

Water Tales from Asia
retold by members of

FEAST

FEDERATION OF ASIAN STORYTELLERS

Splish!
Splash!
Spløsh!





Wild Goose Lake

*A folktale from China,
retold by Alice Bianchi-Clark
illustrated by Aaron Randy*



A long, long time ago in China, there was a young girl. Her name was Water-Lily. She lived in a small village at the foot of Horse Ear Mountain and was the daughter of a hardworking farmer. She loved to sing the songs of the mountain folk, as she helped him daily in the fields.

For months, no rain had fallen: the earth was parched, the crops hung limp and would soon fail for want of water. There was hardly any food left to eat. The farmers had stopped working in the fields. Even Water-Lily had stopped singing.

Yet Water-Lily could not sit around, watching her people go hungry. One day, she announced to her father that she would climb up Horse Ear Mountain.

“Why?” said he, for he did not want her to undertake such an arduous journey on her own.

“I will be careful. I’ll bring back some bamboo so that we can make brooms together to sell.”

She walked farther than she had ever walked and climbed higher than she had ever climbed until, at the top of the mountain, she found strong, sturdy bamboo. She cut the bamboo and tied the stems into a neat bundle which she strapped onto her back.

Her search for bamboo also led her to make a surprising discovery: a lake, a magnificent lake! Surrounding the lake,

was a thick forest. Not even a leaf spoiled the lake's shimmering surface, for whenever a leaf fell, a wild goose would swoop down from above and take it away.

Water-Lily gasped. "Of course, Wild Goose Lake!" she exclaimed, for she had heard of this lake in her father's bedtime stories. High up in the mountain, there is plenty of water, she thought, but down in the village, there is none. If only I could find an outlet for this water, so that some might trickle down to my village and help irrigate the thirsty crops.

She walked along the lake's perimeter in search of an outlet. Steep cliffs, large rocks and a thick canopy of trees surrounded the lake, but Water-Lily could find no outlet.

Suddenly, she noticed a gate, a stone gate, a water sluice with a keyhole. She tried to force it open. She pushed harder than she had ever pushed but to no avail. The gate was locked.

As she was wondering what to do next, a wild goose swooped down and waddled by her feet. "Water-Lily," it said to her surprise, "only the golden key will open the sluice."

Before she could ask the goose where to find such a thing, the goose had flown away. Water-Lily searched and searched for the key along the shoreline.

When she walked past a parrot with brilliant feathers, it said, "Water-Lily, only the Third Daughter of the Dragon King can help you find the key."

Unhelpfully, he too flew off before explaining where such a person could be found. Water-Lily shook her head, but ventured on, determined.

A peacock strutted by. "Water-Lily," it said, "the Third Daughter too loves to sing, and if you sing to her, she will appear," it said.

Water-Lily lost no time. She sang. The more she sang, the lighter her heart felt. At last, the Third Daughter appeared from the waters of the lake.

"Your singing moved me," said the Third Daughter. "You have a big heart. Sadly, my father does not trust humans, so I come to you in secret. Why are you here?"

Water-Lily explained why she had come. "If I could help my family, I would too, so I shall help you. Only the golden key will open the sluice. The key is hidden in a cave, where my father stores his treasure. A formidable eagle guards its mouth. For water is a gift, and all gifts should be guarded from those who cannot appreciate gifts for what they are. However, you do not wish to drain my father's lake, and you appreciate what a gift water is. There is plenty of water here to share. Let us wait for my father to leave his palace.



ABOUT



Teller Bio

Alice is a multilingual storyteller. Her style involves elements of music, dance, art and craft. In Singapore, where she is currently based, she has worked with special needs children, preschoolers and junior school children. Her international experience includes festival work and workshops in Malaysia and India (Sibu 2020; Miri 2020; Sarawak 2019; Chennai 2019; Bangalore 2017; Penang 2017).



Illustrator Bio

Aaron has loved drawing since he was a kid. He used to draw characters from comics and movies. He graduated from Bina Nusantara University in graphic design in 2008. After that, he worked as a graphic designer for 2 years while also starting his career as a freelance illustrator. Since then, he has been working on many illustration projects, most of them are children's books. Currently, he is also working as a 2D character artist for a studio.