

Der rote Drache Fu

Ursel Scheffler · Jutta Timm



Fu

the Red Dragon

A story by Ursel Scheffler

illustrated by Jutta Timm



Content

The stubborn princess

The decree of the king

The Chinese prince

The time has come!

The marshal grumbles

The thunderstorm

The red dragon Fu

The prince and the dragon



1

The stubborn princess

"It is time to find a husband for the princess," said the old king.

"It's about time," said the first minister with a sigh.

"It's really about time," added the second minister.

"We should do something immediately," said the third minister.

"But who will want her?" murmured the king sorrowfully.



2

"She is pretty," said the first minister.

"She is clever," said the second minister.

"She is old enough," said the third minister.

But she is stubborn, bossy and hot-tempered. Yesterday she peppered her silver slipper into the chandelier because the math teacher wouldn't believe her that three times three is ten. And at lunch she threw the spinach plate through the dining room window into the rose garden."

"We should look out for a strong and brave prince," said the first minister.

"One who can cope with her temper," grumbled the second.

"One who won't let the princess walk all over him," added the third minister.

"But how can we find such a prince? No one from the neighboring kingdoms wants her. After all, her angry roar can be heard even beyond the borders of our country!"



3

The king looked sadly before him.

Silently, he reproached himself for having spoiled his only child so much. He could not have known what he was doing when, after the death of the queen, he showered the child with love and granted her every wish.

The three ministers looked at each other thoughtfully.

"In ancient times, brave men were challenged with a heroic deed," said the first minister.

"They let them fight with wild lions and fire-breathing dragons," said the second minister.

"That's right! They were lured with a test of courage until they were so eager to go on the adventure that they didn't care who they had to marry afterwards," said the third minister.



4.

"Hmmm," the king grumbled, thoughtfully resting his bearded chin on his fist. That might be a possibility! But where are we going to get a wild lion or a fire-breathing dragon so quickly?"

"Doesn't something like a dragon live up there in the mountains?", asked the first minister.

He was already very old and remembered that his great-grandmother had told him stories about dangerous dragons when he was very small.

"Right. The dragon Fu," remembered the second minister.



5.

"The red dragon Fu," added the third minister.

"The terrible red dragon Fu," said the first minister.

"The terrible red dragon Fu with the seven tails," added the second minister enthusiastically.

"The terrible red dragon Fu with seven tails and nine fire-spitting heads!" cheered the third minister. He will attract the brave princes from far and near like a magnet!"

"The terrible red dragon Fu ... I shudder just talking about it!" said the king, getting goose bumps under his purple cloak.



6

The King's Decree

The next morning the trumpeters on the three hundred and sixty-five towers of the castle blew on fanfares and all the subjects hurried curiously to the palace.

The king appeared on the balcony and announced:

Dear subjects!

The terrible red dragon Fu, with seven tails and nine fire-spitting heads, dwelling high up in the mountains, threatens our land. The brave man who defeats him shall have the hand of the princess and become king after me!"

Then the three hundred and sixty-five trumpeters rode out as heralds all over the world to proclaim the king's message beyond the country's borders.

The news spread like wildfire from mouth to mouth. And from day to day the dragon became more dangerous. It was said to have teeth as sharp as speare points and claws like daggers. Breath that smelled of sulfur, and an impenetrable armor of copper. I t seemed almost impossible that anyone should be brave enough to take on this monster.



7

But then seven princes from neighboring kingdoms arrived at once.

The princess wrinkled her nose.

She didn't like any of them. None of the forty-nine knights who came from all over the world pleased her either. But this time the old king did not let her talk to him.

I am the king. And I am true to my word. If you don't marry the brave winner, he will get the kingdom without you!

And what will become of me?" the princess inquired snappishly.

You can herd sheep or pigs," said the king angrily.



8

Then the princess got a red head, ran out of the throne room and slammed the door behind her so that the mirrors shook. The king, however, was no longer trembling. He was glad that his ministers had come up with the idea of the dragon.

A brave and fearless man, that was what was needed for the good of the kingdom and the princess.

One worry still plagued the king:

What if the dragon Fu no longer existed? Or what if he was not as dangerous as he and his ministers had portrayed him to the people?



But the opposite seemed to be the case. One by one, the brave knights and princes rode up into the mountains to the lair of the terrible dragon - and no one came back!

There was wailing and lamenting in the kingdom. Everyone regretted the fate of the brave men. Except for the princess.

"So I am rid of them," she thought, "and I don't have to marry any of them."



