

# *The Golden Dragon Adventure*

## Chapter One

### First Encounter

The desert is a dead pit of sand and gravel and rock across which wanders winds and tribes of nomads driving their herds across the timeless routes that are never permanent in the desert. As a gentle breeze blew sand against a rickety old shelter that the two boys and their Master called home. It could be quite and peaceful during these evening hours in the desert, apart from the occasional storm and the winds that reinforce the fact that nothing is permanent in the desert. The daylight saw the boys in a fiery combat that would surprise even the hardest of warriors, an elderly Sage watched intensely as the boys whirled and twirled in a magical dance on the desert sands. The twins were as different as they were alike at first glance it was impossible to tell them apart, but the sage knew all to well their strengths and weaknesses. He had trained them since their third birthday and twelve years later they were two of the deadliest fighters anyone could encounter except for a handful of other devotees scattered around the globe. For here was the elite School of The Golden Dragon. The only way in here was through a lineage that went back centuries and only then if you were born as an identical male twin for only then could an opponent of equal value and challenge be truly encountered. The master would often remind the boys that we live in this place that is not a place to remind ourselves that everywhere on earth and in heaven the sands are shifting and we should never try to grasp them but grasp only the empty ghosts of our own immortality.

So it was with Tai and Mai and their teacher and guardian Ling, and his brother Mon. The boys had never met Mon but Ling had told the boys where to find Mon if ever they needed help in this life. Tai and Mai had taken little notice at the time but every now and then Ling reinforced the message, they learnt through their arduous training that nothing in nature was certain. Ling had them remember all about Mon that they needed in order to find him and also another man called The Moor. It all seemed distant as the three sat in silence and enjoyed their evening meal that Ling had prepared from the food that the nomads had left.

Suddenly the peace of the desert night was interrupted by a voice calling for help, Ling rose and seemed to float over the floor and out the front door as the boys followed eagerly. There was a beautiful young woman running towards their small house, she was bleeding from a wound on her face and was being pursued by a large man in a strange type of ornamental armour the boys were not familiar with. Ling moved between the man and the woman, he looked into the mans eyes who was no ordinary looking man, he stood at least two feet taller than Ling and looked to outweigh the master by at least seventy pounds. I see you pursue this woman the master spoke quietly without a trace of fear in his voice. What danger could she be to you said the master.

She is the property of The Khan growled the man, now stand aside before you become just a memory and these two boys who accompany you become enslaved to the Khan. Tai felt the hairs on his neck stand up at this statement and he wondered how Mai felt. They both looked to each other simultaneously and he knew his brother was also feeling excited by this mans statement. Tai wondered how he would fight this man.

He looked at him and noticed things that Ling had pointed out in their arduous and thorough training, he saw from his stance how he would use his upper arms and the strength in his forearms to crush and squeeze the life out of his opponents.

Tai also observed and noticed his gait as he approached them and saw the slight imperfections that meant he was using his muscular system to stand erect on and not flowing smoothly on his skeleton. This he immediately noticed and from that observation he knew where the weakness lay in his defense, from the slight tilt of his head which meant his Hyoid bone was pulled ever so slightly out of alignment to the raised shoulder and twisted rib cage. Tai knew the effects of this condition well and how it had come about. For this was the essence of their art, not only could he create this condition but he could also reverse it.

All this happened in an instant and imagined himself fighting this man, he would be very predictable and vulnerable in this condition, Ling had shown them this very early in their training as it was the key to all healing and imperative to understand the magnitude of the physical defence patterns of the human body.

Ling did not flinch and repeated his original statement. This only enraged the man and he attacked Ling with a small sword he had concealed beneath his armour. The attack was so sudden it surprised Tai and Mai but the Master just melted with the attack using the desert sand as his weapon. He rolled to one side as if retreating and pivoted beautifully leaping high into the air while flinging a handful of sand into the mans face and landing gently on the sand without a sound. The man was taken totally by surprise and struggled to remove the sand, cursing and swearing as he did.

Ling remained motionless and asked the man if he would like to join them at their evening meal, this made him even more furious and he attacked again.

This time more cautiously, circling Ling with the sword held closer to him. Tai wondered how Ling would handle things. He had often talked with the boys about killing and had told them he himself had killed on many occasions. Tai wondered if Ling would kill this man. He knew from the first attack and his body language that he was no match for Ling, the Master could defeat this man a hundred different ways with the knowledge of the healing arts and the defensive pattern he was stuck in whenever he chose. Then the master did something that surprised both Tai and Mai, he raised his hand and spoke. I offered you these boys in exchange for the woman.

