



PROFILE

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Chew Kuo Sheng is a lively and energetic boy filled to the brim with curiosity. He enjoys school, plays chess and loves reading books. He received a merit prize in the Young Author Award 2009/10 competition for his story, Dragon Emperor vs Snake Emperor.

DRAGON EMPEROR vs SNAKE EMPEROR



One

There once lived a fierce and cruel Snake Emperor who killed thousands of people for their money and land. He had tiny red beady eyes that glowed like burning embers, and a long, black forked tongue that cut through the air like a whip. With each battle he won, he became increasingly cruel, and his thirst for death and destruction grew. Soon, the territory he controlled also grew as he made his slaves build him a huge palace. He also had a big appetite and ate like a glutton. Before long, he was so large that he had rolls of fat around his long waist that rippled as he slithered about.

One day, as the Snake Emperor was basking in his palace, the palace

goose, Zeng, appeared and told him that although he had defeated legions of enemies, he was still only ranked the number two warrior in the world.

Upon hearing these words, the Snake Emperor smashed the table and roared, “Zeng! Tell me who number one is!”

Zeng was shaken by the Snake Emperor’s fury. With his legs trembling and his voice quivering, he squeaked, “It is the Dragon Emperor, sire. He is Lord of the Northern Mountains and protector of the North. His people love and worship him because he is strong and benevolent. He rules his land with love and wisdom, and his kingdom has prospered for thousands of years. His palace in the mountains is lined with

gold and jade, and his land stretches as far as the eye can see."

The Snake Emperor snorted and snarled, "Well, well, what do you know? This skinny lizard of the North is still alive after all these years. Very well, then. I shall kill this skinny lizard and string him up for all to see."

So, it appeared that his only

opponent left to defeat was the Dragon Emperor. The Snake Emperor planned all sorts of traps to trounce and torture his opponent. He imagined the Dragon Emperor falling into his numerous traps; and thought about how he was going to taunt and humiliate the lizard. The sound of his evil laughter resounded throughout the palace.

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Two

Unknown to the Snake Emperor, Dragon Emperor's faithful General Tiger, was spying on him. He had overheard every single word the Snake Emperor said. The loyal tiger quickly ran out of the palace and back to the North to alert his master.

Dragon Emperor, being the benevolent ruler, ordered his 12 generals, General Pig, General Rat, General Ox, General Tiger, General Rabbit, General Horse, General King Kong, General Monkey, General Baboon, General Tortoise, General Bird and General Fish to evacuate the valley. "You must protect the villagers from the Snake Emperor's wrath. Take them away from here and to the far mountains so they can stay in a safe place. I will stay here and hold off the Snake Emperor."

General Tiger protested, "But what about you, Master? He can kill you!"

"Nonsense! Do you think I can be defeated so easily?" glared the Dragon Emperor. "But I am very glad to have been your Master. And it is now time for you to continue your journey by yourselves."

Exchanging worried glances, the 12 generals left the palace reluctantly and gathered the villagers. They hurried them out of their homes and led them over the mountains. General Horse, General Rat and General Fish led some villagers to the West Mountains, whilst General Tiger, General Pig and

