

# Dragon's Curse

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## Dedication

*For the real life Li-Ye...*

*Remember to Breathe  
...And "Be"*



Once upon a time, in a distant land that did not seem to make sense to the mere mortal, there lived a dragon by the name of Meko. He was uncommon amongst the traditional grouping of dragons at that time for several reasons. He was older than most and lived a relatively isolated life. He did this by choice because experience taught him that it was much easier to avoid the chaos in life if one steered clear of the villages and castles, for these were the places where others, out of fear, would seek to end his otherwise continued existence.

He learned, relatively quickly, that his need for food and drink could be satisfied in other ways and, although a farmer's livestock was an easier target than wild game, it was hardly worth the trouble in the long run. And so, he typically remained on the outskirts of town, remaining low in his flight so as to not upset the locals and to rarely, if ever, bring attention to himself.

In his youth, he certainly had his share of run-ins with those who felt threatened by his massive size and larger-than-life persona. He had humbled many a great knight who felt that they could bring this beast to his knees, but this was done out of self-protection and needing to make a point to those who believed their abilities extended beyond the reality of such. Ordinarily, killing a dragon is luck, striking a fortunate blow of the sword or arrow in precisely the right location. In particular, a dragon's heart is vulnerable, with a patch of scale missing in exactly the spot above this organ, lending the dragon to great danger when leaving this area exposed. Many times, superficial wounds in this area are experienced. Those heal quickly after the affected area is licked, accompanied by sufficient quiet and rest. But, sometimes the injury is so severe that the dragon will die of, what most would consider, a broken heart. Simply put, this is when the damage is so significant that recovery will not come regardless of how long the dragon might lie in wait for relief to arrive. It is a slow and painful death, and a fate that no dragon would wish upon another.

Dragons are solitary creatures most times, as the "Dragon's Curse" makes companionship difficult. Unless both can learn to control their natural fire-breathing tendencies, it is almost always certain death for them to remain close, let alone physically touch. Passion itself is a dangerous proposition, as one way to kill a dragon is through fire—And passion is always accompanied by fire. Herein lies the curse; the natural properties of being a dragon make romantic love a complete impossibility. Yet, Meko, from afar, loved Li-Ye in all her splendor. He watched over her, always aware of her exact location at any given time, and stood at the ready to intervene should she experience trouble with an enthusiastic, fame-seeking dragonslayer.

Li-Ye, much younger by dragon standards and still considered by most to be a dragon-child, or "groundling," was a good-hearted dragon as well. She did, however, seek out the more adventurous ways of the world, verging on recklessness, and had not yet learned the valuable lessons that it took Meko hundreds of years to assimilate. But he was drawn to her unlike any before her.

He, of course, was drawn to her physical beauty, which was exotic in a sense and different from the other dragons he had known. Her markings were unmistakable and unique, with tones of purple and reds among the deepest black outlines upon her coat. It was a fine contrast to Meko's blue-ish coloring, in multiple hues, with a hint of silvery gray that became more pronounced each year. They were in many ways colors that represented their personalities—Her, more flamboyant and attention seeking in presentation, him, more subdued, dark, but comforting in some way.

It is safe to say that Li-Ye was a dragon one would notice. Beyond the physical, her behavior was likeable and highly entertaining most times. She was extraordinarily energetic and would fly about in a bouncing pattern, zipping back and forth while giggling and singing, making even the sternest and most grouchy of dragons smile.

Despite this lighter side of her unusually buoyant personality, she was also a dragon, like most, who sought wisdom and eternal growth and could be quite serious and introspective. Yes, there were many sides to Li-Ye. She could be graceful with the best of them, yet she could also be careless, and carefree, in her actions. This appealed to Meko, as she was many times very groundling-like—remnants, he understood, from her not so distant youth. But what he loved about her was also what, at times, frustrated him as he worried about her safety and longed for a consistent level of connection with her. And so, the dichotomy of his love for her presented challenges that he struggled with daily. But, even with that struggle, his love was unwavering.

Meko understood that she had a fierce temper, as most dragons do. He accepted that because he also knew about the depths of her soul and her ability, though sporadically, to meet his heart full on, and how she somehow she made his days feel more vibrant and full of distinct purpose. He adored her. Still, Meko worried about Li-Ye's tendency to elicit trouble with the humans in the area—the one element of her daily behavior that he felt sure would result in her demise. Yet, Li-Ye was doing nothing more than living the life of a true dragon. She was dangerous, of course—but never mean-spirited. Dragons rarely are.

What most people fail to understand is that dragons are not evil, most times, in and of themselves. But, when provoked, they can become quite violent and wreak havoc upon a people, destroying villages or a countryside in one fell swoop. They are known to utilize everything at their disposal, including their extensive claws that protrude from their webbed feet. But nothing—*nothing*—was more feared than their ability to spew fire and to decimate anything and anyone in their path.

