

Plot Outline. *Where the Mountain Meets the Moon*

Chapter	Pages	Main Story	Embedded Story
1	1–10	Minli and her parents live in a poor hut in a poverty-stricken village beneath Fruitless Mountain. Her father tells wonderful stories but her mother thinks they are a waste of time.	<u>The Story of Fruitless Mountain</u> Fruitless Mountain is the heart of Jade Dragon. Her children turned themselves into rivers so that humans would not die when she refused them rain; she then turned herself into a river, but their spirits had been released from the water. Her heart will be hard until she reunites with at least one of her children. [Story explains why the village is so poor.]
2	11–15	Minli wants to help her parents and change their fortune. She buys a goldfish which is promised to bring gold and jade.	-----
3	16–25	Minli’s mother is angry because Minli spent a penny on a goldfish.	<u>The Story of the Old Man of the Moon</u> The evil magistrate (called Magistrate Tiger) insists that everyone must bow to him and wishes to marry his son into the imperial family. He meets an old man reading from a strange book, the book of fortune. The old man prophesizes that the magistrate’s son will marry a grocer’s daughter, then a baby, and the magistrate sends a man to kill her. When the boy married, his wife turns out to be the grocer’s daughter; she survived an attack and was adopted by the king. [Shows the power of the Old Man of the Moon to tell futures and arrange fortunes. Minli thinks he can solve her problems.]
4	26–29	Minli sets the goldfish free so they won’t have to feed it. The goldfish talks and tells her the way to Never-Ending Mountain, where the Old Man of the Moon lives.	-----
5	30–32	Minli packs a bag and goes off in search of the Old Man of the Moon.	-----
6	33–35	Minli makes a compass and walks all night into the forest.	-----
7	36–39	Ma and Ba find Minli’s note, follow her to bring her home.	-----
8	40–42	Minli comes to a salty lake and hears a voice calling for help. She dives in and finds a dragon.	-----

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9	43–45	Ma and Ba push on through the forest. Ma blames Ba for Minli leaving. They meet up with the goldfish seller.	-----
10	46–49	The dragon was tied up by monkeys while he slept because they were too greedy to share their peaches. His tears have formed the salty lake. He tells Minli that he cannot fly. She cuts him free, even though she must dive down to do it.	-----
11	50–59	Minli frees the dragon and assures him he is real. They become friends.	<u>The Story of the Dragon</u> The dragon was born from a painting made with a special inkstone, and was given as a bribe to the Magistrate. His eyes were missing and when the magistrate inked them in, he became alive and ran off into the forest. [This explains the dragon.]
12	60–68	Ma and Ba meet the goldfish man, who tries to convince them to trust Minli. He gives them a silver goldfish.	<u>The Story of the Goldfish Man</u> His grandmother was a fortune-teller who read his fortune—to die on his 19 th birthday. She told him he had one chance to change his fortune and sent him to the Old Man of the Moon with a bottle of fine wine and wonderful cakes. He put the food and wine next to an old man who was reading a book and absently the old man ate it. Then the goldfish man told his story and the Old Man of the Moon changed his death from 19 to 99 in gratitude for the food. [So fates can be changed.]
13	69–73	Minli rides the dragon through the forest, where they hear the screeching of the angry monkeys as they get close to the peach trees. Minli figures the dragon is at least 100 because he remembers when the peach orchard was just a peach pit. Their challenge is to figure out how to get past the monkeys.	-----
14	74–78	Minli tricks the monkeys by cooking rice and covering it with fishnet. The monkeys can reach in but cannot get out with their fists full of rice. While they are stuck, Minli and the dragon go through the orchard.	-----