This stopped the attacker in his tracks, and after careful deliberation he agreed. Lings only condition was he had only to beat one of the boys in unarmed combat and both the boys and the woman would be his, but if the boy won he would leave the woman with them, never to return. He willingly agreed thinking the Khan would be pleased to recruit two such healthy looking boys to train in his army. Ling asked the man to choose which boy would be his opponent. Tai wondered about The Masters motive, he noticed Mai looked eager to do battle with this larger and stronger foe, he stepped forward eagerly to meet the challenge, Mai was always one to accept a challenge.

Even though the boys were of identical Physical appearance, mentally and emotionally they were quite different. Tai was softer and mellow in his nature, not as adventurous and courageous as his brother. Mai was always eager to please The Master, to do the very best he could to become the greatest of masters.

This over eagerness had proven to be his downfall on many occasions in their training. The Master had pointed this out many times, and carefully explained the differences in their makeup. He had taken many hours of instruction on the mental aspects of The Golden Dragon Arts, and had put a great emphasis on how it was the difference between becoming a great master or not.

The man beckoned Mai to stop, I see you are eager, growled the man. His glance shifted slowly toward Tai who met his glaring eyes with his own sky blue eyes. The man who was known as Idrish then noticed the colour of Tais eyes. Idrish had never seen eyes of such a brilliant blue in any of the nomads. The appearance of this boy now confused him, he was not a nomad and he was not of Mongol decent, he seemed to be of Chinese original, but had quite a regal look about him. The eyes he could not discern, he looked to Mai and noticed a similar set of brilliant blue eyes, Mai was looking very intensely at him. Idrish felt a slight sense of anxiety and began to wonder why this man had offered these two boys in exchange for the woman. He searched his memory to see if he could recall any stories or tales of a man living in the desert with two boys, he could not. Had he known who he had challenged he would have turned and fled for his life, but he was on a mission to return the woman and he had never failed before in any battle or challenge issued to him, why would this be different. One man and two boys, unarmed against him, a member of the Khans guard and a trained killer. Idrish attacked Tai, and as the master had done so did his protege, he avoided Idrish very easily using the principle that this man would defeat himself. He was slow and cumbersome due to his short leg and lack of neurological integration compared to Tai whose neurology and meridian system was totally integrated so Idrish was very predictable. Tai enjoyed the battle as it was the first time he had faced an opponent other than his brother or Ling. He wondered if he should kill this man or just disable him, he verified time and time again the healing knowledge by his responses to his avoidance and attacks which he allowed Idrish to defend.

He noticed Lings eyes upon him and wondered if the master was pleased with him, he also thought of Mai and wondered what he would do in such a battle, Mai would have ended it quickly and not played around and as the master stated many times to him and not truly gained all that one could from the encounter. For fifteen minutes the battle raged and Tai avoided every attack with ease. Idrish was getting tired and wondered about this foe he face, it seemed impossible to lay a finger on this young opponent and he wished he had not accepted the stupid agreement in the first place. Then he decided to use the weapons he had discarded earlier and put an end to this ridiculous situation he found himself in.

He retreated to gather his sword, an elaborately made weapon that had been past on to the eldest son in his family for generations with the weapon now in his strong right hand he attacked the boy.

Tai had never faced an opponent with a weapon like this, but his constant years of fighting with Ling and Mai had prepared him for such a moment, he decided to instigate an attack off his defence and put an end to this folly. He decided he needed the fluidness of the snake in this encounter. Many times they had travelled to gather the venomous snakes used in their training, not only did the snakes put up a good fight, they were delicious. He was only seven when he had killed his first snake, the large and venomous King Cobra, which when reared up was much taller than he.

He recalled that day vividly now and moved as the snake. Idrish attacked and it was over in an instant his flying leaping spinning kick to Idrish's Hyoid bone which was already moved to one side was accentuated by the blow rendering Idrish unconscious immediately. Ling quickly bound his hands and feet while Mai tended to the young woman who sat motionless and silent.

Ling had been sensing the area around their desert home from the first moment of the encounter, he had taught the boys to always expect the unexpected and he had put into practice what he had so diligently taught them and was surprised this man was alone. Once he was satisfied he questioned the woman as to the location of the tribe and the number of members. There were about fifty in number she told Ling, she had ran for about fifteen minutes from the east, she then explained how they would plunder small villages and caravans and take the attractive women while they killed the old and weak and imprisoned the young men. Tai and Mai felt enraged, Ling sensed this and with a steady glance communicated his feeling to them. They knew from their training that Emotions were synonymous with being irrational and quickly regained their composure and came back into present time. They still had much to learn about their emotions and mental condition as well as their inherited habits and behaviors, for even though that had been trained so thorough in *The Golden Dragon Arts* they were after all still human.

