

Sound of the Winds

**Fan Fiction
based on 'KungFu: The Legend Continues'***

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"Tiān!", Ti yelled for the umpteenth time. Once again, she wondered how she had managed to call her daughter 'Heaven' when at present she was just about as angry as she could be. Maybe this was the closest to the Divine mysteries she would get.

The healer sighed, and a tiny smile crept over her face. The door that led to the balcony in Caine's loft remained open while she watched large grey clouds approaching. Hadn't she told Kermit and T.J. that bad weather was on the way? They were all set to enjoy a rainy day full of cold bathing suits, easterly winds and crying kids.

Well, basically *one* kid. The one that just now wasn't willing to come in.

Alright, she probably had to make allowances. The Dragon Child just didn't act like normal children did, but still, she was her mother...

"Kermit", Peter's girlfriend said to Detective Griffin, who was standing just behind her to hide the fact that he was smirking, "I don't think it would be a good idea to head for the lake today. Seems likely that there'll be thunderstorms."

"Nah", he disagreed, "I know you haven't made plans for the rest of your vacation yet, and I'm not going to interfere with non-existent ideas, but today is my first day off in months, and I promised my goddaughter I'd teach her how to swim."

"Kermit, she is not *your* goddaughter. She's F.A. and T.J.'s..." She fell silent. He knew, and she knew that he knew. Nothing new there.

Under this sun, anyway.

Now it was her turn to smirk.

At precisely that moment Peter appeared in the corridor, panting heavily, "Okay then, let's go - wow, the humidity outside is beyond any sensible scientific measurement."

"Axiomatically true", Kermit agreed, "scientific measurement is never sensible. It isn't supplied with anything that makes it intelligent. Only using it with a certain amount of thought and common sense can lend some sense to it, which, however, wouldn't make sense *today*, since we already know that instead of going outside, you might as well put your head into a washing machine. - So drag your daughter in from humidity in the air and let's get her into humidity of the lake water so I can teach her to swim."

Peter looked at him as if his friend had offered to hit him in the face. "No way", he began.

Ti interfered just in time. Peter's face was already reddening. She recognized the slightly panicky look in his eyes, correctly interpreted it as his wish to teach his daughter himself and threw in, "Oh no, you guys. Tiān is not going to be in any kind of water during a thunderstorm. Neither are you two, for that matter!"

She put her hands on her hips and made it absolutely clear that it was time to leave. But only in a Faraday cage, if at all.

The cops obeyed her orders immediately, and Kermit went outside to fetch his little friend.

"Six years old and still rebellious", Caine's son muttered, though with an unmistakably loving

undertone.

"She's not six, Pete, and you know it - she's twelve and a half months old."

True, though altogether unbelievable. If one shared a generally accepted understanding of time, of course. And didn't believe in the legend of the Dragon Child.

The Dragon Child was said to have special skills of reconciliation. She was supposed to be an otherwise normal child who needed much less time to mature and then, at the height of her strength, would slow down this excessive speed of development to normal. At least that was what Caine had told his assistant, and that was what she kept hoping for.

Ti shrugged; she had long ago resolved that in a universe ruled by the laws of both quantum physics and relativity, anything was possible. She didn't care as long as the chaos in the wake of recent events still held the promise of one day being healed by... *The Heavens*. A thought that brought her mind back to Tiān.

"Grasshopper junior the fourth, if you don't stop shouting at Uncle Kermit, you'll have to stay here today!"

This worked. Five minutes later they were all sitting in T.J.'s giant limo, boisterously driving along at two mph above the speed limit. Ti was content with the situation, but in the back seat, her daughter had a sullen look on her face.

The group of friends reached the lake just after the giant grey clouds that had been visible from the loft, only now those had turned to different shades of darker grey and lilac. At their edges there were also some glowing red specks of light. As T.J. got out to open the door for the others, a distant rumbling made him hesitate.

Ti didn't get out of the car immediately, either. She was wondering why she had not seen Caine all day. Usually, the two of them had a briefing of one sort or another at least once every morning, which meant that somehow this wasn't a normal morning - a fact that disturbed her considerably.

Of course, she kept trying to tell herself there was absolutely nothing to worry about, for after all, Caine was an enigmatic man. But somehow it just didn't work. This feeling of both uncertainty and insecurity increased when she realized what her notion was based upon.

