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Dragonwings

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Chapter 1 - Land of the Demons - February - March, 1903 Ever since I can remember, I wanted to know about the Land of the Golden Mountain. My mother would never tell me about it. Before I was born, my father left our home to go there. He worked for the white demons. There was a lot of money to be made in the demon land. It was very dangerous. Father lives in the land of the Golden Mountain.Mother said that she was too busy to answer my questions. She and my grandmother were in charge of working our small farm. When I talked of the Golden Mountain, Mother would find something wrong on the farm. She did not want to talk about the Golden Mountain. Father lives in the land of the Golden Mountain. Mother made sure that I knew one important thing about my father. He made the most marvelous kites. As soon as I was big enough to hold the string, Mother took me out and taught me how to fly a kite. Father had made a special kite when he knew my mother was pregnant. Mother said I could only fly it when I was older and wiser-that is, when I turned eight. I wanted to fly my father's kite.Father lives in the land of the Golden Mountain.When I turned eight, I felt I was old enough to get answers. Grandmother felt sorry for me. She decided to tell me. She said, the reason we call America the Land of the Golden Mountain was because there's a big mountain there full of gold. Men wait until the sun warms the mountain and then scoop the gold into buckets. The white demons roam the mountain and beat up any other men that try to get the gold. Father is in a dangerous place. Father lives in the land of the Golden Mountain.I did not know that I would find out first hand about the mountain. One day, our cousin ,Hand Clap, returned from the mountain. He brought a letter from Father. He said that he thought it was time for me to be with him. Mother did not want me to go. Finally, she agreed.When I first saw my father, I ran into his arms. Father smiled and said, “Hello, boy. I’ve waited a long time to do this. Too long.”Father lives in the land of the Golden Mountain.

Chapter 2The Company (April 1903)“So this is your boy,” Uncle Bright Star said. “Yes, Uncle.” Father pushed me forward. Uncle stared at me and I stared back at him. Uncle said, “Don’t you know it’s impolite to stare, boy?” Then I said, “Why are you doing it, sir?” My uncle said that I have character. Everyone laughed. I had been accepted.Moon Shadow learns about the land of the Golden Mountain . 6 I asked, “Which one’s the Golden Mountain?” Father said, “There is no Golden Mountain, but there are a lot of demons. Maybe we’ll come across it yet.” Father whispered to me, “Stick close to me, Moon Shadow, and don’t be afraid.” Then, we set off to Chinatown. That is where the Tang (Chinese) people gather to live in America. Moon Shadow learns about the land of the Golden Mountain.There were no women on the streets, only men. We stepped into a small, neat, three-story building painted bright red and green. We went upstairs. This was used as a kitchen and resting room. The third floor was our sleeping quarters. The dinner that night was the best I ever had. First, Uncle toasted me. Then, he toasted the Company that we worked for.Moon Shadow learns about the land of the Golden Mountain.Next, they brought out a new set of clothes and hat for me to wear. Father said, “They’ve given you something for your body, but I am giving you something for your soul.” He went upstairs and came back with the most marvelous kite I had seen. It was painted in bright colors and was shaped like a butterfly.Moon Shadow learns about the land of the Golden Mountain.

At that moment, the door bell rang. It was Black Dog. He told us that the white demons were drunk and ready to beat up the Tang people. Then, we heard windows shattering and yelling from the demons. We waited silently for them to go away. Once we knew they had gone, we began boarding up the windows. Black Dog laughed, “Welcome to the land of the demons, boy."Moon Shadow learns about the land of the Golden Mountain.

Chapter 3The Dragon Man(April 1903)As Father led me to my room, I wondered about his name, Windrider. I asked, "Why do they call you Windrider?" Then, he told me a story.Windrider tells Moon Shadow a story.