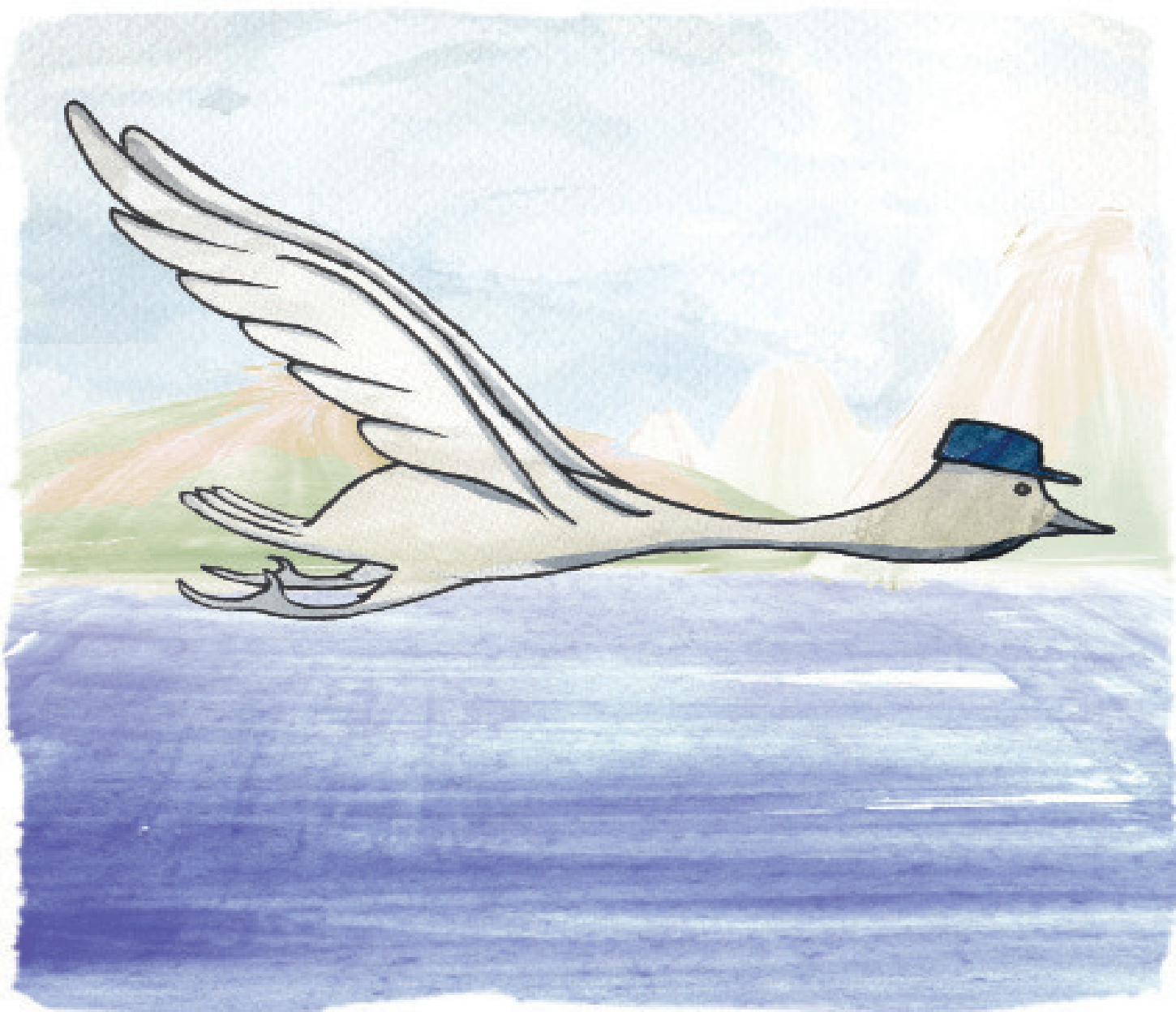
General Ox brought other villagers to the South Mountains. General Rabbit, General King Kong and General Monkey directed some villagers to the North Mountains and the rest of the generals led the remaining villagers to the East Mountains.

Three

Meanwhile, Zeng, the palace goose of Snake Emperor, set off on a scouting mission to check on the Dragon Emperor. He flew over the lands and fields, over the rolling hills and flowing rivers, and flapped his wings nonstop all the way to the Northern Mountains. As he neared the Northern Mountains, he spied the villagers moving and watched as they trundled away towards the Dragon Emperor's Northern Mountains. He circled the sky, counted the people, and noted the generals. Then he flew, huffing and puffing, back to the Snake Emperor's palace to report.