Caine had been telling her for weeks that 'the' day was about to take place.

The day when her daughter was to be initiated.

He had, however, failed to reveal to her whether or not there was going to be a dangerous ceremony, nor had he disclosed the secret who was going to be involved or what his granddaughter was about to enter into. Ti felt responsible as a mother, frightened as a woman and - she smiled weakly - a bit upset as a future daughter-in-law. How on earth could he do this to her?

T.J. looked at Caine's assistant as if wondering what the inscrutable look on her face was supposed to tell him, and her smile widened.

"Well, anyway", she remarked. "What are we going to do right now?"

"Get out of this cage, what else?!" Peter was losing his temper once again. The Shaolin cop jumped

out of the car, threw an angry look at the clouds as if threatening them to vanish, and helped his family and friends out of the car.

Brisk winds buffeted them all the way as they approached the lake, the heat becoming increasingly more oppressive.

However, since the sound of distant thunder was gradually fading away, no one wanted to be the first to give up and turn back.

Tiān jumped happily up and down, covering long stretches of the way running and throwing lumps of wet sand at Kermit, who seemed to be torn between being a steadfast ex-mercenary cop and the perfect uncle. Or someone who was at least called 'uncle'. By his two real nephews, his one real niece and by the daughter of his best friend, who constantly played tricks on him and just wouldn't stop.

Ti wanted to smile when she noticed this, but something else struck her. The closer they came to the lake, the thinner the clouds were becoming. She could hear the cries of seagulls and the sounds of the waves breaking on the shallow shore, and warm rays of sunshine lightened her mood.

But there was something else. Something strange. Wonderful, but strange, nevertheless.

She heard the wind singing. No words, but a melody - and one which she had known for ages.

Hastily, she checked her state of her consciousness: She was breathing heavily, but the incoming oxygen was helping her stay upright. 'No more visions..., please', she heard her own voice in her head like a prayer, 'I'm through with mysticism that goes beyond a healthy level of serenity and probably also the truth. I just want to float with the *...'*

But the wind did not stop singing the familiar tune: the song of the Baiji dolphin.

There had been no clouds in the form of a water mammal this time, she was sure of that.

The young physician quickly checked if everything else was in order: Kermit was running past Tiān, playing tag, and Peter was teasing T.J. about something which, as usual, was totally beyond Ti.

Then there was an almost indiscernible change of atmosphere. Something, out of the blue, started emanating smoke from somewhere ... Ti traced the seemingly unnatural clouds back to their origin, but all she could detect was a solid rock formation on the far bank of the lake. Cracks and crevices cut into the stone blurred her vision, and she would have turned away if Tiān's small outline hadn't been visible in front of the cliffs in the distance. "Stay away from there!", she screamed, but T.J.'s shouts drowned out her voice.

"Pete! Come over here, there's something I need to show you!", Kincaid yelled.

Trying to suppress a rising level of panic, Ti jumped and ran over to the red-haired cop.

"Isn't this...?", T.J. asked.

"Yeah, it's Caine's hat." Ti was having trouble breathing now.

Peter jerked and nodded, "Must be."

Griffin was standing halfway between his friends and the rocks now, and from his position, he could easily discern the object the others were examining. At least that was what Ti was hoping for. She threw another glance at her daughter, noticed that the ex-mercenary was still within calling distance and yelled, "Kermit, tell Tiān to keep off the bank! Now!"

Surprisingly, Griffin did exactly what he was told to do, but without any visible success. He did not need, however, to admit this; Peter's latest discovery discharged him of this duty. Something else had been lying waiting to be found along the way.

It was Caine's ring. The one he had once given to Peter before he went on his spiritual journey to search for his wife, and also the one he had given to Ti when Tiān was born.

It exuded a soothing sense of calm that drew the healer's attention away from the child climbing the rocks.

Its glossy surface dazzled her eyes, shimmering with every colour of the rainbow - something it usually didn't do.

It also emitted a melody, equally unusual, and one which made Ti resolve that she must finally have gone nuts. It was the Baiji tune she had known for so long. She shook her head violently to clear her mind and came to realize just in time what her daughter was doing.

She was climbing the raw stone wall and had almost reached the entrance to a cave. There was still smoke around it, a combination of steam and dust-filled cloud.

And then the little girl entered the cave as if she had fallen into a trance, her hands stretched out in front of her.

