

## O-Gonsho

The tawny owl sat in the tree and remained motionless, as if it had turned to stone. None of the ninjas running through the forest noticed it – except one.

The Dragon Ninja had seen the tawny owl out of the corner of his eye and was calm. The little bird would play an important role in his plan. But for now, he had to mingle with the enemy – the Tiger Ninjas. To avoid being detected, he had covered the Dragon Ninjas' emblem on his black wrap jacket. In place of the red dragon's head, there were now tiger claws.

The disguised Dragon Ninja followed his enemies deep inside the Ei-Nori-Mur Mountain. There were already many Tiger Ninjas gathered there in a huge, cavernous hall, lit only by a few torches.

Suddenly, there was a wheeze, a roar, a screech. The Tiger Ninjas fell silent.

Dragging his powerful, fiery tail behind him, the striped dragon known as O-Gonsho entered the room.

All the torches and candles in the room blazed and cast their glittering light over the mighty dragon.

The Tiger Ninjas instantly knelt before O-Gonsho, bowing to show their respect for the dragon.

O-Gonsho began to glow, shrinking and eventually taking on his human form right before the eyes of his followers. His face was hidden in the shadow of a black hood.

He stepped up onto a platform and spoke to the onlookers in a deep voice: "The time has come! The time, for me to take power. With the help of the four magical ninja weapons, the Bu-shu-kai, I will force the world to submit to me. And you, my faithful servants, will be rich and powerful!"

A murmur went through the crowd. A tall man with a neck like a bull's asked, "But Sir, the Bu-shu-kai are guarded by the four mighty Guardian Dragons! Only a descendant of dragon's blood can free the magical weapons from them..."

O-Gonsho laughed, derisively. "Yes, a Dragon Blood – a human descendant of the Guardian Dragons. So it is written."

The Tiger Ninja was astonished. "But the last Dragon Blood failed thirty years ago! Since then we haven't had a single Dragon Blood in our ranks."

"Until today!" growled O-Gonsho, signalling his one-eyed servant, Morog.

Morog led a figure shrouded in a black ninja suit into the gallery. His face was masked.

O-Gonsho announced: “My spies discovered this Dragon Blood. He has decided to fight for our cause.”

When the Tiger Ninjas heard this, they cheered enthusiastically. But O-Gonsho had not finished his speech. A dark shadow passed over his face. His followers fell silent at his signal.

“It is still too early for celebrations!” O-Gonsho continued. “Because another Dragon Blood has been discovered, far away from Ei-Nori-Mur.”

The Tiger Ninjas flinched and whispered nervously.

“But...doesn’t that endanger your plan, Sir?” one cried. Others agreed with him.

“Silence!” Roared O-Gonsho. “Our problem has a simple solution – we must find this other Dragon Blood and lock him in the eternal dungeon, before those miserable Dragon Ninjas learn about this!”

The gathering of Tiger Ninjas vowed that they would do whatever it took to bring the other Dragon Blood to O-Gonsho.

The disguised Dragon Ninja had heard enough. Unnoticed, he sneaked out of the hall and ran through the winding halls of the cavern, heading for the exit. Only when he was far enough away from Ei-Nori-Mur Mountain did he stop. He took a piece of bark from a nearby tree and scratched a secret code into it with his thumb nail.

Whoever was able to decrypt the code would read: “They know! We must get to him and take him to Chipanea. Immediately! Otherwise he will be lost!”

The Dragon Ninja whistled through his teeth and, in the blink of an eye, the owl snapped out of its torpor. It swooped down towards him in a dive and grabbed the piece of bark in its talons. Then it flew back up again, disappearing silently into the darkness of the night sky.

Muffled war chants could be heard from the direction of Ei-Nori-Mur.

“Even though you know about him now, we will always be one step ahead of you,” vowed the Dragon Ninja. “You’ll never get your hands on the magical ninja weapons! You will never lure the world to its doom! Never, as long as there is a Dragon Ninja to stand in your way!”

## **Lian Flemming**

When Lian Flemming woke up on the morning of his tenth birthday, he saw a spider with seven legs. The little creature had abseiled down from the ceiling of his room and was now hanging just above his face. Lian crawled backwards out of his bed as fast as he could. But he still had the feeling that the spider was watching his every move with its eight eyes.

Quickly, he threw his bed sheet around his shoulders like a cape and put on his bike helmet. He grabbed a coat hanger and brandished it at the spider like a sword.

“Submit to me, evil ruler of the underworld!”, he commanded the spider. “You don’t know who you’re dealing with. Sword Stabber is my name and I know no mercy. I...”

Lian paused. Out of the corner of his eye, he noticed a black shadow lurking near the bed. Mister Nox! He cast a quick glance to the side – yes, it was definitely his tomcat.

The spider remained motionless on its thread. Hadn’t it noticed the black beast that was already on the bed and was getting ready to pounce?

“No, Mister Nox, don’t!” Lian shouted, diving between the cat and the spider. Mister Nox gave a little meow and tried to wriggle past Lian. “No you don’t!” Lian seized the cat, put him on the floor and turned back to the spider. “And now to you, ruler of the underworld. Sword Stabber saved your life and will now banish you from this land. It’s too dangerous for you here” Lian held his open hand underneath the spider. “May I?”

As if the spider had been waiting for this all along, she abseiled trustingly down onto Lian’s hand.

Lian examined her closely. Her skin was matte-black and a strange red pattern shimmered on her back.

Lian went to the window, opened it and carefully placed the spider on the windowsill. Nimbly, she crawled out on her seven legs.

“Go well, ruler of the underworld!” Lian called after her, theatrically. But the spider had already disappeared.

Lian looked up at the morning sky and took a deep breath in. The air smelled pleasantly fresh. He took another deep breath. Wet pebbles, damp earth, fresh grass...

Smells like rain! The thought flashed through his head. He scanned the sky for clouds. But there were none to be seen. Very strange, thought Lian. He had never noticed such a strong smell before. Why could he smell rain all of a sudden? Even though the sky was bright blue?

But before he could ponder it any longer, Lian spotted something on the horizon. What was that? An aeroplane? A huge bird? A...dragon?!

No, it couldn’t be. Lian blinked and rubbed his eyes. When he looked up at the sky again, there was nothing to be seen.

Lian shook his head. How could he have thought he’d seen a dragon? He was too old now for such fantasies.

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He rubbed the rest of the sleep from his eyes, closed the window and made his way downstairs to the kitchen. In doing so, he missed two things: one, that a black jeep with darkened windows drove along the street and parked in front of Lian's house. And two, that he really had seen a dragon and that dragon was about to land in a nearby park.