Father said, "one night, I went to sleep. Then, I woke up on a beach. I saw the Dragon King lying on the beach. The Dragon King told me that I used to be a dragon! When I was a dragon, I was the greatest doctor of all dragons. He said that I was a show off about flying." Windrider tells Moon Shadow a story.Then, Father said, "Dragon King was hurt. He asked me to heal him. Without thinking, my hands knew what to do. He asked, "How can I ever reward you?" I asked him to make me a dragon again. He could not do that. So, he made some shiny wings. His soldiers pasted the wings to my back. I felt them tug at my back. Then, I spread my wings and saw how beautiful they were!"Windrider tells Moon Shadow a story.Father said, "It would take all night to describe the dragon kingdom. I still remember the Dragon King's throne. It was made of gold. You could see anything in it. Then, the Dragon King asked me what I wanted to see. I told him that I wanted to see my wife. Next, I could see your mother singing a lullaby to you. Finally, it was time for me to return to my living world."Windrider tells Moon Shadow a story. Father sat quietly. Then he said, "the others say it was a dream. The only proof I have is a sore back and ribs." I said, "I believe you were there Father. Something as beautiful as that has to be true." Then, there was a knock at my bedroom door. It was Uncle. He gave me a little toy that he made. It was a carving of a Monkey. I held it close as I fell to sleep.Windrider tells Moon Shadow a story.

Chapter 4 - Tests (April 1903-February 1904)During the next year, I learned that the Company was more than a group of men. We were brothers banded together. I was treated like a man, not a boy. Father could speak the language of the white demons best. (Some of the Chinese people called white men demons. This is a name for mean people). He was often sent into town to pick up dirty laundry. Then, he would deliver the clean laundry. Father had many skills.

 One day, we met a demon. This demon was big and cheerful. He was driving a horseless carriage (a car) that had broken down. A long time ago, people called cars horseless carriages. He asked father, “Do you know anything about a horseless carriage?” Father had never fixed a horseless carriage in his life. Then, he looked into the engine. He fixed it!Father had many skills. The demon was very happy with Father’s work. He offered us money, but Father would not accept it. Instead, he reached into his pocket and gave Father a business card. It said, “Oliver Alger, Real Estate Agent. Properties sold and managed. 1200 Polk St.” Father had many skills. I asked Father how he knew what to do. He said that he just let his hands do the work. I asked, “Do you think that was the Dragon King? Do you think it was a test?” Father stared at me. He said, “You talk too much.”Father had many skills. When we got home, Father showed me a newspaper. The name of the newspaper was the New York Herald. It said that two demon men had flown. Two men, the Wright brothers, flew an airplane. Some of the others told father to build a flying machine, too. Then, he would be able to fly Mother to be with us in the Land of the Golden Mountain.Father had many skills.

Chapter 5 Windrider's Claws (February 1904 - May, 1905)Black Dog got into trouble with the white demons. He owed them money for drugs. Then, he was shot. He was taken back to the Company and put to bed. The men were discussing how they would pay the money back. They also said that demons tried to trap the Tang by selling drugs to them. Black Dog promised to stop taking drugs.

Father and Moon Shadow have hard times. It was not long until Black Dog was back to his old tricks of stealing money and buying drugs. One day he took me to town to pick up dirty laundry. I was carrying the money bag. He hit me over the head, stole the money bag, and ran away. Father and Moon Shadow have hard times. Father went out looking for Black Dog. He was being protected by the brotherhood of The Sleepers. When he found him, he beat him up. Another brother pulled a gun on me. Then, my father accidentally killed him. The others told father that he should leave town until everything settled down. Father and Moon Shadow have hard times. Father and I left the Company the next day. Father told them that he was going to work for a demon, Mister Alger. He said that we would stay with demons who rent houses to people for money. They all thought we were crazy for wanting to live among the demons. Father and Moon Shadow have hard times. At the farewell party, everyone brought gifts. Uncle gave us a porcelain cup with soil and incense in it. Incense is a special stick that is burned when people pray. The soil was from his last trip to China. He told us to burn the incense for protection. Father said, “We’ll give it a special place.” It will help us pray for safety. Father and Moon Shadow have hard times.

