

Dragon

After my chores are done I eat the rice balls mother left, then run to where my box is hidden. I take it to the empty pond, place it at the bottom and draw back the lid. ChiChi, the cricket I captured three days ago, scrambles into the shadows. I wait for her to sing.

But there's not a chirp. Without her note to cut the air everything is quiet. The birds have stopped. No breeze stirs the leaves. Then I hear what ChiChi and the birds have heard, an approaching murmur above the clouds. I imagine what kind of monster it must be, its sound so low and menacing that the other creatures honour it with their silence and the world is still for it. I picture what I cannot see as the rumble grows. The beast glides overhead, its outstretched golden wings and flowing beard, its razor talons and smoking nostrils hidden only by the clouds that came over during the morning. And then, as quickly as it has come, the dragon passes, heading in the direction of Nagasaki, where grandmother lives, then on to its far-off lair.