Kermit had obviously realized this, too, and was already dashing after her. Peter, on the other hand, was calling his girlfriend to assist him and T.J. in looking for his father. That, at least, was what Ti interpreted from his wild gestures and the word fragments she could hear through the Baiji melody.

"Pete, Tiān's younger than she looks, and you know it. She's not yet familiar with the way things work in this world. Now move it, let's help Kermit over there!" She threw anxious glances towards the mouth of the cave into which her daughter had disappeared. Smoke still issued from it with strange regularity.

The melody, however, had ceased.

Fear rose in Ti and threatened to paralyze her, but she somehow managed to move forward and approach Kermit.

"The music's stopped", she whispered.

To her surprise, Griffin shook his head. "I can still hear it", he claimed. "I'm going in."

"No! - Kermit, you don't even have a torch, how are you going to..."

"You know, there are some things you can learn from guys like Paddy MacDermot or MacGyver. And one of those things is, always carry a pocket size torch with you."

He smirked and produced the said object from his waistcoat pocket. "See ya."

"Wait a minute, Kermit - don't you think it's somewhat strange to hear music coming out of a cave like that?" Ti wouldn't have been able to tell at that precise moment whether it was more important to keep Griffin from risking his life or to save her daughter from whatever might be in there. At the same time, however, she already knew that in a few seconds, she would be offering to accompany him.

"It's probably just some kind of stalactite or stalagmite formation functioning like an aeolian harp", the ex-mercenary uttered in a matter-of-fact tone. "Tiān, are you okay in there?"

An aeolian harp, sure. A term derived from the Greek Pantheon. Yet another element from a legendary world. Another symbol to confuse her. This was precisely what Ti was afraid of: her daughter finally fulfilling her destiny as a mystical creature, or even a mythical one. She was afraid of not being able to follow her then.

"Ouch! - Kermit, take it easy!" The ex-mercenary had picked up yet another Caine-related object from the ground and decided to hand it over to Ti. On hearing something from inside the cave, however, he had turned his face towards the entrance, while at the same time pushing his arm backwards to put the item into her hands – a movement that had almost provoked an instinctive reaction of defense, but the KungFu master in her had made her stop in time.

This was a friend *handing* something to her, not *attacking* her. One of the most important skills of a fighter was the ability to be ready at any time and to trust no one, not even someone like Kermit - but also the ability to tell when a movement in the air meant attack and when it didn't.

However, being afraid had dulled Ti's reactions, and she saw the approaching elbow a fraction of a second too late. When Peter and T.J. arrived, she was standing defiantly on the twenty-five square meter platform in front of the cave, rubbing her ribs.

Then Peter identified the object Kermit had found. "That's my father's stone necklace! Ti, what's going on here?"

"How am I supposed to know? Let's go in!" This, definitely, was not her idea of a pleasant summer afternoon, especially not one during Peter's vacation.

The melody became audible again, and they entered the cave.

"Why would my father leave all these things behind? He must have been kidnapped!", Peter muttered.

A chilly breeze swept through the narrow tunnel they were walking down. Then the wind stopped, only to appear again. Neither Kermit nor Tiān were to be seen anywhere. The three friends shivered with cold and continued on around another bend in the tunnel.

T.J., at the front, suddenly stopped and held his breath. His friends piled up behind him and peered over his shoulder into the darkness that prevailed in spite of the light from Kincaid's torch. A shimmering brightness appeared in the direction they were looking.

"Wow - oh, wow!", the son of the police commissioner said when he had finally found his voice again. Ti nodded. What they saw was like a giant jigsaw puzzle the pieces of which were already in the right places but still took them some time to realize what it was they were looking at. Kincaid

muttered, "Is that a ... dragon?"

"Stop talking like Hermione Granger, Teej", Ti demanded, relieved when her sense of humour broke through the oppressive sense of mysticism that filled the cave. She had dreaded this moment from the minute her daughter had been born, and she wasn't yet ready to acknowledge that whatever was happening here was right. She had come a long way: once a serene artist in meditation, yet now a completely confused mother. She felt paralyzed. Frozen.

T.J. repeated in astonishment, "Is that... really... a dragon?"

Yep, Ti thought, it probably is. After all, my daughter is supposed to be the Dragon Child, so what are we arguing about? She felt tired, and her knees were on the verge of giving way.

"Is it?", T.J. inquired once again, and Peter said with awe, "I guess it is."