"Your Majesty!" squawked Zeng, as he landed with a thud in front of the Snake Emperor who was seated on his throne in the Celestial Hall. In between gasps, he wheezed, "The generals are bringing the villagers away. They must be aware that we are going to attack them."

"Fools! Get Botak Lizard here immediately!" snarled the Snake Emperor. The palace guards instantly sounded the gong to summon Botak Lizard, the top general of the army,



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while the Snake Emperor mulled over the news.

Botak Lizard slithered quickly from the parade square through the corridors to the Snake Emperor's Celestial Hall. "General Lizard, it appears that your security has been lax! How could the Dragon Emperor know about our plans to attack them? You ought to be torn limb from limb and turned into a pair of lizard-skin boots!" hissed the Snake Emperor. "But I will spare your miserable life if you can crush the Dragon Emperor's generals and capture their people. Go now and make sure you succeed. I will not tolerate any more mistakes. Scram!" Thus, Botak Lizard left the Celestial Hall, shivering under his leathery skin. He mustered up his hundred thousand gecko soldiers, and set off with them to the Northern Mountains.

Four

The Snake Emperor started to think that the Dragon Emperor might be tougher than all his other enemies, and that the geckos might bungle up the mission. Hence, he decided to plant a trap along the way and took along his magical flute – the Deafening and Ear-splitting Flute, which when played, will burst the eardrums of every living creature within a mile. He tucked it into the folds of his scales and set off for the Northern Mountains with Botak Lizard.

Thus, the Snake Emperor led his army to the North to crush the Dragon

Emperor. His army marched across the lands and over the rivers and up to the Northern Mountains. Within a day, they reached the Dragon Emperor's mountains. The battle was finally here. Botak Lizard, the Snake Emperor's general, led his soldiers of geckos, and surrounded the Dragon Emperor's palace. Botak Lizard was an odd sight, for while he was a ferocious warrior, he had lost most of his magnificent crest in an earlier battle. As a result, instead of looking imposing, he looked somewhat ... bald with his missing crest.

Five

Dragon Emperor stood outside his palace; he was a tall and majestic sight to behold. Surrounded by the geckos, he was outnumbered by the thousands. As the geckos slithered towards the Dragon Emperor, his 12 generals appeared from behind the mist. The faithful generals had come back to aid the Dragon Emperor. But the Dragon Emperor noticed that one was missing, "Where is General Fish?" General Tiger replied that General Fish was on vacation after defeating the Big Fat Gorilla last week. "Oh well. It looks like we will have to squash the Botak Lizard and Snake Emperor without Fish."

The two armies clashed, creating a huge din, with soldiers screaming and limbs flailing about in the dust. Swords clanged against one another, and bones crunched when hit with maces. The



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"I will have a death match with you, Fat Snake!"*

battle raged on for 70 days and it did not look as if it was going to end. But, the screams gradually became softer, and the limbs eventually stopped flailing. When the dust settled, the ground was soaked with blood from the wounded soldiers and broken tails from Botak Lizard's army of geckos. Only the generals and emperors were left standing.

General Rat stepped out in front of Snake Emperor and declared, "I will have a death match with you, fat snake!" The Snake Emperor laughed haughtily, "What are you going to do, small guy? Sit on me? Take this!" With that, he spat poison into the eyes of the small but feisty rodent, who immediately screamed in pain and jumped into the pond to wash away the toxins.

The two emperors sized each other up, their unblinking glares electrifying. If onlookers could read their minds, they would have seen a flashback to their younger days two hundred years ago. They had once been disciples under the same master when they were still princes. Snake Emperor was the strongest and fastest disciple, and he could beat all the other disciples with ease. Everyone, including Snake Emperor himself, thought he would be the best – the only – disciple worthy to take over the master's position. But alas, that was not to be. On the day of blessing, the master chose the Dragon Emperor instead to take over the helm. The Dragon Emperor at that time was somewhat clumsy and slow,

although he was well liked by everyone. Somehow, the master had recognised the goodness and steadfastness of the Dragon Emperor, and knew he would become a better leader than Snake Emperor. Nonetheless, Snake Emperor did not take the master's decision happily and he left, swearing vengeance one day.

