

The Willow Pattern Story

Long ago in China, there lived a very wealthy and hard-hearted Mandarin. He had a beautiful daughter named Koong Shee. The beautiful young girl had black silken hair and almond shaped eyes. She guarded a big secret from her father. She had fallen in love with her father's secretary, a young man named Chang. Koong Shee and Chang would meet in secret beneath the large Willow tree by the bridge and dream of their future together.

Koong Shee was of noble descent and Chang was a mere commoner. So the young couple, no matter how great their love, would never be allowed to marry.

When the girl's father found out about their secret meetings, he was furious. He banished Chang and forbade his daughter from ever seeing him again. Koong Shee would sit beneath the Willow tree that had once been a place of joy and would quietly weep. Her heart was filled with pain.

Eventually, her father decided to lock her up in a tower in the garden until she saw sense and got over the loss of Chang. Her father then told her that she was the promised bride of Ta-Jin, a very old but wealthy merchant. Not only had she lost Chang but Ta-Jin was a wicked man and a very difficult person to please.

Koong Shee longed to see her handsome, young Chang and her thoughts would fill with the happiness they shared. As the day of the wedding drew near, Chang returned. He sent a message through Koong Shee's maid to meet him by the Willow tree. The Mandarin had released his daughter from the garden tower and she was able to run down to the agreed spot. As Chang approached, he saw his beautiful Koong Shee sitting beneath the tree. They hugged and vowed never to be separated ever again.

Chang and Koong Shee had no choice but to elope and get married without the Mandarin's permission. They were to be guided to a boat by a friend but as they started on their journey, Koong Shee's father saw them and chased after the pair. The young couple raced across the bridge to the waiting boat and sailed away.

That night, a storm developed and the boat sank at sea, sadly taking the lives of Chang and Koong Shee. Soon after, from out of the churning foam of the waves, flew two doves. Seeing the young couple's love for one another, the gods transformed Koong Shee and Chang into two beautiful doves. These two doves have lived on forever and can still be seen today flying high above the Willow Tree where Koong Shee and Chang first pledged their love.