Ti sank to the ground and would have fallen if T.J. had not caught hold of her just in time.

"Thanks, Teej", she said silently.

Obviously loud enough, though, for the dragon to hear. The light emanating from it intensified.

Shining with what might be sweat or condensed water from the cool walls of the cave, the giant creature lay curled up at the far end of what seemed to be a huge nest made of clay.

"By the way, Teej, it's not an 'it' - it's a 'she' ", Ti squeaked. Was there anything left she actually had control over? Not her voice, that was clear, and not her daughter, either... but at least her legs were responding again. Good.

The female dragon had furnished her nest with feathers and herbs to keep her young warm and healthy, and Ti suddenly felt a rush of compassion with the mythical animal, who appeared to have used her claws to form protective walls, by the look of the furrowed surface. Suddenly she realized what the smoke in front of the cave had really been: It was the breath of the dragon. Invisible from a distance when the thunderstorm had been raging, visible only for those within the eye of the storm, for those destined to be here. Suddenly, the whole thing looked a lot more pleasant.

However, the dragon was not only watching them. She curled her tail around Tiān and started to open her mouth.

"No!", Ti screamed, fighting off Peter and T.J. who were trying to hold her back. She was not going to let the dragon swallow her daughter, destiny or not, not even a heavenly dragon, not even a *Lóng*. She mustered her courage again and stepped forward.

Ten foot nearer the nesting area, and then out of the dark four arms grabbed her.

Afterward she wasn't sure if she had screamed at the top of her lungs or just given in silently. But it didn't matter.

Caine was there.

And Kermit, who was standing behind the Shaolin priest, was there as well.

The dragon opened her mouth a little more, and Kermit yelled, "Surprise! - Hey, sweetie, it's us, and

we'd sure appreciate it a great deal if you could just do whatever it is you're doing and then – perhaps I should have started with this - give us back our little girl safe and sound!"

Ti had always known there was no way of stopping an ex-mercenary when he had something on his mind, but this time it was dangerous. Not only for him, but for all of them.

Caine, however, remained calm.

"Do something", Ti pleaded.

"I will not", he said. "Watch."

The five of them were now more or less huddled together, and Ti could feel the warmth of her friends and the energy that was slowly reemerging from wherever it had remained hidden.

The dragon put her teeth around the tiny girl, and Ti fainted.

As she gained consciousness again, her eyes flew to the nest of the beast.

But this was no beast. Not in the sense of a brutal non-human creature, anyway. The dragon's teeth touched Tiān's skin with utmost care and gentleness, and the moment they did so, the animal's tail protecting most of the wonders from the observers, something happened.

Actually, lots of things happened.

In the first place, Ti realized she was never again going to call her daughter immature. She immediately knew, before her eyes could actually see what was going on, that the seemingly endless months of hiding a child from curious glances, the months of growth spurts that could not be ascribed to any kind of hormone known to man, had finally ended. This was what her pregnancy and Tiān's childhood days had been leading to.

Secondly, the light of the dragon started to shimmer in every colour Ti could imagine, and she realized that this oscillation of indescribable hues resembled the effect she had observed when they had found Caine's ring. And she began to suspect that the Shaolin priest had known this all along, and as usual had not let on to anyone. Anger boiled in her stomach and could only be suppressed with immense concentration.

"Pop, are you okay?", Peter finally asked, when he realized that there was no imminent danger to his daughter.

Caine nodded and smiled. Ti looked at him, then at his son, and slapped her boyfriend in the face, just like her father-in-law to be usually did.

Peter grabbed her hand and held it, and then for the first time in a week or so he hugged her. After all, vacations were good for couples, Ti had forgotten about that. She knew he had no idea what was going to happen, either, but as most of their friends were with them, and their daughter was alive – the rest was up to the *. Or rather, Ti thought, to put it more personally, the Heavens. If the universe could produce unexpected wonders like this, there was definitely the need for someone to put this chaos into order, and Ti felt glad to be among those who had the chance to know that someone.*

Detective Griffin and the Shaolin priest looked at each other with respect, as usual. Then Kermit

asked, "You didn't talk to Ti this morning, Caine. That was done, or rather *not* done, for a certain purpose, wasn't it? And the hat, the ring, the necklace - those were traces, right? Hints to lure us to... this, I suppose."