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15	79–87	Ma and Ba can’t decide whether to go forward or go back. Ba tells a story at the urging of the silver goldfish. After the story, Ma agrees to go home and wait for Minli’s return.	<u>The Story of the Paper of Happiness</u> There was a very happy family. The Tiger Magistrate sent soldiers to get their secret of happiness. The head of the family wrote down the secret and placed it into a box. As the soldiers went back, one stumbled, the box broke, and the paper floated away. It had one character written on it, over and over, but the soldier could not read. The magistrate thought that no one word could be the secret of happiness, so he sent the soldiers back to punish the family, but they were gone, lock, stock and barrel. [Convinces parents that Minli, like the secret of happiness, cannot be found.]
16	88–96	After feasting on peaches and walking for many days, Minli tells Dragon that she is supposed to go to the City of Bright Moonlight and find the Guardian of the city to get the borrowed line. They meet a fish asking if one of them is Aunt Jin, who is supposed to come back to show the fish that the Dragon Gate is real. Fish directs them to the City of Bright Moonlight, but advises dragon to stay hidden.	<u>The Story of the Dragon Gate</u> There is a Dragon Gate over a huge waterfall. If a fish can get up the waterfall and through the gate, it will be transformed into a dragon. [Suggests that Aunt Jin is the fish that Minli set free.]
17	97–101	Minli goes into the Outer City and a boy with a water buffalo gives her direction to the Inner City, which is guarded. She can’t get in, so she goes home with the water buffalo boy.	-----
18	102–10	Minli goes home with the buffalo boy, whose parents are dead, and she realizes how much better even her poor home is. They share dinner and he tells her about his friend. He suggests that she will know how Minli can see the king.	<u>The Story of the Buffalo Boy’s Friend</u> The buffalo boy follows the buffalo to a clear lake, where seven girls are swimming. Six of the girls grab their clothes and run away, but the buffalo is on the 7 th girl’s clothes. The buffalo boy gives them to him; they talk and become friends. Now she visits him every month when she comes to see her grandfather.
19	111–14	The boy’s friend has said that the king might be at the Market of Green Abundance the next day.	-----
20	115–17	Ma is softening—she offers to help carry the fishbowl and she feeds the fish. They return home.	-----

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21	118–25	Minli gives her last coin to a mean vendor to buy a peach for an old beggar. The beggar, who turns out to be a magician plants the peach pit, puts his stick in the hole, and brings a peach tree into being. He feeds the crowd from the tree, but the peaches are disappearing from the mean vendor’s stand. When he leaves, Minli runs and grabs his arm, and sees his gold dragon bracelet, indicating that he is the king.	-----
22	126–31	Minli follows the king through a secret door into the palace garden. He hides her when his servants come and orders them to bring two meals to the pavilion, where he plans to “commune with the moon.”	-----
23	132–42	The king and Minli have a delicious dinner and he tells her that his great-great-grandfather was the boy who married the grocer’s daughter. He also tells her this missing part of the story. He gives her the paper, which gives answers, but the answers change with the problem; he thinks the paper is the “borrowed line” she seeks. Tonight it says, “You only lose what you cling to.” He thinks it is time the paper returns to the book.	<u>The Unknown Part of the Story of the Old Man of the Moon</u> The angry magistrate tore a page from the Old Man of the Moon’s book, which was the paper with the secret of happiness. The page had been treasured by the kings of the city for generations. [Ripping a page from the Book of Fortune will not change one’s fate.]
24	142–49	Dragon meets the stone lions, who are alive and who are the guardians of the city. After hearing the story of the string, the dragon identifies it as the borrowed line and the lions give it to him.	<u>A String of Destiny</u> The king’s father came to the city with his officials, and turbulence occurred. This city was cracking! The stone lions saw the Old Man of the Moon and asked him for help. He gave them a red string used to bind people together and told them to hold on to it until it was needed. The king rejected his father and restored harmony to the city, so the string has not been used yet. [Hold onto things until they are needed.]
25	150–52	Ma weeps for Minli and fears she will not return. Ba says he thinks the words on the paper of happiness must be “faith,” and he comforts his wife.	-----

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26	153–56	Minli awakes to find her traveling kit and the borrowed line (paper) beside her. She finds the dragon and they realize they each have a “borrowed line.” The question is: Which is the real one?	-----
27	157–59	As they travel, the earth becomes colder and more barren. They see something yellow far ahead. They decide to spend the night in a cave, but Minli cannot sleep for thinking of Ma and Ba and the boy. Then she hears a noise and goes out—to find a terrible tiger.	-----
28	160–61	Ba and Ma are afraid for Minli in a terrible storm. They pray to the moon to keep her safe.	-----
29	162–66	The tiger—huge, green, horrible, and cruel—attacks Minli but Dragon saves her. However, he is clawed by the tiger and the gashes fester; he becomes very sick.	-----
30	167–71	Minli goes toward the village to get help, but encounters the tiger. She picks up a sharp stone, but a little boy grabs her and pulls her down. She watches as a little girl goes to the tiger and tells it a story.	<u>The Story the Girl Told the Green Tiger</u> She reminds the tiger that he demanded two children each month be paid in tribute to him. She and her brother were to be the first, but another beast had dragged her brother away. She flatters the tiger, relays insults from the other beast (who claims he is the tiger’s son) and offers to take him to the other beast’s cave. [They save Minli and their village through courage and cleverness. Both are needed.]
31	172–74	The little girl brings the tiger to an abandoned house and tells him the other beast is in a hole, which is actually an old well. He growls at his own reflection, gets furious at his own echo, and leaps into the well and is destroyed.	-----
32	175–78	The children are A-Fu and Da-Fu. Their grandfather catches up with them as they celebrate killing the tiger. He has a medicine bag and they hurry off to save the dragon.	-----