Chapter 6The Demoness (May 1905)Our new place was for poor demons. Father said that we could make lots of money. We could fix machines for the demons. We would live in the stable behind our landlady's house. A stable is a place for animals. We would sleep on mats and blankets.Windrider and Moon shadow have a new home. All of the houses looked like square boxes. They were all the same, except for one. There was one large Victorian home that was made of eight sides. This was the landlady's house. A landlady is a person who owns houses and rents them to other people. Father said, "It's time for us to meet our landlady." Windrider and Moon shadow have a new home.This was the first demoness that I have ever seen up-close. A demoness is a lady mean. Her name was Miss Whitlaw. She was tiny and polite. She smiled at us. She had a friendly twinkle in her eye. She invited us in. Miss Whitlaw gave me milk and gingerbread cookies. They were the best I had ever tasted. Windrider and Moon shadow have a new home.Miss Whitlaw had a niece named Robin. Robin invited me to look through her picture viewer. A picture viewer is like a small camera that you look into. It is used for looking at pictures. I couldn't believe my eyes. She said, "It's Niagara Falls. You see, the picture viewer lets us travel all around the world without even leaving the house." Windrider and Moon shadow have a new home.Next, Robin showed me their stained-glass window. A stained glass window is a window made of colored glass. It was tall and rectangular. It was covered with a great dragon breathing yellow and red flames. Robin said that dragons were very wicked animals that eat people and destroy towns. I looked at Father. I was confused. Father looked at me and shook his head. I felt sad that Miss Whitlaw and Robin did not know that real dragons of the sea were wise and kind. Windrider and Moon shadow have a new home.

Chapter 7 - Education(May-June, 1905) Each day, while Father was at work, he allowed me to have 30 minutes of free time. I could use this time to nap, play, or read. I decided to teach Miss Whitlaw and Robin about dragons. They decided to teach me how to read and write in English.Moon Shadow is a student and a teacher. Then I told Miss Whitlaw about my father's dream of building an airplane. I asked her to help me write a letter to the Wright Brothers. Miss Whitlaw was my writing teacher. I was her student. I wanted to help my father learn about airplanes. I was his teacher!Moon Shadow is a student and a teacher.This is my letter:To the honorable Wrights:

This is to inform you that I am a boy of eleven. I have greatly admired your feats of daring. My father wants to fly too. Can you help him? We need to know how to shape the propellers and wings. Father says that no one else in the world knows as much as you do about airplanes.Thank you. Moon Shadow is a student and a teacher.Two weeks later, I got a letter from the Wrights' bicycle shop. This is their letter:Dear Mr. Lee,My brother and I are always happy to meet another flying enthusiast. Our brotherhood is too small to lose any one of us. Enclosed you will find some tables and diagrams that should prove of some service to you. If we can be of any further assistance to you, please let us know.Moon Shadow is a student and a teacher.I waited anxiously for Father to come home. When he arrived I read the letter to him. He was very angry that I told Miss Whitlaw about his dream of flying. He crumbled the letter and threw it in the corner. The next morning, Father picked up the letter and smoothed it out. He was looking at the tables and diagrams. He said, "Can you help me write another letter to them?" I said, "I can try."Moon Shadow is a student and a teacher.

Chapter 8 -Earth, Wind, and Water(June-September 1905)

We wrote many letters to the Wright brothers. They answered Father's questions right away. Their instructions helped Father make larger glider kites. The large kites were small models of the real airplane. Moon Shadow learns from many people.One Saturday morning, Father invited Miss Whitlaw and Robin for a picnic. After the picnic, we took turns flying Father’s newest model. Father’s turn was last. I watched him closely. He pulled a letter from his pocket and tied it to the end of the kite. Next, he pulled out his pocketknife and cut the string. He wanted to see how far it would fly on its own. We were all disappointed. Father promised to make us new kites. Moon Shadow learns from many people.The next Saturday, Father had to work. Robin invited me to fly her new model. I was afraid. I could hear the demon boys playing in the streets. Robin told me that the biggest boy, Jack, was scared of the sight of his own blood.