Ordinarily, dragons, especially the older ones, prefer to live their lives in peace, taking only what they need for sustenance—a cow here or there, or some other farm animal or local game. Granted, this did not make friends of village farmers and the other peasants, but a dragon has to do what a dragon has to do. Most dragons do prey on meat, along with digesting the rocks that fuel their fire, but on occasion a barren tree will indicate a light snack enjoyed by a dragon that craved his greens.

One day, after a light meal of a goat over the nearby hill, Meko flew over the mountainside perch of his longtime friend, the mystic, Kathegar. He had come to rely upon her wisdom and daily conversations to ward off the loneliness and to keep in perspective his realistic prospects with Li-Ye. He encircled the cliff to Kathegar's cave several times before he finally lowered himself down upon the layer of rock below the formation where the cave itself was located.

Withdrawing his massive wings, he began to make himself more comfortable upon the rock, and after doing so, laid his enormous head upon the upper cliff's edge, ten feet or so from where his friend, Kathegar, was seated on her usual stone that doubled as a bench. They learned that this set-up worked best for their long talks and enabled both to hear the other without vocal strain—an important consideration when talking to a dear comrade or someone you consider a soulmate.

Kathegar was an unusual woman. Self-described as “not a small woman,” Kathegar was beautiful, as her source of positive energy emanated from her every movement, gesture, and word, which only enhanced her physical attributes and made her even more stunning to the beholder. Of average height and only slightly enhanced girth, she was in possession of a kind face, gently framed by the short, well-maintained black hair that was kept “just so.” More often than not, her spectacles were used as a prop, further demonstrating a point by finding their way down the slope of her nose as she peered out over them, or taken off and waved in the air as if she were conducting an orchestra.

Modest were her surroundings, for she learned she did not need much to bring about her happiness. Depending on the season at hand, she would typically be found barefoot and wearing tattered garb in colors that were anything but pretentious. Earth tones were her home and further verified this woman's connection with all that was natural and good. And, she was equally as comfortable with lugging wood from the ground below as she was with her precious books, which she read and re-read in order to come to the fullest understanding of their meaning.

She was kind, of course, but she also knew when to confront another in order to help them see the real truth. She believed in forgiveness, but not in foolishness, and for this, she was a tremendous help to those who lived their lives in some state of temporary blindness. She was, indeed, a teacher, yet she was an eternal student of all that was abundant in the world. She was exactly the type of friend that Meko needed. Honest. Pure. In fact, she was exactly the type of friend that everyone should have.

For some reason, she never feared the dragon, Meko. It was she who initiated contact between them as she would wave to the great beast as he flew above, and motion with her hands that he land in order for them to have a proper conversation. For some time, Meko was confused with this behavior, but little by little he came to believe that this woman's motivations were honorable and that this was not a trap laid by any that might do him harm. So, one day he did muster the courage to land and to finally speak face-to-face. And, since that day, he came to rely upon her heavily for companionship, guidance,

laughter, storytelling, and truth. He also found great solace in her ability to predict the outcome of any situation, over and over again, with tremendous accuracy.

Yes, she was a mystic, by traditional definition, although she hadn't always had this gift. Her prophecy and wisdom was brought about by an illness that almost claimed her life. In fact, she insisted that she actually did pass to the other side, emerging with a greater understanding of life...and death. She did not fear it—either one. Instead, she moved to the cliffside where she spent her days praying and simply “being.” She welcomed Meko's frequent visits, for she did not have much interaction with others with the exception of a few religious mountain folk who dropped by occasionally to discuss the greater meaning of our existence and human plights.

She enjoyed Meko's quick wit and his ability to make her laugh heartily. They quickly became fast friends and developed a deep and unexplainable understanding of one another—a phenomenon that went well beyond the need for any spoken words. And, this, as we all know, is a tremendous gift.

“Well, hello my friend!” said the warm and welcoming woman in an accent that was foreign to these parts, but one that Meko found inviting and somehow familiar.

Mindful of his need to control his breathing, Meko swallowed first, then replied in his relatively deep voice, “Good morning, Great Mystic!”

Kathegar bellowed in laughter, as usual, because this was how they typically greeted each other and she enjoyed the title Meko had bestowed upon her.

She continued by saying, “How goes thy day?”

Meko sighed as a small puff of smoke escaped his nostrils. This made Kathegar chuckle and share a kindly, understanding smile, as she knew how difficult it was for a dragon to be disciplined enough to swallow his fire. She was also quite appreciative of his efforts because their friendship had certainly caused her to be singed a time or two before.

“Have you spoken with her as of late?” Kathegar questioned with one eyebrow raised.

