

## The Dragon Beside Me

Chapter: 1

The Promise

The small house in the middle of an apple orchard brightened with lights. In the backyard, a big family was enjoying the barbecue. The sounds of chattering and laughing voices could be heard clearly.

As the adults were chatting together, a group of small children was seen playing around. But no matter how far they ran around, none of them dared to run farther into the orchard where it was too dark for them to see anything.

At this time, one of the children suggested playing hide and seek. After drawing with a stick, it was decided for the young boy to be the first seeker. As the boy began to count, the other children began to scatter as they tried to find a safe place to hide.

Some of them entered the house and some of them decided to hide around the backyard.

At this time, the five years old Su Ruan stood around in panic. Her cousins had run too quickly to hide and left her alone. She tilted her head up to look at her father to ask for his help, but he was too busy discussing some business matter with her uncle.

A small frown appeared on her face as the others were not paying attention to her.

Su Ruan then spun around to look at the best place to hide before her cousin would finish his count. However, the good spots around the backyard were already taken by others. Su Ruan then turned around and decided to hide inside the house.

Her steps suddenly halted as she was about to enter through the back door. Su Ruan turned around to stare into the darkness of the orchard.

She could have sworn that she had heard something coming from the direction.

Su Ruan stood at the backdoor until she heard the voice again. The noise sounded like a whisper and Su Ruan was sure that the voice was calling out her name.

Slowly, Su Ruan took a cautious step into the dark. "Hey," she whispered back. "Who are you?"

"Hey," the voice whispered back. "Come on over. It's me."

The little girl's eyes widened and glistened with joy upon recognizing the familiar voice. She ran into the orchard with her short legs and stopped when her eyes could no longer see anything in front of her.

"Big brother!" Su Ruan whispered. "Where are you?"

"To your right," the voice whispered back. "Come on over."

The little girl hesitated. She turned her head towards her house and wonder if she should go back. But seconds later, Su Ruan decided to walk further into the dark. Clenching at the hem of her blue skirt, Su Ruan turned to her right and walked.

A gasp came out of her mouth when she felt that someone was tugging at her hand and her eyes widened in surprise. Before a scream of help escaped her mouth, Su Ruan finally see the boy she was looking for.

Instantly, her expression softened. "You scared me."

"Sorry," the boy retracted his arms.

Su Ruan studied the tall boy beside her and smiled when she saw the pitiful look on the boy's face. "It's alright. I'm fine."

Long Fei let out a sigh of relief upon hearing that the girl was not angry with him. He stared at the little girl's petite face and suddenly felt more at ease.

"What are you doing here in the dark." Su Ruan asked. Because the boy was taller than her, she had to tilt her head up to look at him. Once she met his gaze, Su Ruan found that she could not look away.

"I came here to see you," Long Fei said. "Didn't you tell me that you were going to go back to the city tomorrow?"

"You can come to the door," Su Ruan said. "Why do you have to call me out here?"

Long Fei hesitated for a moment. "My parents. They did not allow me to come out. I have to sneak out to see you. I don't want them to know that I came here to find you."

Su Ruan stood on tiptoes to pat on his thick hair, to console him when she saw the sad look on his face. But their height difference only allowed her to touch his cheek. "Don't be sad. The next time I came back here, we can always play together."

His brown eyes shone brightly. "You have to promise."

"Hmm," Su Ruan nodded. "I promise."

"Promise me that you will come back and look for me."

"I promise." The little girl stretched her hand with her little pinkie out. The two kids made their promise and smiled happily.

"What were you doing before you came here?"

"We were playing hide and seek." Su Ruan let out a gasp when she realized that she was supposed to hide from her cousin. "I was supposed to hide!"

"Stay here for a while," Long Fei spoke. His hand gripped on the little girl's as he tried to stop her from going back to the house. "Play with me."

"But the others will be looking for me."

"You are supposed to be hiding, aren't you?"

Her lips curled into a smile. "You're right. But what are we going to play?"

The boy pondered for a moment before he tugged at the girl's hand. "Come with me. I have something to show you." Long Fei started to run in a direction as he pulled at the girl's hand.

Suddenly, Long Fei felt a tug on his hand and a short cry. He stopped abruptly and saw that the girl sat down on the ground. It was at this time that he realized that he had pulled too hard and the girl had tripped as she tried to catch up with him with her short legs.

"Are you alright?"

Su Ruan brushed at her painful knees as she bit on her lips, trying to bear with the pain. "I'm alright."

Long Fei looked at the girl with worry. He finally crouched down beside her to inspect the injury on her knees. His heart was feeling uncomfortable upon seeing the red spot. Fortunately, the girl did not cry.

"What am I going to do?" Su Ruan's attention was on her bruised knees. It was not very painful but at this time she was worried about what she should tell her parents once they noticed this injury. They will definitely scold her for running around.

A thought came to his mind. Long Fei leaned forward and stuck out his tongue to lick the injury.

Just like that, the blood stopped and the bruise was healing slowly.

However, the look on Long Fei's face does not seem right.

"What's wrong with you? Big brother?" Su Ruan quickly noticed the change in him.

The boy tried to stand up straight when he heard her voice. However, when his gaze met with hers, Long Fei had to take a few steps back. He knew the look in her eyes well.

Su Ruan was afraid of him.

The girl trembled as she realized that the boy was no longer the boy she knew.

His body does not resemble a human. It seemed that he had grown taller. No. Bigger. His face... was full of scales. Then, there was a pair of something that resembled a horn that popped out from his head.

Su Ruan's scream was loud and shrill.