When we walked outside, Jack stopped playing. He began mocking me by saying, “Ching Chong, Chinaman.” To mock means to make fun of someone. I looked at him and said, “I no like that song. I think it stupid.” Then he said, “You think I’m stupid?” Then, Jack ran toward me. He expected me to run away. Instead, I punched him in the nose.Moon Shadow learns from many people.

 Jack sat on the sidewalk with blood running down his face. Suddenly I realized that demon boys were like the Tang boys I knew at home. You had to punch the biggest and toughest one to be accepted. From that day on, we all became friends. Moon Shadow learns from many people.Chapter 9 - The Dragon Wakes (December 1905-April 1906)By the time winter came, we were not rich, but we were doing well. We saved our money. We hoped to open our own repair shop in San Francisco. I began to have this terrible feeling that something would happen to our home. I was right.Early one morning, I got dressed and went outside to pump water. he morning was filled with soft, dreamy colors. Then the earthquake hit. I did not believe it at first. It seemed as though the whole world had come unglued. Buildings were falling down all around me.An earthquake hits San Francisco.

 All of the houses on Polk St. were wiped out. Miss Whitlaw’s was the only house left standing. Father and I ran inside to check on Miss Whitlaw and Robin. They were safe. Miss Whitlaw said that we must help to save those who had been crushed under the rubble. We knew we couldn’t do it alone. Miss Whitlaw said, “We’ll get help from the others.” An earthquake hits San Francisco. Little by little we began to clear the mounds of rubble. We saved as many demons as possible. After several hours of work Father said, “I hear no calling in the last hour. No one alive left here.” Miss Whitlaw agreed. We all went back to Miss Whitlaw’s house for food and water. The water pump was dry. A fire had begun south of Polk St.An earthquake hits San Francisco.About four hours later an army of demon soldiers came by to rescue us. They told us about the fire. Then they told us to gather our belongings. They would take us Golden Gate Park. Miss Whitlaw suggested that we go to check on our people at the Company. We helped Miss Whitlaw gather her things. She took the picture viewer and the stained-glass dragon window. As Miss Whitlaw and Robin drove away, she said, “We’ll meet you in the park.” Father said, “See you there.”An earthquake hits San Francisco.

Chapter 10 - Aroused (April-May 1906)

Uncle brought the wagon to pick us up. On the way to the Park we passed many white people. They looked shocked. They could not believe that this happened to them. Yesterday, they wanted money. Now, all they could think of was bread and water. Life changes for everyone in San Francisco.We found Miss Whitlaw and Robin at the park. She offered us dinner. We told her that we brought our own food. The Tang people were placed in separate tents from Americans. When our tent became flooded with water, Miss Whitlaw invited us to stay with her. Life changes for everyone in San Francisco.The next morning, a young officer entered the tent. He said, "Come along, you two. We're moving you out." Miss Whitlaw argued with the officer, but he said that we must leave. The officers found all of the Tang people. They marched us away from the camp. Soon, there were very few of us left. We were not sure where they were taking us. Life changes for everyone in San Francisco. Uncle decided to take charge and asked for my help. He said that some American businesses could not make money without us. American businesses paid us very little money. This left more money for them and their business. Uncle said that we would tell the American businessmen that we would leave. Most of the businessmen agreed that we should stay.Life changes for everyone in San Francisco. We were went back to Chinatown to rebuild our company. The company's days were filled with joy and laughter. Father helped the company but still had flying on his mind. He said that we should not give up on our dream of flying. Uncle laughed and said that Father made no sense. Then Father and I left the company to make our dream come true. Life changes for everyone in San Francisco.

