



MID-AUTUMN FESTIVAL

HOU YI AND CHANG E

文：Wasa

THERE ARE SO MANY VARIATIONS OF THE CHANG E LEGEND.

Version 1:

Hou Yi was an archer and immortal, and Chang E was a beautiful young girl, working in the Jade Emperor's (Emperor of Heaven) Palace as the attendant to the Queen Mother of the West (wife of the Jade Emperor), before her marriage. One day, Yi made the other immortals angry, and as a punishment, Yi and his wife, Chang E, were banished from earth and forced to live by hunting on earth.

One day, all of the 10 suns circled together and caused the earth to scorch. The Emperor of China commanded Yi to save all of the suns. Yi succeeded and the Emperor rewarded him with a pill, the elixir of death, and advised him: "If you want to swallow the pill, you have to prepare yourself with death". Yi took the pill home and hid it under a rafter. In the midst of this, Yi was summoned again by the emperor. After he had gone, Chang E discovered the pill and she swallowed it. Immediately, she found that she could die. Just at that moment, Yi returned home, he realized what had happened and began to reprimand her. Chang E flew out the window into the sky.

With bow in hand, Yi sped after her, and the pursuit continued halfway across the heavens. Finally, Yi had to return to the earth because of the force of the wind. Chang E reached the moon, she became breathless and coughed. Part of the pill fell out from her mouth. Now, the hare was already on the moon, and Chang E commanded the animal to make a pill from it, so that she could return to earth to her husband.

As of today, the hare is still pounding. As for Yi, he built himself a palace in the sun. Once a year, on the 15th day of the full moon, Yi visits his wife. That is why the moon is full and beautiful on that night.

Version 2:

Chang E and Hou Yi were both immortals in heaven. One day, the ten sons of the Jade Emperor transformed into ten suns and caused the earth to scorch. Having failed to order his sons to stop ruining the earth, the Jade Emperor summoned Yi for help. Yi shot down nine of the sons, but spared one son to be the sun. The Jade Emperor was not pleased with Yi's solution to save the earth. As a punishment, he banished Yi and Chang E to live as mere mortals on earth.

Seeing that Chang E felt extremely miserable over her loss of immortality, Yi decided to find the pill of immortality, so that the couple could be immortals again. On his way, he met the Queen Mother of the West, who agreed to give him the pill, but warned him that each person would only need half a pill to regain immortality.

Yi brought the pill home and stored it in a case. He warned Chang E not to open the case, and then left home for a while. Chang E was very curious. She opened up the case and found the pill, just as Yi was returning home. She was so worried that Yi would discover that she had opened the case, she accidentally swallowed the entire pill, and started to fly into the sky. In order to prevent her from flying further, Yi wanted to shoot her down. However, he could not bear to aim the arrow at her. Chang E kept on flying until she landed on the moon.

Chang E was so lonely without her husband. Fortunately, the jade rabbit, which manufactured elixirs, was her company.