"Looks like it's just you and me. Be prepared to become a crocodile-skin bag!" declared the Snake Emperor.

Six

The two emperors confronted each other. They glared at each other until they could not bear it any longer and leapt at each other. The Dragon Emperor blasted huge puffs of fireballs at the snake, but the snake kept evading, always leaping out of the way in the nick of time. Snake Emperor knew he could not merely keep dodging, so when the Dragon Emperor paused for breath, he belched loudly and spewed barrels of saliva from his mouth. His saliva gushed out from his throat like a never-ending jet, and the sticky, slippery mess was sprayed all over the poor Dragon Emperor and the ground.

Now, the Dragon Emperor was a fastidious creature who liked cleanliness. He would itch if he had even the tiniest amount of dirt on him. Covered head to toe in the sticky saliva, he became horridly miserable and was almost in a state of panic. With his eyes



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momentarily blinded by the saliva, the Dragon Emperor stumbled and fell as he could not steady his footing. The Snake Emperor seized his chance and pounced on him. He wrapped his huge long body around the length of the Dragon Emperor and squeezed with every bit of his strength. Writhing on the ground, the two glared at each other nose-to-nose. The Snake Emperor was certain victory was his and he gave a final squeeze to squash the last bit of air from the Dragon Emperor's lungs. Unfortunately for the Snake Emperor, this final bit of air was the formidable Dragon Emperor's breath, full of sulphur and garlic, known to fall even the strongest creatures.

The Dragon Emperor's breath hit the Snake Emperor square in his face, and he immediately gagged. With his eyes bulging from his sockets, and his face turning bright blue, he gasped desperately for air. Dragon Emperor quickly struggled out of the Snake Emperor's clasp, and summoning his last bit of energy, he hurled a burst of fire at the Snake Emperor. When the smoke cleared, he saw the Snake Emperor splayed motionless on the floor with wisps of smoke curling around his body.

Seven

Dragon Emperor was overjoyed that he had crushed his enemy and he screamed happily. General Tiger and his soldiers strapped the Snake Emperor and Botak Lizard together, and tied them to

a pillar at the bottom of the palace steps for the night.

"You look like road kill now, your Majesty. Enjoy your last night out here and reflect upon your wrong-doings, for tomorrow you will be punished for all your evil deeds. You might find yourself wishing for death since your fate might be worse than death itself!" said General Tiger as he slapped the Snake Emperor across the snout and left.

Snake Emperor pondered over his possible fate. Will the Dragon Emperor skin him and turn him into a leather coat? Would he be made to labour for eternity? Would he be confined to the depths of the smouldering mountains, condemned to squirm in the burning lava for thousands of years? Or worse still, would he be deprived of food until he shrivelled to nothingness? That was truly a fate worse than death! But the cunning Snake Emperor was not one to give up so easily. Racking his reptilian brain, the Snake Emperor thought of a way out. Recalling that the Dragon Emperor was a merciful creature, he hatched an idea to feign remorse and beg for forgiveness.

Eight

When the sun rose at dawn the next day, the prisoner awaited his fate at the hands of the Dragon Emperor. The Snake Emperor, once an awesome sight, was now bedraggled and limp. With a gust of wind, the Dragon Emperor appeared

in front of the Snake Emperor, tall and majestic. "Well, any last words before I punish you for your heinous crimes?" asked the Dragon Emperor.