“No,” said the dragon with his eyes pointed downward. “Not since our last attempt, of which you are well aware.”

“So, she still has yet to learn to control her fire, I see,” stated the wise woman who typically found the right words to say.

Meko simply nodded in a slow and deliberate way, as a slight tear filled his right eye.

Kathegar was fully cognizant of the challenges of two dragons in love. Sometimes it is best just to stay away from each other rather than risk the dangers of that entanglement.

But she also knew how hard it was for Meko to remain distant, especially when he felt that this female counterpart somehow completed his existence. Without her, he felt strangely alone, even though the majority of his lifetime involved just that. He *was* alone. But, until now, he never felt unsettled by it. Still, Li-Ye was absent by choice or by circumstance, and Meko recognized that he was powerless to change this reality.

Well in-sync with each others moods and thoughts, Kathegar asked, “Why the haste? You know she is young and is only starting out her dragonhood, unlike you.”

It was true. Unless eliminated by knights, other dragon slayers, or townsfolk, or potentially injured and killed through an accident of some other kind such as being struck by lightning, dragons live forever. They don’t even bother really keeping track of chronological age because it means nothing except, perhaps, the experience that comes with time.

Meko was substantially older than Li-Ye, yet it was only apparent in particular cases. Maybe that is what Meko loved most about this lady dragon. She was youthful in her outlook on life but had more wisdom than most at the early stages of her lifetime. He enjoyed their time together, but feared her choices sometimes because they often put her in harms way. He felt a need to protect her at all times, even if only from a distance, standing guard for when he might be needed.

The last time that Meko and Li-Ye were together, Meko was burned. The wounds had by this time healed substantially, yet there were scars remaining. It wasn’t enough injury to make the older giant shy away from future contact, but it did make him wary under the present day circumstances. Primarily, it appeared as though Li-Ye was unwilling to give up her fire. Meko would never ask her to give it up completely, just to know when and how to use it properly. Fire *within* a dragon is good, as it offers protection and is undeniably one of the core parts of being such a beast. Outward release of fire can be harmful, though, and it must be managed wisely in order to avoid serious injury or death for the other.

“Can you teach her?” asked the mystic.

“Can you teach an unwilling student, my friend?” quipped the dragon.

“Perhaps it is not time for her to learn this lesson, Meko. Bide your time and live your days as you are meant to. The time may come later that you can find your way into her heart and into her soul. For now, you have no power to alter destiny.”

“Have you no other solutions, Kathegar? Undoubtedly you know another way,” challenged Meko, knowing that the magical woman could offer additional assistance if she chose to.

“My dear friend,” warned the wise woman, “you now ARE playing with fire. Do not seek your answers through magick, for you know there are always consequences to that choice and you may not receive the outcome you desire. Some requests for intervention are best unmade.”

“But there *is* a way...? A cure? A spell?” pushed Meko after he momentarily stopped breathing, paused, and then spoke.

“Of course,” said Kathegar with the eerie absence of a smile.

“I, myself, cannot cast the spell, nor would I if I could. I will instead direct you to someone who might help you. But I urge you to reconsider. Beware of that for which you ask. No good can come of this.”

On the verge of responding to her plea, the two heard a shrieking dragon’s scream and the shouts of townspeople in the distance.

“Go. She needs you!” yelled the mystic as she saw his wings expand to twice the length of his torso.

He let out a bloodcurdling cry, accompanied by a large flame of fire from his throat and the full extension of his sharp talons. With that he was gone from the cliffside and on his way to his beloved’s side.

Rushing through the trees in low-lying flight, Meko sped across the landscape, tuning into the sound of the commotion to guide his route with increased precision. As he cleared the edge of the mountain ahead, he saw Li-Ye swooping down upon the townspeople as they swung at her with torches and set off crossbow shots and a barrage of arrows. Several knights on horseback crisscrossed along the roadway, swords in hand, looking for an opportunity to spear her underbelly, a very vulnerable location for a dragon, but no doubt they had even greater hopes of striking her tender heart.

Meko saw that Li-Ye, in a fit full of rage, flew repeatedly down upon this village, setting fire to cottages and fields until all that could be heard were the flames themselves, combined with Li-Ye’s shrieks and the verbalized terror of the villagers.

Meko quickly flew alongside her and pleaded, saying, “Enough. I will distract them while you make haste away from here. Please take leave.”

Li-Ye knew he was right, but an angry dragon is not a pleasant thing. She blew fire at him, causing him to drop his flight level to miss her deadly projectiles, as Meko continued at his attempts to de-escalate the situation. An angry woman is bad enough, but an angry dragon is downright dangerous.

He knew there was only one thing to do. Bracing himself, he stopped mid-flight and, using his wings like a bat, struck the other dragon that had now turned her uncontrollable anger towards him.