Ling had taught them not only the art of fighting with their bodies but also how to have control over ones Mental and Emotional states. The mental side of the art was where their power was and they spent many hours in a state of mindlessness each day. Ling went over and sat on the sand fence while the boys sat with the woman who was feeling much calmer after the needle Mai had inserted next to her spine, the boys were masters of acupuncture as this was an integral part of their training. The woman was absolutely amazed that these young boys were so in control of themselves at such a young age and also the most amazing people she had ever encountered. She told them her name was Min and she was from a far away land and the caravan she was travelling with had been plundered about a month ago and she was made to work for the tribe that had imprisoned her. She had been separated from her family and wanted desperately to escape when the opportunity presented itself she fled blindly into the desert.

Ling returned and decided to attack the tribe. He and the boys would attack immediately before they sent reinforcements to find Idrish. Ling beckoned the two boys to follow him. He ventured a short distance into the desert and began to dig in the sand with his hands and beckoned the boys to help. Three feet beneath the desert sands they uncovered a huge old oak chest it was so big the boys wondered how it could be moved.

A huge brass lock secured it and Ling removed a key from a leather thong around his neck and opened the lock. Inside the chest was an array of weapons the boys had already used in their training. There were many arrows and two elaborate bows, a number of small five pointed metal stars used for throwing there was six of these strange looking moon shaped swords the master called Moon Swords. Ling picked up one of the swords and whirled it around with such speed it buzzed like a bumblebee. The master also pulled out a large sword that glimmered in the moonlight, he then pulled out a piece of rice paper and tossed it into the air and before it landed Ling had cut it to confetti with a number of rapid strikes that amazed both the boys.

Ling had often talked about weapons and trained the boys only on the rare occasions with such aids he always reinforced you must become a master of your own body first as weapons are only an extension to make killing easier and quicker from a distance.

It was now time to employ these aids. Ling pulled a number of other weapons from the chest and the boys knew exactly what each weapon was even though they had never actually seen some of them before. There were some throwing knives with elaborately carved ivory handles and a number of vials containing different poisons and potions which the Master examined very carefully for he was a master healer and used the combinations of the different herbs to heal, render unconscious or kill. Day after day the boys had listened intently to their master as he spoke of the wonder of all things and they patterned themselves after him. He was an endless stream of knowledge and the boys just soaked up every word with an insatiable hunger for more, their brains were totally integrated through their training and that meant their mental, emotional, physical bodies were totally integrated into their meridian system which gave them an amazing ability to find solutions to the challenges he threw at them continuously. He was relentless in his approach often keeping the boys awake without sleep for days at a time. Preparing them for just such an occasion as they now found themselves in, he knew they could fight just as well after three days without sleep as any fresh opponent they may encounter, hence his confidence and trust in their ability to match any opponent they encountered at such a young age.

They had been stressed and pushed beyond their limit of endurance many times already in their short lives and from that training had developed an amazing temperament and intelligence that went beyond the mental into the physical and emotional bodies. The healing side of their arts was instrumental in returning their neurology back to normal after the challenges they encountered for only in dancing with violent death is a man truly a man as the master reminded them often and their neurology had been given some really hefty challenges which gave them the ability to absorb trauma that would kill another very quickly, for not only could they dish it out they could also absorb incredible trauma and remain stable in it all. Hence they had absolute trust in their master.

There were three pairs of dark blue pants they each in turn put these on. The pants contained a number of pockets, and places to conceal different sized knives. Next Ling removed three shirts of fine metal fiber that the ancient smiths of Jazva had manufactured and were gifts from the King of Jazva to the The Golden Dragon, for their protection of him during the Ancient War of Visbar. There were only twelve of these Metal coats, a strong and durable metal, known only to the smiths of Jazva. The garments were extremely light and the boys loved the feel of this armour against their skin. The shirts of mail would protect them from arrows, spears, knife and sword. There was also a dark blue jacket each, these also contained a number of different pockets into which the boys placed the five-sided star knives, each was coated with a deadly poison that the boys were made aware of and given a flask of antidote. Only Ling had a sword, he reinforced the importance of staying close to him, he gave them each a beautifully carved bow and a number of arrows, the tips he had coated with the same poison. The boys were to be his other sets of eyes as he was ready to destroy The Khans Tribe. The question remained what to do with the woman, Ling approached her and

spoke to her, she then crawled under the house and hid in a secret tunnel, she was to remain hidden until they returned.

If they failed to return before dawn she was to remain in the tunnel all day, cut off all her hair and put on the clothes Ling had left for her. Then she was to find Mon, he had given her directions and a message to give to Mon. Mon would initiate their rescue if they remained alive, plans within plans was what Ling had drilled into the boys since their training began. They set out in the bright moonlight, leaving the woman and Idrish behind.