

The Four Dragons
A Chinese Folk Tale
Told by Adam C. Sharp

Characters:

NARRATOR 1

NARRATOR 2

LONG DRAGON

YELLOW DRAGON

BLACK DRAGON

PEARL DRAGON

JADE EMPEROR

MOUNTAIN GOD

OLD WOMAN

BOY

TOWNSPEOPLE

NARRATOR 1: When you look around you it is hard to believe-

NARRATOR 2: That there once were no rivers or lakes on earth.

NARRATOR 1: Where did they come from?

NARRATOR 2: How did they appear?

NARRATOR 1: We are here to tell you a great story

NARRATOR 2: Of how these four rivers

NARRATOR 1: Were formed.

NARRATOR 2: This is the story-

NARRATOR 1: Of the Four Dragons

(The Four Dragons: LONG DRAGON, YELLOW DRAGON, BLACK DRAGON and PEARL DRAGON enter and look around the land.)

NARRATOR 2: Once upon a time there were four sea dragons. The Long Dragon

LONG DRAGON: What a wonderful morning. I think I'll go for a fly around the sea.

NARRATOR 1: Yellow Dragon

YELLOW DRAGON: The sky looks so clear. I think I'll join you.

NARRATOR 2: Black Dragon

BLACK DRAGON: I want to fly right through those storm clouds. I want to make it rain.

NARRATOR 1: And, the Pearl Dragon

PEARL DRAGON: Anyone for hide and seek this morning?

YELLOW DRAGON/BLACK DRAGON/LONG DRAGON: Sound fun, sounds good. Sure.

(The Four Dragons start to fly around. Townspeople gather and begin to pray)

PEARL DRAGON: *(Suddenly stops.)* Look! *(Points at the Townspeople.)*

YELLOW DRAGON: What? *(Looks where PEARL DRAGON is pointing.)*

LONG DRAGON: I thought we were playing? *(Looks at where Pearl Dragon is pointing.)*

BLACK DRAGON: What is it? *(Looks at where PEARL DRAGON is pointing.)*

PEARL DRAGON: Come and look here!

(They all gather and look.)

PEARL DRAGON: What's wrong?

NARRATOR 1: On earth, they saw the many people gathered.

NARRATOR 2: They had fruits and cakes.

NARRATOR 1: They were also burning incense sticks.

BLACK DRAGON: Looks like they're praying.

LONG DRAGON: Yeah.

NARRATOR 2: An old woman with snow white hair emerged from the people.

(OLD WOMAN stands out from the TOWNSPEOPLE. She kneels.)

NARRATOR 1: She had a little, thin boy with her.

OLD WOMAN: *(Looking up.)* Please send us rain quickly, God of Heaven, to give our children rice to eat. Please.

NARRATOR 2: There had not been rain for a very,

NARRATOR 1: Very,

NARRATOR 2: Very,

NARRATOR 1: Long,

NARRATOR 2: Long,

NARRATOR 1: Long,

(Pause.)

NARRATOR 2: Time. Long time. It was a long time since they saw rain.

NARRATOR 1: It had been a long time since it had rained on their land and crops. The crops withered, the grass turned yellow and fields cracked under the scorching sun.

YELLOW DRAGON: How poor the people are! And they will die if it doesn't rain soon.

PEARL DRAGON: We must help them.

BLACK DRAGON: We can't help them. We shouldn't help them.

(PEARL DRAGON, LONG DRAGON and YELLOW DRAGON look at BLACK DRAGON.)

BLACK DRAGON: What? It's the way of things. The natural order of things. We shouldn't be involved.

LONG DRAGON: We have to be involved.

PEARL DRAGON: Yes.

BLACK DRAGON: What about the Jade Emperor?

YELLOW DRAGON: I know, but-

LONG DRAGON: We have to be involved. Let's go and beg the Jade Emperor for rain for these people.

PEARL DRAGON: Black Dragon what do you say? We have to be in this together.

BLACK DRAGON: (*Thinks.*) Okay.

(*The Dragons leave. The JADE EMPEROR walks out and sits. We hear music.*)

NARRATOR 1: So, they decided to meet with the Jade Emperor.

NARRATOR 2: The Long Dragon leapt into the clouds. Then, the others followed. They flew towards the Heavenly Palace.

NARRATOR 1: Being in charge of all the affairs in heaven on earth and in the sea, well, let's just say the Jade Emperor was, well-

NARRATOR 2: He was pretty powerful. He was *the* emperor.

NARRATOR 1: And, he did not like to be interrupted.

(*The Dragons rush in and disrupt the JADE EMPEROR.*)

JADE EMPEROR: Why did you come here instead of staying in the sea and behaving yourselves?

(*The Dragons look at each other.*)

PEARL DRAGON: We were, but we saw something that we had to tell you.

JADE EMPEROR: What's that? I'm very busy.

YELLOW DRAGON: The people.

JADE EMPEROR: Yes. What about them? Come on.

BLACK DRAGON: They're, well, they need something important.

LONG DRAGON: The crops on earth are withering and dying Your Majesty. I beg you to send rain down.

YELLOW DRAGON: Quickly.

JADE EMPEROR: What?

YELLOW DRAGON: Nothing. Really. As soon as you can. Really.

JADE EMPEROR: Fine. All of you go back down first. Then, I will send some rain down tomorrow.

NARRATOR 1: The Jade Emperor never intended to do as he said.

NARRATOR 2: He just pretended to agree while listening to the songs and fairies.

YELLOW DRAGON/PEARL DRAGON/BLACK DRAGON/LONG DRAGON:
Thank you Your Majesty!