Chapter 11 - Exile - (May 1906 - September 1909)

Father and I moved to the foothills above Oakland. We borrowed Miss Whitlaw's wagon to move. We lived in an old barn. It was next to a beautiful mansion that was ruined in the earthquake.The view from the hills was amazing. At night thousands of lights seemed to glitter like gold. At last, I found my gold mountain. It was not made of gold nuggets. It was made of people like the Whitlaws and the Company. Father and Moon Shadow follow their dream. Then we received a letter from Mother and Grandmother. Mother said how proud she was of Father for following his dream of flying. She said that I should continue to support and love him. I know that she was blushing with pride. Father and Moon Shadow follow their dream.It took three years to build the flying machine. Father and I named it Dragonwings. By the end of summer, we were ready. We would take Dragonwings to the top of the mountain to fly it. Father would use the money we had saved to hire a team of horses to pull the wagon to the top. I was proud of Father for wanting to be a dragon again.Father and Moon Shadow follow their dream.The next day, Black Dog was at our house. He was looking through our things. He came toward me with a knife. Then, Father walked in. Black Dog had me on the floor with a knife at my throat. Father yelled, "Don't harm him." Black Dog said, "How important is that flying machine to you?" More important than your son's life?" Father gave Black Dog his money. His dream was not as important as his son.Father and Moon Shadow follow their dream.Then it was time to pay the rent. The landlord got mad at Father. He gave us three days to get the money. We knew that would be impossible. We knew that we could not take Dragonwings with us. We had no money for horses to haul the wagon. "Maybe this is the final test in life," I said. Father thought for a bit and laughed, "Yes, maybe it is."Father and Moon Shadow follow their dream.

Chapter 12 Dragonwings (September 1909- June-1910) It was way past sunrise when I woke up. Father was rolled up in his blanket. Then a knock came at the barn door. Hand Clap stood there. It was as if he had appeared by magic. He called over his shoulder, "Hey, everybody, they're here." I heard the clink of a harness and the rattle of an old wagon. The men from the Company were following close behind. "We're here to help you get that flying machine to the top of that hill" Uncle said. Father and Moon Shadow are helped by family and friends. We put Dragonwings onto the wagon. For the first time, Dragonwings emerged into the world. "We'll go to the very top. That's where the wind is best," said Father. When we were almost to the top of the mountain, we saw two figures tromping up the hill. Miss Whitlaw and Robin's faces lit up when they saw us. "Thank Goodness," she puffed. "I thought we might be late."Father and Moon Shadow are helped by family and friends. Robin and I took our places to help get Dragonwings off the ground. Father laid belly down on the flying machine. Dragonwings lurched forward and took off. Everyone cheered. Father was actually flying. About five minutes later the wind began to blow harder. I held my breath. Dragonwings rose into the air. Then, it headed down the hillside toward the bay. It crashed into the hillside. We rushed to check on Father. He was alive, but his leg and two ribs were broken. I felt sad.Father and Moon Shadow are helped by family and friends. Father awoke the next day. He said, "I'm not going to build another flying machine. When I was up there, I wanted you and your mother with me. I know now that my family means more to me than flying." Uncle said, "Maybe that crash knocked some sense into you." Father and Moon Shadow are helped by family and friends.

Hand Clap and Uncle reminded Father that he was still considered a partner in the Company. Father said, "But I don't even have a dollar to my name." "I'll lend you the money," Uncle said. Father agreed. Hand Clap and Uncle said that they were getting too old to run the Company. They said that Father and I would be the perfect team to take over. Father and Moon Shadow are helped by family and friends. Father and I moved back into the Company's new building. It took months for Father's bones to heal. During that time we never lost touch with the Whitlaws. I would either call or visit them every Sunday. In summer, Father was able to give money to the demon officials. Then he sailed to the Middle Kingdom to bring mother back.Father and Moon Shadow are helped by family and friends. I knew that we would face many future problems. I was not afraid of them. I knew that mother and father gave me courage. Father had the courage to follow his dream. Mother had the courage to let us live in America. We would be strong together. Father and Moon Shadow are helped by family and friends. The End