"Please, your most benevolent Lord of the North, I beg your forgiveness. It was wrong of me to take so many lives. That's because I never had parents to guide me – I lost both of them to hunters even before I hatched from my egg. And my brothers tried to eat me the moment I hatched. I have never known any love or warmth," sobbed the Snake Emperor. "I promise to turn over a new leaf, return the riches back to the people, and not harass anyone. And, sire, if you could find the kindness within you, I beseech you to guide me in the path of goodness. Teach me to be a good ruler to my people, so that I can take care of them and give them the love that I have never known in all my miserable life. Please come to my land and teach me, and let me show you how I can repent. Let us make peace. Come to my palace and I will prepare a feast to honour you," said the Snake Emperor in his most convincing voice with tears streaming from his beady eyes.

The Dragon Emperor, being the compassionate creature he was, was moved by the Snake Emperor's plea. He remembered as clear as yesterday his master's last words to him: "When someone has done a bad deed or committed a crime, you should not punish or torture him as it would only fill your own heart with hatred. The right

thing to do is to forgive and forget. Only then can you find your connection with that person again."

Dragon Emperor looked at the Snake Emperor. Keeping his master's lesson in mind, he decided to fulfill the snake's last wish to become gentle, helpful and kind. He decided to release the Snake Emperor, not knowing that it was just a part of his devious trick.

Unknown to the Dragon Emperor, the Snake Emperor intended to give him a poisonous wine. This wine was specially concocted by the Snake Emperor, and was laced with venom so strong that no one could possibly survive after taking even the smallest sip. The wine was a beautiful scarlet colour and had the most enticing aroma. All it required was a single sip and the poison would spread throughout the victim, burning his muscles, and creating the most terrible and unbearable itch all over. The itch was so powerful that the victim would scratch himself until he peeled. The Snake Emperor will then wait for him to hit the depths of his pain before cutting off his head and killing him.

The Snake Emperor smiled to himself at the thought of having the Dragon Emperor's head. "His head would be a nice trophy. I can have my cake and eat it for once, since I have now defeated the almighty Dragon Emperor and have become the number one emperor in the world."

Nine

Hence, the two emperors set off for the palace. They went down the mountains and through the forests. As they walked among the tall trees, the Snake Emperor said, "Let me play you a delightful tune with my flute." He took out his magical flute and played an enchanting tune. Suddenly, the trees started to sway and topple towards the Dragon Emperor. But the Dragon Emperor was quick, and he hurled a huge blast of fire at the trees and burned them into cinders in the blink of an eye. The Snake Emperor was furious that his trap failed. He wanted to beat his chest and gnash his fangs in anger, but had to put on an innocent look so as not to give himself away to the Dragon Emperor.

But the Dragon Emperor had already wised up and had begun to suspect the intentions of his arch-enemy. "Maybe the Snake Emperor is trying to trick me with his poison wine. He has killed lots of people after all. He could not possibly be so kind or good – he must be up to more mischief!" He hollered angrily at the Snake Emperor, "You must be up to no good, you cold-blooded reptile!"

The Snake Emperor lunged at the Dragon Emperor and the two of them wrestled with each other. The Snake Emperor blew strong winds that shook the earth and screamed so loudly that it could be heard at the ends of the world. Alas, the Dragon Emperor was doomed as he was the weaker of the two.

The Snake Emperor held the Dragon Emperor in a death grip and was about to pierce the magical flute into his heart to kill him. The Dragon Emperor summoned all his energy, broke free from the Snake Emperor and shot into the sky. He dived down onto the Snake Emperor's head like a missile – *Crunch! Crack! Psst!* When the dust settled and the shock waves ceased, there lay the Snake Emperor, scruffy and all messed up. His eyes were crossed and his tongue hung out at the corner of his mouth. The Dragon Emperor was also in a bad state – he had blood in his mouth and his eyes bulged from his sockets. But the Dragon Emperor had finally defeated the wicked Snake Emperor.

The Dragon Emperor brought the Snake Emperor to a secluded monastery in the Northern Mountains. Every day for the rest of his life, the priests read sermons to the Snake Emperor, and helped him to learn how to live peacefully and calmly. As for the people, they rejoiced when they realised that the Snake Emperor was no longer around to terrorise them. They lived in peace and prosperity for a long time.