First Brother: "Third Brother must be in trouble!"

Narrator 4: he exclaimed. Second Brother looked into the distance.

Second Brother: "Aiya! Third Brother has been taken to the palace! He's surrounded by two armies! They are going to execute him in the morning. No wonder he is crying."

Fourth Brother: "Don't worry!"

Narrator 4: cried Fourth Brother, who saw that Seventh Brother was about to cry, too.

Fourth Brother: "I will change places with him. The Celestial Emperor (whose face is more dazzling than the rising sun) can try cutting my head off as many times as he likes. Perhaps that will make him feel better."

Narrator 4: Off he went as quickly as he could, and got there in half a minute, less than no time. He sneaked in between two armies to Third Brother, who was wide awake and waiting for him. So, Third Brother went home, and Fourth Brother took his place.

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Narrator 1: All the next day the officers of the two armies tried over and over again to behead Fourth Brother, but sword after sword bent and broke on his bones of iron. In the end, they were forced to confess to the mighty emperor (whose whisper was like the rumble of thunder) that they simply could not behead their prisoner.

Emperor: "A man with bones of iron! Drown him in the deep sea!"

Narrator 1: roared the mighty emperor.

Emperor: "Drown him in the deep sea! Tomorrow!"

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Narrator 2: When Fourth Brother heard that he was to be drowned, he became very upset.

Fourth Brother: "Bones of iron won't bend or buckle or break, but they will sink,"

Narrator 2: he thought to himself, and he burst into tears.

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Narrator 3: A hundred miles away on the beautiful hillside, First Brother heard Fourth Brother begin to cry.

First Brother: "Fourth Brother is crying,"

Narrator 3: he said. Second Brother looked into the distance, far beyond the hills and said,

Second Brother: "Ai ya! Tomorrow morning they are going to drown Fourth Brother. No wonder he is crying."

Fifth Brother: "Don't worry."

Narrator 3: Fifth Brother interrupted.

Fifth Brother: "I will change places with him. The mighty emperor (whose whisper is like the rumble of thunder) can try to drown me as many times as he likes. Perhaps that might make him feel better."

Narrator 3: Off he went, as quickly as he could, and got there in half a minute, less than no time. He tiptoed past the guards to Fourth Brother, who was awake and waiting for him. Swiftly, they switched places, and Fourth Brother went home.

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Narrator 4: All the next day, the soldiers of the two armies tried to drown Fifth Brother. They threw him into the deep sea, but his legs grew so quickly, the water only came up to his knees. They tried throwing him into deeper water, but the deep, deep water only just reached as far as his waist.

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Narrator 1: Finally, they threw him into the deepest part of the sea, but even the deepest part of the sea only came up to his neck. Waves broke under his chin.

Fifth Brother: "Ahhhhh, how lovely and cool is the deepest Seawater of all."

Narrator 1: said Fifth Brother, smiling happily.

Emperor: "He is much more dangerous than I imagined,"

Narrator 1: muttered the splendid emperor (whose merest Glance was like a flash of lightning).

Emperor: "He won't drown, but he might burn. Into the Fire with him, tomorrow morning!"

Narrator 1: he commanded.

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Narrator 2: When he was told his fate, Fifth Brother burst into tears.

Far away on the beautiful hillside, First Brother heard Fifth Brother's cries. Second Brother looked right across a hundred miles to the Great Wall of China.

Second Brother: "Ai ya! Tomorrow morning they are going to burn Fifth Brother alive. No wonder he is crying!"

Narrator 2: he shouted.

Sixth Brother: "Don't worry,"

Narrator 2: said Sixth Brother, afraid that Seventh Brother might begin to cry, too.

Sixth Brother: "I will take his place. The splendid emperor (whose merest glance is like a flash of lightning) can bake me all day long if he likes. Perhaps that will make him feel better."

Narrator 2: he said with a shiver.

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Narrator 3: Off he went, as quickly as he could, and got there in half a minute, less than no time. He tiptoed in between the two armies and found Fifth Brother, who was awake and waiting for him.

So Fifth Brother went home, and Sixth Brother took his place.

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Narrator 4: The next day the two armies ran backwards and forwards, bringing kindling wood, brushwood and driftwood, and bundles of dried grass. They built such a big fire that the smoke from it never, ever felt too hot. Basking in the heat of the blaze, he sighed with happiness.

Sixth Brother: "How kind of the noble emperor to let me warm myself in his very own fire!"

Narrator 4: he cried.

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Narrator 1: The noble emperor (whose slightest frown made the land shake like an earthquake) was furious.

Emperor: "Send the royal archers!"

Narrator 1: he ordered.

Emperor: "In the morning, we will shoot this man full of arrows."

Narrator 1: Sixth Brother burst into tears.

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Narrator 2: Over on the beautiful, First Brother heard Sixth Brother crying,

First Brother: "Second Brother, what do you see?"

Narrator 2: he asked.

Second Brother: "Ai ya! Tomorrow morning they are going to shoot Sixth Brother full of arrows!"

Narrator 2: cried Second Brother.

The brothers looked at each other.

First Brother: "There is nothing for it. We cannot leave Sixth Brother to die alone. We will all go to the Noble emperor (whose slightest frown makes the land shake like an earthquake). He can shoot arrows through all of us. At least we will be together.

Narrator 2: said First Brother.

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Narrator 3: The brothers started their journey to the Palace, but poor Seventh Brother was so upset, That he couldn't help crying just a little. His first tear was as big as the longest river in China, rolled into a single drop. His second tear was as big as the second longest river. Both tears were as salty as the sea.

A great ocean of warm saltwater swept down the road ahead of the brothers. It swept on for a hundred miles.

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Narrator 4: Seventh Brother's first tear swept one army north. His second tear swept the other army south.

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Narrator 1: As for the emperor, he was tossed so high and so far that he is still trying to return to his palace.

Seventh Brother's flood of tears swept over the Great Wall of China, flowed all the way out into the Yellow Sea, and all the way back again in half a minute, less than no time.

Sixth Brother was Free!

He hurried back up the road while his six wonderful brothers hurried down the road. They were reunited at the Great Wall.

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Fifth Brother: "Fish!"

Narrator 2: cried Fifth Brother. The wave had washed hundreds of glistening fishes ashore. There they were, flipping and flapping, piled all the way up to his knees.

Third Brother "Wood!"

Narrator 2: cried Third Brother, gathering a forest to start a fire.

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Narrator 3: Fourth Brother snapped his iron finger and his iron thumb. A spark leaped out to set the fire blazing and crackling.

Fourth Brother: "Fire!"

Narrator 3: he cried, laughing.

Seventh Brother: "Oh I'm so hungry. Now that we are all together again, we can have dinner and forget our troubles. I promise never to cry again, unless I absolutely must."

Narrator 3: said Seventh Brother.

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Narrator 4: So the seven Chinese brothers sat themselves down around the warm fire and feasted on delicious fried fish... for after such a worrying week they were all very, very hungry.