9

The Chinese Prince

A year went by. The king had grown old and gray with grief. He had already given up hope that the princess would ever find a husband. Then a Chinese prince was reported.

Well, if you dare," said the old king sadly. He felt sorry for the brave young man.

I will," said the prince happily. He said that at home in his palace he had played with the palace dragons from childhood, but they were not much bigger than hunting dogs.

But size is not important. The important thing is to know the soul of the dragons," said the prince.



10

"The hole?" inquired the king, who had almost lost his hearing.

"No, the soul," the prince improved him. He stepped to the window and looked thoughtfully out to sea. That's why I must ask you to let me and my servant Wang stay in the inn until the day and the hour have come.

"The day and the hour?" wondered the princess, who found the prince unusually amiable.

"The hour that is favorable for the fight with the dragon," said the prince mysteriously.



11

The princess looked at him with wide eyes. He was not only brave, he was also handsome, smart, educated and polite. She caught herself wishing that this prince should go on the adventure with the dragon.

The king said:

"You will not sleep in the inn, my prince. You shall live with your servant in my summer house by the sea."



12

The time has come...

Every morning, when the sun rose, the princess ran barefoot to the balcony in front of her room to see if the prince was still there.

Most of the time he was walking along the beach in the early morning, watching the wind, the waves and the clouds.

One morning, dark storm clouds gathered in the sky.

It's time, dear Wang!" the prince shouted happily. "Saddle our horses!"

As he rode past the palace with his servant, the princess stood at the window and called out:

"You're not going to ride out in this weather!"



13

"I am not going for a ride! I'm going to fight the dragon!" the prince shouted and put spurs to his horse.

At that moment, a flash of lightning flashed across the sky, and a violent thunderclap followed. The princess quickly closed the window and hid in her bed so that only the tip of her nose could be seen. She was terribly afraid of thunderstorms.



14

The court marshal is not amused

The court marshal, who secretly hoped for the crown if the princess did not find a husband, stood one floor below next to the king at the window and grumbled:

"I have no pity for him! He has had long enough to defeat the dragon in fair weather. But he was too cowardly to do so.

Instead, he took a vacation at the royal summer house at state expense. He was in no hurry at all to pass his challenge!"

"He comes from far away and thinks differently than we do," the king soothed his confidant. "May be, may not be. Who knows if he is even a prince," the jealous court marshal added.

"Prince or not, who cares," sighed the king. "The main thing is that he can handle the dragon - and the princess."



15

The Thunderstorm

Meanwhile, the prince rode through the thunderstorm with his servant Wang. The rain drummed on their armor. Whenever lightning twitched, so did Wang.

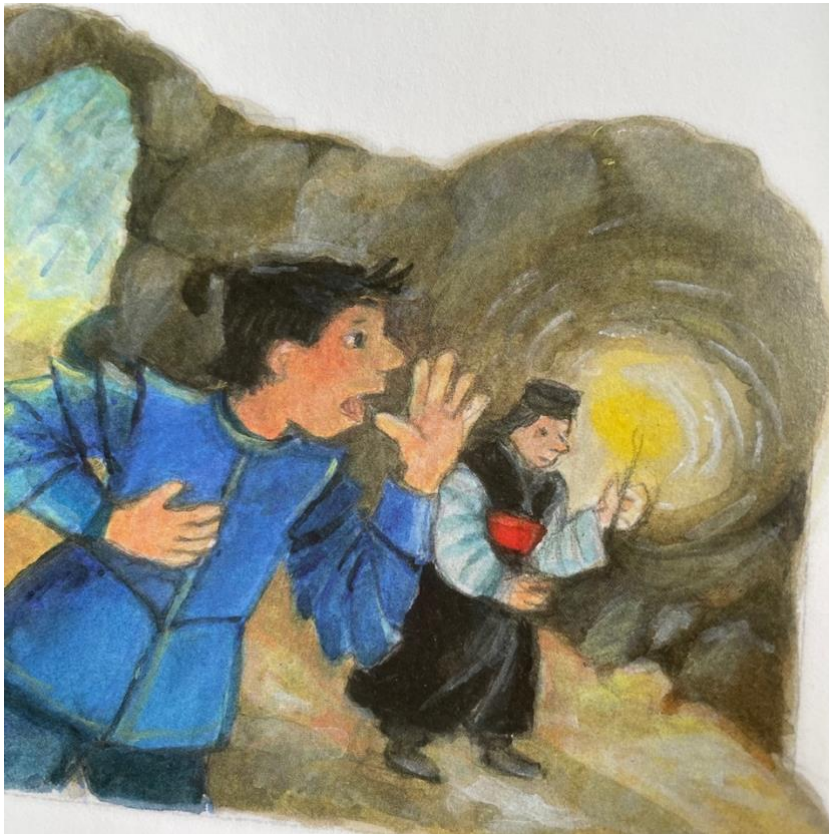
Metal attracts lightning. If lightning strikes our armor, what will happen?" Wang, who was usually fearless, inquired anxiously. The prince knew no fear of thunder, lightning, or rainstorms. He rode straight toward the dragon's lair, confident in his plan. "Everything will be all right!" he reassured his companion.



