

The Journey

Big Panda and Tiny Dragon



James Norbury



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MANDALA

SAN RAFAEL LOS ANGELES LONDON

For those on their own journey.



There was a temple high in the mountains.





Surrounded by a vast forest.



And a deep, still lake.



The temple had seen better days.

But that didn't matter
to the two friends
who made that ancient
place their home.



Big Panda and Tiny Dragon.



During the day they would travel high into the mountain peaks.

And explore the thick, tangled forests hoping to catch a glimpse of the creatures that lived there.



At night they would watch the stars and drink the hot tea that Tiny Dragon so carefully prepared.

One winter evening, under a full moon,
Tiny Dragon turned to his friend and said,

“This place is incredible, Big Panda.
The trees, the mountains, the birds and the animals,
they are all so magical; we are so lucky –
so why do I feel like something is missing?”

Why do I feel incomplete?”



Big Panda nodded
and took a sip of tea.

"That is a good question, little one,
and the answer is simple yet difficult.

Sleep now.

Tomorrow is a new day,
and we'll see what we can do."



Big Panda awoke early, but his friend
was already up watching the sun
rise over the mountains.

He seated himself on the rock
next to Tiny Dragon.

"You are unhappy, my little friend," said Big Panda.
"That's OK. It happens to us all.

The important thing is that you have
noticed something is wrong."





“Problems should not stop us,” said Big Panda.

“They are simply nature’s way of letting us know we need to explore a different path.”



“You have shared how you feel,” said Big Panda.

“Sharing our lives, both the good and the bad, is what makes us closer and lets us help each other.”



“I’d help you,” said Tiny Dragon,
“if you ever needed it.”
“You help me every day,” replied Big Panda,
“just by being yourself.”

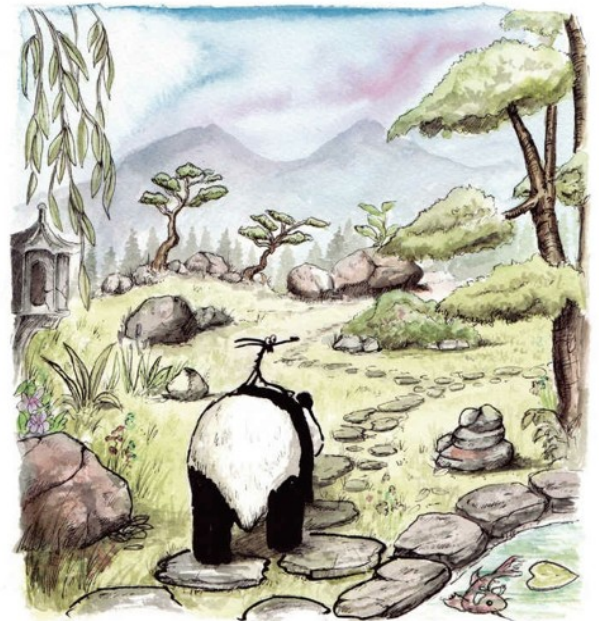




They crossed the old bridge that led to the temple's garden.
"Change," said Big Panda, "even if you don't know where it will lead,
is better than stagnation."

"In some ways, the mind is much like a garden.
It needs your care, attention and effort.

Left to its own devices it will soon become overrun with weeds.
And where there are too many weeds, flowers cannot grow."





Tiny Dragon nodded.
"But how do I pull up the weeds?"



"I will help you," said Big Panda.
"Remember, little one –
together we can do anything."



They left the garden and walked to the cliff
that overlooked the Great River.

After settling himself on the rock,
Big Panda turned to Tiny Dragon.

“We cannot just sit here and hope the
weeds will go away on their own.

We must take action.

Sometimes something needs to change,
and that requires effort.

We shall go on a journey, across the river.”



They returned to the temple to close the wooden shutters and block up the broken doorway, for it rained a lot in the mountains and Tiny Dragon did not want his things to get wet while they were away.



When he was finished, he placed a few of his most-prized possessions into his little cart and went outside to meet Big Panda.



When Big Panda saw the overstuffed cart, he slowly shook his head.

"We cannot take all of this over the river."

"But I need these things," said Tiny Dragon, stroking his picture of Grandpa Dragon.



"Everything you need," said Big Panda, "is already inside you."



Tiny Dragon paused – deep down
he knew Big Panda was right,
but he had one small question.

“Can I take my tea set?”

“Of course,” said Big Panda.

“There is nothing wrong with enjoying the
fruits of the world, we just need to make sure
we do not lose ourselves in them.”



And so Tiny Dragon clambered up onto Big Panda's back and they followed the rocky trail that led out of the mountains and down to the river, leaving the old temple far behind them.