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33	179–81	The grandfather pours the medicine over the wounds and they begin to heal. The children take Minli home with them to rest, while the grandfather stays.	-----
34	182–88	They reach the village where Da-A-Fu live. There are beautiful yellow flowering trees, but the rest of the village looks drab. The children tell Minli the story of the flowering trees.	<u>The Story of the Village of the Moon Rain</u> The village land was barren, no matter how hard the villagers worked. Rain fell like pearls one night and disappeared into the ground. The next night, the rain fell again and the villagers gathered the pearls in baskets. They turned out to be seeds. They planted the seeds and when the rain fell again, the silver trees with golden flowers began to grow. Now they plant seeds every day and more trees sprout. [Nature is generous and beautiful, but work is also necessary.]
35	189–91	Ma and Ba clean up after the storm but still worry about Minli. The fish is silent. Ma actually laughs once at Ba.	-----
36	192–202	Minli sleeps and wakes refreshed. Amah gives her some tea made from the golden flowers, which is the medicine that is curing the dragon. They tell how they discovered the medicine by accident and Minli tells her adventures. The twins know where Never-Ending Mountain is—a day’s journey away—and promise to take Minli there.	<u>The Story of the Green Tiger and the Tea</u> The Green Tiger is the spirit of the angry magistrate who was banned by his son. He punished and destroyed people. The men tried to kill him, but he was too strong and wounded half of them with his poisonous claws. When he came to the village, he left a sign that indicated he wanted two children sacrificed every month. Amah was out getting water to clean wounds when she saw the tiger and hid behind the flowering trees. When he left, she boiled the water, which had fallen flowers in it, making tea. The tea healed grandfather and the other men. [Explains how the tea the dragon was using was found.]
37	203–08	The dragon comes to the village, where he is treated kindly. After breakfast, the twins and Minli set off. She has a warm new jacket, which the villagers made overnight from pieces of their own clothing displaying generosity and kindness!	-----

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38	209–16	They ride on Dragon’s back toward Never-Ending Mountain. Da-A-Fu tell how the Old Man of the Moon brought their ancestors to the village.	<u>The Story of Da-A-Fu’s Ancestors</u> Their ancestors are the happy family that gave the magistrate the paper. When warned that he was going to punish them, they decided to have one more happy day. They had a picnic and flew and flew their kites on the mountain, letting the kites go free at the end of the day. As they walked sadly home, they realized they were on a different mountain, yet they found find their village at the bottom, just as they had left it. They realized that the kites had told the moon their story and the moon took pity on them and moved their village. [Moon can intervene in fates.]
39	217–22	They arrive at Never-Ending Mountain, but she realizes it is too high to climb. Flying is the only way to reach the Moon. Minli makes a kite from the two borrowed lines—the paper (a page from the Book of Fortune and the string, the red cord) plus her chopsticks. (Meanwhile, the twins leave laughing that someone might want to change their fortune.) As Minli flies it up, the string keeps magically lengthening. Finally she feels a tug, but she cannot bring it down. The string begins to thicken, turning into a web and then a delicate bridge.	-----
40	224–32	Ba agrees with Ma that it is hard to wait, that it is like the dragon waiting for his pearl. Ma actually asks to hear the story. When he finishes, she does not show the envy of wealth that she has shown in the past. She is changed inside. Ma has lost her envy of others and has become more serene.	<u>The Story of the Dragon’s Pearl</u> A dragon worked for many years to make a perfect, glowing pearl, and then the Queen Mother of the Heavens stole it and locked it away. When she showed it off to some guests at a party, the dragon saw the light and burst in. She fled with the pearl and, cornered, tossed it over the garden gate, where it sank into the Celestial River. Her father scolded them both and said to leave it there, when all people could enjoy its light. That is the origin of the moon. [Beautiful things should be shared, not kept greedily.]

