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Ririro

IMAGINATION OVER KNOWLEDGE

Soccer on a lake

The two Chais, father and son, were widely known in the area as first-class soccer players. Even when the father was forty, he continued to play and if he hadn't tragically drowned in a large lake, he would have played until he was sixty. Eight years later, young Chai had to make a long journey across the same lake. He anchored his boat in the evening. It was a beautiful moonlit night and as he enjoyed the view, he suddenly saw something strange. Five men emerged from the lake, carrying a huge mat which they spread out on the water.

Then they brought bowls of food and pots of wine, but these were not ordinary pots and bowls, as they made a wooden sound. When all the food was spread out on the mat, an old man and a young man distributed the food. Chai couldn't see their faces, but he noticed that the three being served were beautifully dressed and wore large black turbans on their heads. Chai noticed that the old man looked a lot like his father, but his voice sounded very different, to his great disappointment.

After a while, when the three men had eaten and drunk as much as they could, Chai heard them say, "Let's play soccer," and while he wondered what they meant, he saw the boy dive into the water. He disappeared from view, and in an instant, he reappeared with a monstrously large ball. It was so big that he

could hardly carry it. The ball looked like silver and sparkled inside and out, blinding Chai's eyes. The three men stood up from their dinner and called the old man to join the game. Up went the ball, high in the air, sparkling and shining, came back down and went up again, until suddenly, just as it was getting really exciting, the game was over because the ball fell right in the middle of Chai's boat!

This was more than Chai could take, and he kicked the ball hard. But there was something strange about this ball. It was as light as a feather and as soft as rice paper, and Chai's foot went right through it. The ball went up into the air, but a multicolored light flowed out



of the hole. Finally, the ball fell like a comet and touched the water, which began to foam.

"Hey, hey," the players shouted angrily, "who is this miserable man who

dares to interfere with our game. "Well kicked," said the old man. The other players became even angrier when they heard this. "You old fool, how dare you make jokes now that our game has just been ruined? Watch out or you'll get a blow with the bamboo stick. Go immediately and take that young servant with you, or something bad will happen to you." When Chai saw the two men coming towards them with swords in their hands, he was not afraid, but also drew his sword and prepared for battle.

By that time, the old man and the boy were on the boat and Chai immediately saw that his father was standing in front of him. So he shouted, "Father, look at me, I am your son Chai." The old man was beside himself with joy that he had found his son and did not realize that the boy had slipped away and gone back to the players. But the next moment, he realized the dangerous situation and just in time, he shouted for young Chai to hide when the three players jumped on board the boat. They looked terrifying with wild faces and rolling eyes. They threw themselves at the old man and wanted to take him away when young Chai, who had loosened his boat from the mooring, picked up his sword and cut off one man's arm and the other man's head. The bodies fell with a splash into the water. When the third man saw what happened to his friends, he disappeared in an instant and no one knew how. But Chai and his father were safe and hurried to get the boat away.

Then the mouth of the lake suddenly opened. A large deep pit appeared and a roaring wind blew, causing monster waves that shook all the boats. It came closer, closer and Chai's boat would have been swallowed whole if he had not grabbed one of the two large round stones, used as anchors, and thrown it into the wide open mouth of the lake which then immediately closed. Afterwards, Chai threw the other stone overboard and in an instant, the wind died down and the water became calm again. As they sailed on peacefully, Chai's father told him his story. "I never drowned," he said. "All the men who were with me when the boat was lost were

eaten by the fish goblins below. I was spared because I could play soccer. Where do you think the soccer ball you kicked apart was made of? It was part of a fish. And that arm you chopped off? Look at it, it's a fish fin. And the men you saw playing with me are the fish goblins who serve the Dragon King. But let's hurry and get away from this place before he catches us....