(The Dragons hurry away. The JADE EMPEROR stands and leaves.)

NARRATOR 1: The four dragons went happily back. But, there wasn't rain the next day.

NARRATOR 2: Or, the next day.

NARRATOR 1: Or, the next.

NARRATOR 2: Ten days passed and not one drop came down from the sky. The people suffered more.

(While the Four Dragons play, the Townspeople start chewing on bark, grass and clay.)

NARRATOR 1: Some even started to eat bark and grass roots.

NARRATOR 2: Others were forced to eat white clay when they ran out of bark and grass roots.

(The Four Dragons stop playing and look down at the Townspeople.)

NARRATOR 1: The four dragons felt very sorry, for they knew the JADE EMPEROR only cared about pleasure, and never took the people to heart.

LONG DRAGON: I can't believe he is doing this to them.

PEARL DRAGON: I know, they're starving down there.

YELLOW DRAGON: And, he's up there enjoying himself.

(We see the JADE EMPEROR eating and walking in the background.)

BLACK DRAGON: You're right. We have to do something. The people are starving. I can't bear it.

NARRATOR 2: The Four Dragons didn't know what to do.

YELLOW DRAGON: How can we help them?

PEARL DRAGON: What can we do?

NARRATOR 1: Suddenly, Long Dragon had an idea.

LONG DRAGON: The sea.

NARRATOR 2: Seeing the vast sea before them Long Dragon looked at the other Dragons.

BLACK DRAGON: What is it?

PEARL DRAGON: Tell us.

YELLOW DRAGON: We want to know.

LONG DRAGON: (*Standing tall as he speaks.*) The sea before us. Is there not plenty of water in the sea where we live? The water will be like rain drops and come down to save the people and their crops.

YELLOW DRAGON: That's a great idea.

PEARL DRAGON: A wonderful idea.

BLACK DRAGON: But, we will be blamed if the Jade Emperor learns of this. He will know it's us.

(*They all look at each other.*)

LONG DRAGON: Then, we need to know if it's worth it.

YELLOW DRAGON: But, we're doing the right thing.

PEARL DRAGON: But, are we prepared for the consequence?

BLACK DRAGON: Then, we need to do this together. No matter the consequences.

LONG DRAGON: No matter the consequences.

PEARL DRAGON: Yes. Let's do it.

YELLOW DRAGON: Yes. They need us and that's more important than any consequence.

BLACK DRAGON/YELLOW DRAGON/PEARL DRAGON/LONG DRAGON:
Let's do it.

(The DRAGONS do what the NARRATORS' state.)

NARRATOR 1: The Long Dragon and the Yellow Dragon swooped down to the sea, scooped up water in their mouths, and then flew back into the sky.

NARRATOR 2: Next, the Black Dragon and the Pearl Dragon swooped down and scooped water into their mouths too.

NARRATOR 1: The Four Dragons flew back and forth, making the sky dark all around.

(TOWNSPEOPLE look up as the FOUR DRAGONS circle.)

NARRATOR 2: Before long, the sea water became rain water pouring down from the sky.

NARRATOR 1: The Townspeople were overjoyed.

OLD WOMAN: It's raining! It's raining!

BOY: Rain! Rain! Thank you! Thank you!

NARRATOR 2: On the ground, the wheat stalks raised their heads and the sorghum stalks straightened up.

NARRATOR 1: The Four Dragons had done it.

NARRATOR 2: But, some choices, as good as they are, have consequences. The Sea God told the Jade Emperor what had happened.

JADE EMPEROR: They disobeyed me! How dare they?! How dare they bring rain without my permission!

NARRATOR 1: The Jade Emperor ordered the heavenly generals and their troops to arrest the Four Dragons.

(TOWNSPEOPLE are now GUARDS who take the FOUR DRAGONS as prisoners. The FOUR DRAGONS stand before the JADE EMPEROR.)

NARRATOR 2: The Four Dragons were outnumbered and were soon taken prisoner.

JADE EMPEROR: What shall I do with you four? Ah! You wanted to help the people so badly, then that is what you will do. That is what you become. Mountain God!

MOUNTAIN GOD: Yes, Your Majesty.

JADE EMPEROR: Dragons. You will go to the four mountains and lie upon them and you will never escape. Guards take them away.

YELLOW DRAGON: It was worth it.

PEARL DRAGON: Yes. It was.

BLACK DRAGON: We saved those people. It was worth it.

LONG DRAGON: Yes. We did it.

(The guards take the FOUR DRAGONS away.)

JADE EMPEROR: Mountain God. You will make sure they can never leave.

MOUNTAIN GOD: Leave it to me.

(The FOUR DRAGONS go to four different areas of the stage.)

NARRATOR 1: The Mountain God used his magical powers to make four mountains fly there, whistling in the wind from afar.

NARRATOR 2: The mountains were pressed down on the four dragons.

NARRATOR 1: Imprisoning them as they were.

NARRATOR 2: They never regretted their actions. Determined to do good for the people forever, they turned themselves into four rivers-

NARRATOR 1: Which flowed past high mountains and deep valleys, crossing land from the west and east and finally emptying into the sea.

NARRATOR 2: And, so China's four great rivers were formed. The Black Dragon became the Heilongjiang in the north.

NARRATOR 1: The Yellow Dragon became the Huanghe in central China.

NARRATOR 2: The Changjiang farther south was the Long Dragon.

NARRATOR 1: And the Pearl Dragon became the Zhejiang in the very far south.

NARRATOR 2: They had become what they most desired, a help to the people on the land.