

MEI-LING AND THE DRAGON
A Chinese fairy tale
Adapted by Carole L. Cooney

Setting: A village at the base of a mountain

Characters:

Chinese names.....Meaning

Narrator

Mei-Ling Beautiful tinkling bell

Dingbang, the dragon Protector of the country

Li, mother Strength

Chen, father Great

Narrator: Once upon a time, Mei-Ling and her family lived in a very poor village that lay at the base of a tall mountain. The villagers believed a dragon named Dingbang lived at the mountain's top, breathing smoke and fiery flames into the air every day. Everyone was warned never to go near the dragon.

Chen: Come Mei-Ling, it is time to walk inside and help your mother prepare food for supper.

Mei-Ling: Yes, father. But may I stay just a little while longer to see the smoke rise from the mountain?

Chen: Let me tell you, little one. There is a dragon named Dingbang who lives on the top of the mountain. You may think he is great and mighty but the dragon is the cause of our suffering. It is the dragon's fire and smoke that makes the fields, rivers, trees and all plants brown and shriveled up. Mei-Ling, never, never go near the dragon!

Narrator: Soon, it was time for Mei-Ling's birthday. Although her parents were poor, they wanted to give her a party.

Li: Sweet Mei-Ling, your father and I want to give you a birthday party. Who would you like to ask to come and celebrate with us?

Mei-Ling: Oh, Mother, I would like to ask my relatives and friends, but I have one special wish. Mother, may I ask the dragon to come to my party?

Li: What a silly thing to say! Mei-Ling, don't you know if you go near the dragon it will eat you?

Narrator: But Mei-Ling was determined to ask the dragon and so she started to run up the mountain side. Halfway up, suddenly she stopped. She heard the dragon shouting a scary song.

DingBang: (sing to the tune of London Bridge)
Alone I live, alone I roar.
I am a dragon evermore. (roar!!!!)

Narrator: Fiery flames shot down the mountain! Mei-Ling ran to her house.

Chen: I hope you've learned your lesson. Come and look at the birthday list your mother has written. Is there anyone missing?

Mei-Ling: Father, I want to add the dragon! I'll be back very soon.

Narrator: And before her father could stop her, Mei-Ling ran up the mountain again. When she was three-fourths of the way up, she stopped because she could see the huge shape of the dragon as he bellowed his scary song.

Dingbang: (sing to the tune of London Bridge)
Alone I live, alone I cry.
Friendless and sad until I die. (roar!!!)

Narrator: Once again red-hot stones and fiery flames shot from the dragon's mouth toward Mei-Ling. She screamed and ran home.

Li: My dear child, I am so glad you have returned safely. Now have you learned your lesson, Mei-Ling?

Narrator: The day of Mei-Ling's birthday arrived. Although they were poor, family and friends brought little gifts of fruit and rice.

Li: Mei-Ling, look at all of the gifts. Is there anything else you would like?

Mei-Ling: I still want to ask the dragon to my party, Mother, and this is so important to me that I'm going up the mountain again. I shall return very soon.

Chen: Do not go, Mei-Ling! Remember what I told you.

Narrator: But Mei-Ling was determined to ask the dragon. She ran and ran to the top of the mountain where she could hear the dragon's scary song.

Dingbang: (sing to the tune of London Bridge)
Alone I live. What dare come near?
Who can conquer doubt and fear? (roar!!!)

Mei-Ling: It is Mei-Ling who comes to see you. Dingbang, I love to see you shoot fiery smoke and hot rocks down the mountain side. It is so exciting! Today is my birthday and I've come to ask you for something special. Would you please come to my birthday party?

Dingbang: (roar!!! then stop) What? You are speaking to me? That has never happened before. What did you ask me?

Mei-Ling: Would you please come to my birthday party?

Ding-bang: What courage and kindness you have, little Mei-Ling! Why, of course I will come to your party. I know what we shall do. Hop on my back, and I will carry you down the mountain.

Narrator: Mei-Ling climbed onto Dingbang's scaly back. As the dragon moved slowly down the mountain, his tail carved a deep path. Suddenly a spring bubbled up and cool water began to run down toward the village. As they entered the village, Mei-Ling's parents, relatives and friends clapped their hands in joy.

Mei-Ling: Father, Mother, here is Dingbang, our friendly dragon. See what he has done for us? See the water? Now our village will have water for the fields, rivers, trees and all plants. Thank you Ding-Bang!

Narrator: And so the villagers were never hungry again. They loved the dragon so much that they made him their symbol of good luck. Mei-Ling was honored by the whole village where she lived happily ever after.