The IT cop waved his arms around the cave, which was still filled with intense humidity. He started wondering why breathing was so easy in here, where there was supposedly no sufficient supply of oxygen, and he nervously rearranged the position of his sunglasses on his nose.

Then he seemed to realize that wearing sunglasses in caves was not exactly a sensible thing to do, because he fumbled around with them for a couple of seconds. Ti smiled.

She could easily imagine what he felt like: Kermit had found himself in a position that he had to think about - he wasn't the kind of person to throw his convictions overboard just because not wearing sunglasses was, for the moment, the appropriate thing to do and would also make seeing things a whole lot easier.

Finally, Griffin seemed to decide that this was that special kind of moment when unique situations required unique actions, and he put his glasses into his waistcoat-pocket.

Kincaid stared at him in surprise, to Kermit's obvious amusement. Ti nudged Griffin in the ribs.

Then she remembered what the IT cop had been up to in the first place, and she repeated, "Caine, I'd be interested in this as well. You knew this was going to happen, didn't you?"

Caine nodded and smiled, but this time no one was slapped. The group fell silent. Tiān emerged from the middle of the dragon's lair and approached them.

The little girl was beaming with a serene kind of joy that seemed to be way above her age. She approached the group of adults and took her godfather's hand.

"Look at her", Tiān demanded, pointing at the dragon. "She says you need it."

Reluctantly, Kincaid threw a glance at the giant creature which, in the policeman's mind, evoked the picture of a T-Rex with an unusually slender head rather than that of a friendly protector. Her power seemed to be ambivalent like that of the rain outside or the water dripping down the walls of the cave here and there: capable of both destroying and promoting life. Once T.J.'s eyes touched her scaly existence, however, it was as if a part of his soul that had been caged long ago was suddenly freed. He was finally able to breathe and be himself again.

Before he could give thanks to either the dragon or the child, however, Tiān let go of his hand and went over to Kermit instead. The IT cop didn't get the slightest chance to protest; his best friend's daughter dragged him towards the *Lóng*, all the time encouraging him to touch the scaly skin. He kept wondering who was teaching whom how to swim now...

Then he, very slowly, reached out for what his intellect still considered a mind-boggling impossibility. He caught himself wondering whether the skin of the animal might feel wet, slimy or dry. And finally, the down-to-earth ex-mercenary crossed the line and managed to accept the inexplicable in his life. The glow of the dragon presented him with a warming reflection on his face and reconciled him with the strangeness of the situation when he turned around and joined the group of lookers-on.

Tiān stayed near her mythical friend for another couple of seconds to hug her once again, and

everyone in the cave felt a strong sense of reconciliation and peace. When the little girl had caressed the dragon for the last time, they headed back to the banks of the lake.

On the platform right behind the entrance to the cave, Kermit uttered in a casual tone, "Oh, by the way, whatever you do - don't tell anyone about this, especially not Captain Simms. Otherwise, Pete, T.J. - I know, *don't call me T.J.* -, otherwise your vacation plans will end in a padded cell at the precinct."

"Understood, *Daddy*", T.J. was in a joking mood, "but don't you think a dragon of that size and colour - or should I say 'colours' -, don't you think that it'll attract peoples' attention?"

Caine's intervening hand made him stop.

"I do not believe it will attract attention", the Shaolin priest said calmly. And then, as if nothing had happened, he led his family and friends back to their car, along the banks of the lake, through the different weather zones they had already come through that day, only in reverse order: from dragon-breath-stained sunshine to light winds, and finally to the darkness of a thunderstorm.

When they got into the limo, everyone was soaking wet.

"No problem", T.J. said, "this car's got an air-conditioning system worth ten campfires. We'll be dry again in no time."

With this comment, he turned the ignition key, and the heating facility started its work. Ironically, the trademark reminded the friends of what they had been through that day. However, no one was in the mood to realize this.

Only Tiān seemed to be up for the unusual again, and although nobody had ever taught her to read - she was, after all, really only a couple of months old and had had to learn such an incredible amount of other things up to now -, she deciphered the words, " 'Dragon Power'. Wow! Let's go for a ride through the air with this car, then!"

And before T.J. could try to fulfill his goddaughter's wish or Tiān could call on the dragon to help them, Ti ventured into another lesson about the way one might introduce a one-year-old baby who could already talk and read to the wonders of the world, of which she herself was one.

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