The prince looked around carefully. He noticed the nibbled branches around the cave and said:

"Strange! Obviously this dragon is a herbivore! But what happened to the men who rode up the mountain before of us? Actually, we should be stumbling over the remains of 7 princes and 49 dead knights, if he didn't eat them skin and hair!

"Maybe he's more dangerous than we think," Wang mused.



16

The red dragon Fu

"Light the torch!" the prince told his companion as they stood in front of the cave. Then he cautiously took a few steps inside and called out, "Hello! Is anyone there?"

No reaction. Farther and farther the prince and Wang ventured into the cave.

In the light of the torch, instead of bones or corpses, they discovered on the floor only nibbled turnips, apples, carrots, potatoes and a half-defoliated cabbage head.

"It's probably a big dragon from the family of herbivorous dinosaurs," said the dragon-knowing prince.

"And he is afraid of thunderstorms, just like our palace dragons. Just as you knew before," his companion added. "He must be hiding," said the prince, pushing aside the bale of hay that was blocking the narrow passage.



17

"Hello, Dragon Fu! Where are you?" called the prince. But nothing moved. Finally, the cave expanded into a larger room. In one corner sat a howling, teeth-chattering little something. It had wrapped itself in a blanket and snuggled down on a bed of straw.

"Good afternoon. Sorry to disturb you, can you tell me where the great dragon Fu is?", the prince politely inquired.

"Fu the dragon, that's me," replied the trembling ball.

"Are you afraid of thunderstorms?" the prince inquired.

"Y-y-y-yes," admitted the little dragon.

"Then it is a sign that you are descendant from an old, noble dragon family," said the prince with satisfaction. "Calm down, the storm will pass soon!"



18

When the little dragon hesitantly crawled out of his blanket, Wang said in amazement:

"Where are your nine heads?"

"I have only one head," Fu said softly.

What about your seven tails?" Wang wanted to know.

"I only have one tail, and it broke off a bit because I got it stuck at the back exit!"

"And your fire-spitting?"

"I can steam a bit with my breath when it's very cold outside.

That's all," Fu confessed.

"And why is it that everyone is afraid of you?" the prince inquired.

"It's because people spread such lies about me," the dragon complained.

Really only lies?", the prince inquired. "Then where have all the brave men gone who set out for your cave?"

Then the little dragon began to giggle. However, a new thunderclap outside the cave made him wince again right after.

The prince had sat down on a stone to be able to speak better with the little dragon. Before he knew it, the little dragon, who was really not much bigger than a dog, had jumped onto his lap.

At the next thunderclap, he snuggled up to him for protection.



