

Three Special Gifts

Retold by Carmel Reilly

Illustrations by Sarah DeMonteverde



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Chapter 1

A Clever Plan

Once, long ago, there was a family who lived on a farm in a remote part of China.

The family was made up of an old man, his four adult sons, three daughters-in-law and five grandchildren.

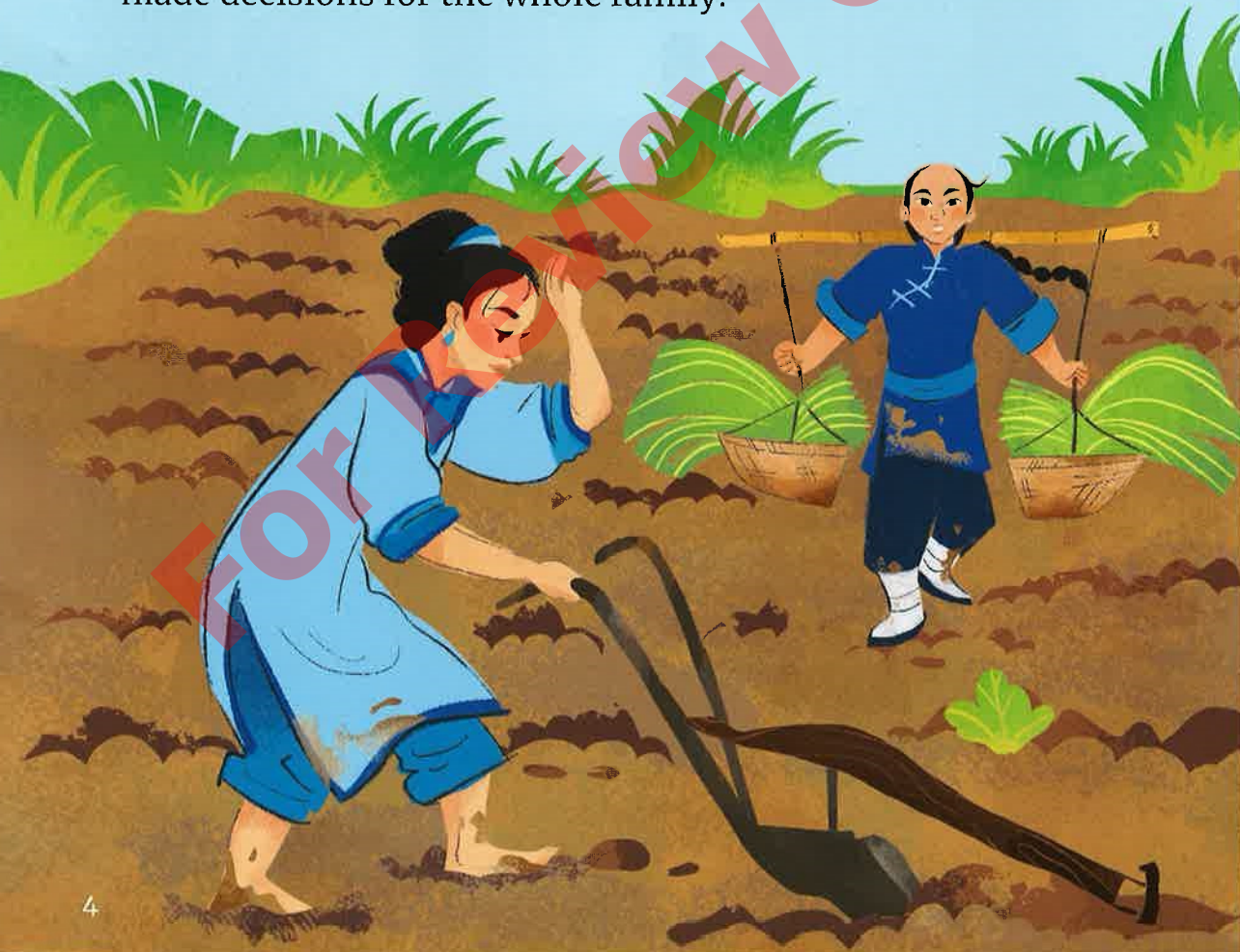


Sadly, the old man's wife had died some years before. This was not only hard for the old man and his sons, but for the three daughters-in-law, too. They really missed having the older woman in the household to help and guide them.



Not having a mother-in-law made the daughters-in-law want to visit their own mothers more often. Because they did not live close to their mothers, they usually only saw them once a year, during the New Year festival.

If they wanted to have extra visits, they had to ask permission from their father-in-law, as he was head of the household. In those days, the head of the household made decisions for the whole family.



Although the old man had allowed his daughters-in-law extra visits before, he did not like them going away. There was a lot of work to do on the farm, and their help was always needed.



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It had been some months since the daughters-in-law had seen their mothers. The old man knew they would ask him for a visit soon.

He had thought for a long time about how he could stop them going away so often. If he simply said no, they would become upset with him. He realised that he had to do something that would put an end to the extra visits, without making him seem unkind.

So, when his daughters-in-law came to see him, the old man had a clever plan that he was ready to put into action.