Letting out a loud cry, Li-Ye immediately fell backwards, stunned that Meko had, for the first time ever, struck her. She began falling towards the ground before she finally regained control and, wailing loudly, flew out of range of the villagers, dodging the arrows, sticks, and stones that continued to come her way until she was gone.

With her now out of immediate danger, Meko blew fire at the townspeople, simply to make them run for cover so that he too could make his escape. And it worked, as the people who so completely misunderstood his intentions ran behind buildings and carts, while children and women wept and screamed in despair.

As always, this saddened the great giant, knowing that these people did not understand that he meant them no harm. In fact, he was there to help them as much as he was there to aide Li-Ye. Still, knowing that they could not comprehend the motivations in his heart, he distracted them in any way he could until he was also away from the tragic situation. What seemed like a very long time was over almost as quickly as it came, in a split second of terror for both sides, with equal fear of each other creating havoc in what could have been an otherwise ordinary day.

He rounded the hills in search of Li-Ye, looking back periodically at the village in the distance, smoke-filled and left to rebuild, and he became angered.

*“Why did she insist on going into the villages?”* he asked himself. *“What was the point? Was it really necessary for any other reason other than a sense of power and invincibility that a dragon would do this?”*

He also recognized in that instant the other source of his anger. Each and every time that she engaged in this behavior, he risked losing her. Then again, he said to himself, it didn't really seem like there was anything to lose. He didn't really HAVE her, did he?

In the clearing by the river he saw where Li-Ye had landed, licking her wounds by the water's edge. He made way to her side, attempting to push his own anger aside in order to deal with hers. He could see amidst her beautiful coloring of purple, black, and red that arrows or what-have-you had struck her and that there was some minor bleeding.

*“Serves her right,”* he thought, yet he also felt a large degree of compassion for this young dragon that was simply trying to live in the only way she knew how.

She had so much to still learn. And, he knew, first hand, that being a dragon is not an easy life. You are relatively hated, except in some cultures where you are revered and better understood for the spectacular creature that a dragon can be.

As he landed next to her, she looked at him from the corner of her eye, offering a menacing stare and a clear look of disdain. He withdrew his wings and began walking towards her.

“What do YOU want?” she hissed, as smoke escaped her mouth.

For a female dragon that often professed her undying love for him, he admitted that he did not, at this moment, feel terribly enamored by this creature. Taking a deep breath and exhaling without dispelling fire, he slowly approached Li-Ye, a bit hesitant at first, but with the mission of determining if she was more injured than he could tell from first glance. In silence, he began exploring every inch of her, scale by scale, licking the wounds that concerned him only to find, thankfully, that there were no injuries of great consequence.

After uttering a large huffing noise that suggested exasperation, followed by a temporary and involuntary fluttering of her wings that only further emphasized her frustration, Li-Ye rolled her eyes and said, “I am fine!”

Meko retracted his head from the final inspected wound and raising his face to hers, dragon-kissed her slightly above but between her eyes, and softly said, “I know.”

“I am not a groundling, Meko!” Li-Yi shouted. “I need not yours nor another’s protection!”

“*Easy, Dragon,*” said Meko in barely a whisper, as he knew this phrase to usually disarm Li-Yi when she was in a state of anger or upset.

Meko could see from her facial expressions that she took this as a patronizing remark, though it was not intended as such. She cocked her head slightly to the right and shook it back and forth. The increased tightness around her snout indicated that she would like to say more, and the smoke seeping from the corners of her mouth showed that the thoughts were not pretty. He knew under this scenario to remain quiet and, if he spoke, to choose his words carefully.

“I need to fly,” she curtly responded, which he understood to mean two things.

It meant, for one, that she needed to be alone at that moment, and, secondly, that she needed to physically move in order to clear her head. In fact, she was known to resolve her feelings through flight on a daily basis. It was a part of her normal rituals of life. Perhaps it was simply the place where she found clarity and felt most free. Regardless, it made her feel better. And so, Meko would never think to keep her from this activity when her body cried out for this release.

“As you wish,” he said with a nod and the brief closing of his eyes.

She immediately spread her wings and began her run until she ascended high above the trees, quickly making her way out of sight.

‘Fly away, ...fly ...away. Humph!’ he quietly muttered, shaking his head in an annoyed but amused fashion, while, at the same time, enjoying the spectacle of her movements as she entered flight and disappeared from view.

She had become good at that, Meko thought to himself. He couldn’t help but notice how she recently avoided talking about what was happening between them—or NOT happening between them—and the anger she seemingly had for him and others. Yet, he respected her needs for the time being and focused his thoughts on returning to Kathegar to discuss his options to dispel the dreadful Dragon’s Curse.

<<<<<<TO BE CONTINUED>>>>>>