



YEARLING

# *A Grain of Rice*

*Helena Clare Pittman*



Once a year the Emperor of China opened his court so that even the humblest of his people could come before him. It was on one such day that Pong Lo, the son of a farmer, knelt at the Emperor's feet.

"Imperial Majesty," said Pong Lo. "I have come to ask for your daughter's hand in marriage."

The Emperor's lords were shocked.

The Princess Chang Wu, who stood near her father's throne, lowered her eyes and blushed.

"How dare you make such a request?" demanded the Emperor. His eyes were fierce and his long moustache twitched. The peasant pressed his forehead to the silken carpet.

"Forgive me, Your Majesty . . . ," he mumbled.

"Speak up!" commanded the Emperor.

Pong Lo lifted his head. ". . . but I am more than qualified to be her husband!" he declared.

The lords giggled.



“Qualified!” cried the outraged Emperor gripping his sword. “Such boldness qualifies you to lose your head!”

*It takes a clever man to win  
the hand of a princess. . . .*

**W**hen a humble farmer named Pong Lo asks for the hand of the Emperor's beautiful daughter, the Emperor is enraged. Who ever heard of a peasant marrying a princess? But Pong Lo is wiser than the Emperor knows. And when he concocts a potion that saves the Princess's life, the Emperor gladly offers him any reward he chooses — except the Princess.

Pong Lo makes a surprising request. He asks for a single grain of rice, doubled every day for one hundred days. The baffled Emperor obliges — only to discover that if you're as clever as Pong Lo, you can turn a single grain of rice into all the wealth and happiness in the world!

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