

Asia Folktales Story of The Great Bell From Peking

Xenoyuna Sakura



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The mighty Yung-lo sat on the great throne surrounded by a hundred attendants. He was sad, for he could think of no wonderful thing to do for his country. He flirted his silken fan nervously and snapped his long finger-nails in the impatience of despair.

"Woe is me!" he cried at last, his sorrow getting the better of his usual calmness. "I have picked up the great capital and moved it from the South to Peking and have built here a mighty city. I have surrounded my city with a wall, even thicker and greater than the famous wall of China. I have constructed in this city scores of temples and palaces.

I have had the wise men and scholars compile a great book of wisdom, made up of 23,000 volumes, the largest and most wonderful collection of learning ever gathered together by the hands of men. I have built watch-towers, bridges, and giant monuments, and now, alas! as I approach the end of my days as ruler of the Middle Kingdom there is nothing more to be done for my people.

Better far that I should even now close my tired eyes for ever and mount up on high to be the guest of the dragon, than live on in idleness, giving to my children an example of uselessness and sloth."

"But, your Majesty," began one of Yung-lo's most faithful courtiers, named Ming-lin, falling upon his knees and knocking his head three times on the ground, "if you would only deign to listen to your humble slave, I would dare to suggest a great gift for which the many people of Peking, your children, would rise up and bless you both now and in future generations." "Only tell me of such a gift and I will not only grant it to the imperial city, but as a sign of thanksgiving to you for your sage counsel I will bestow upon you the royal peacock feather."

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