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41	233–35	The dragon is too big and heavy to climb the rope bridge, but Minli promises to ask his question for him. She bravely starts up the long bridge.	-----
42	236–44	After a long climb, Minli reaches a white wall and is greeted by a white rabbit, who has been expecting her and tells her she is a little late. She sees a man. Wu Kang, cutting down the only tree, and the Rabbit tells his story.	<p><u>The Story of Wu Kang</u></p> <p>Wu Kang was never satisfied, even though he had a good family and farm. He moved to the town but that was not enough. He moved to the city and tried different professions, but they were never enough. Finally, he sought out an Immortal, the Old Man of the Moon. Although the immortal taught him many things, he was never satisfied. So the Old Man of the Moon tied him with red thread to a tree and said he would learn patience and contentment by chopping the tree down. The tree always grows back and its seeds drop down to earth (becoming the seeds that fall on Da-A-Fu’s village), so Wu Kang must learn patience or chop for all eternity. [Be satisfied with the good things in your life.]</p>
43	246–50	Minli sees the Old Man of the Moon sitting with a giant book in his lap. He is tying clay figures together with red strings from a bag, the same bag carried by the buffalo boy’s friend, who turns out to be the goddess of weaving. He recognizes her and tells her he will answer one question. She is torn between asking her question and the Dragon’s question. Then she sees that the page has been returned to the book of Fortune, and the character on it says <i>Thankfulness</i> . She is thankful for her friend the dragon and all his help, and she decides to ask his question (Why can’t he fly?”) Thereby, she forfeits her own question.	-----

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44	251–55	Ma and Ba are still waiting. He tells stories to pass the time and ease their minds each night. One night she says she will tell a story.	<p><u>The Story That Ma Told</u></p> <p>There was a discontented woman who was never satisfied with her simple life with her loving husband and beautiful daughter, but always wanted more. She was bitter and complaining and eventually her daughter left home to try to improve the family’s fortunes. The woman repented and asked forgiveness of her husband and hoped to be able to ask it of her daughter. [If you make happy those that are near, those that are far will come.]</p>
45	256–59	The dragon waits three nights. Minli returns and yanks the stone off the dragon’s head and suddenly he can fly. She explains that she did not need to ask her question because she has learned from the buffalo boy’s simple life, the king’s generosity, and Da-A-Fu’s unwillingness to change their fortune, that fortune is not gold, but something more. She realizes that she already possesses good fortune at home with her parents.	-----
46	260–65	Minli and the dragon fly home, over Da-A-Fu’s village, the City of Bright Moonlight, and the monkeys. When they get close to Fruitless Mountain, they see another dragon, gold—Aunt Jin, the goldfish transformed? The dragon feels very at-home at Fruitless Mountain and the nearby Jade River. Minli continue on alone. When she arrives home, she is greeted warmly by the goldfish and slips into bed.	-----

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47	266–70	<p>In the morning, Ma and Ba are thrilled to see Minli. The stone turns out to be a valuable dragon’s pearl. Fruitless Mountain has turned green and the Jade River has now become clear. (Minli wonders if her dragon friend might be one of Jade Dragon’s lost children? He was born from a painting, but perhaps one made with an inkstone from Fruitless Mountain, which is Jade Dragon’s heart.) Minli realizes that all her questions have been answered and the village is prosperous after all.</p>	<p>-----</p>
48	271–78	<p>The goldfish man comes back after 2–3 years thinking he is at another village as he finds the village prosperous. He sells out and learns what happened. The people gave the king of the City of Bright Moonlight the priceless Dragon’s pearl, and in turn, he gave them seeds and farm equipment in gratitude. These were more valuable to the villagers than gold. Minli and her family now have a big house with pictures of lucky children on the gate, like A-Fu and Da-Fu. The gate has lion-head knockers. Children are drinking Dragon Well tea in the house and waiting to hear stories. Minli’s parents greet the goldfish man warmly. He finds Minli is in back, bathed in moonlight and smiling at the moon with children waiting to hear the story of her journey from Never-Ending Mountain.</p>	<p>-----</p>