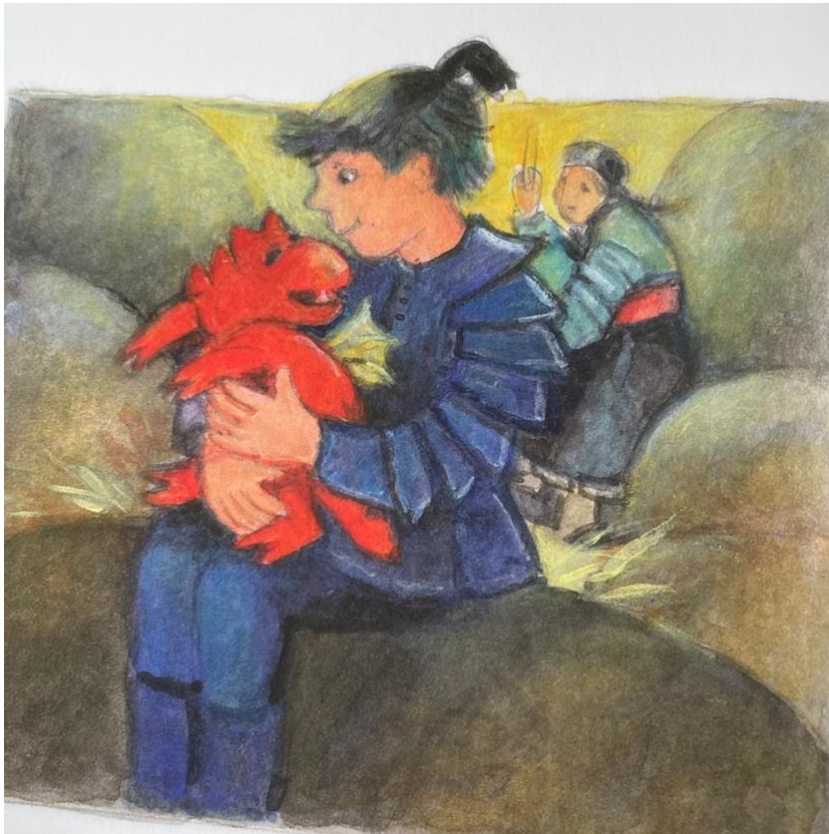
20

"You don't have to be afraid any longer," the prince reassured him and cuddled him behind his little ears. It's like the story that people have told about you: Everyone is afraid of you, even though they don't have to be. And even you don't have to be afraid of the storm when you are in your cave!"

"But, they say...", the little dragon began.

"I know, they say that an evil wizard once made dragons afraid of thunderstorms because then he had power over them when it thundered! But that's all nonsense."

"Then surely I don't have to be afraid anymore?"



21

"Definitely not!" the prince assured him. "But now tell me what happened to all those brave men!"

Suddenly, the little dragon's fear disappeared, and he laughed so hard that his face got a thousand wrinkles.

"I saved them," said the dragon, giggling merrily.

"Saved them? From what?"

"Well, from the princess! Everyone knows that she is stubborn, bossy and hot-tempered. Her angry yelling reaches up to the mountains. Sometimes she wakes me up in my sleep."

"And you told all this to the brave knights and princes?" the prince asked.

The little dragon nodded with satisfaction. "And they were happy about it. They all said that they would gladly take on a wild dragon, but not a wild woman."

The prince looked at the dragon in disbelief and said: "Then where did they disappear to?"

"Through the back door," said the dragon.

He hopped off the prince's lap, ran to the far corner of the cave, rolled a huge stone on its side with amazing strength and pointed to a secret cave exit: "From here they escaped in a hurry!"

"Incredible!" marveled the prince.

"Unfortunately, I didn't pay attention last time and got my tail caught when I rolled the stone back," complained the little dragon. "I'll be more careful when I let you out!"

"I'm not sure if I want to go out," said the prince thoughtfully. "I want to finish the adventure in my own way. Do you want to help me?"

"I'd be happy to," replied the little dragon.



23

The Prince and the Dragon

In the afternoon, when the sun was shining again, the prince rode down into the valley with Wang and the dragon.

All over the city people were waving flags and shouting:

"Hurray! The brave Chinese prince has defeated the terrible dragon Fu!"



The prince rode straight to the palace. He entered the throne room.

"Congratulations!", the king shouted delightedly. "But... what do you carry on your arm?"

"The terrible dragon Fu!" said the prince, smiling.

"Well, he is not very big," said the king hesitantly. "But you have defeated him. You shall have the princess for your wife and become king!"



24

"This is too much of an honor," said the prince with a polite bow.

"I thank you, but I would rather..."

The old king did not let him get a word in edgewise. He laid down the heavy crown with a sigh of relief and said:

"I hereby announce my resignation!"

Then he leaned back into the throne chair with a sigh of relief.

Difficult and worrying years were behind him!

"I thank you," the prince began again. "But I cannot accept this honor. I must return to my kingdom. Instead of the princess, I will take the little dragon Fu as a souvenir and make him my chief house dragon."



25

When the princess heard this, she stamped her foot indignantly and cried out: "What, he doesn't want me?"

She fought back tears. But then she took the crown, put it on her shaggy curly head and shouted:

"Then I'll just rule alone! What do I need a prince for?"

The marshal nodded in agreement and murmured:

"Well, why do we need someone like him? You have me, Your Majesty!"

Perplexed, the old king looked from one to the other.

The ministers saw the crown on the princess's head and said:

"And yet you have us, Sire!"



25

Since that time, there have been queens who rule alone, whether they married a prince or not. That's why it's no longer necessary to attribute nine heads and seven tails to little dragons.

And the red dragon Fu?

If he hasn't died, then he still lives peacefully with his children and his children's children in a quiet corner of China.

By the way: Fortunately, dragons grow very, very old there!