

The Second Book of Little Dragon Mu

Mu visits the Netherlands

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After his first visit to Europe, Little Dragon Mu moved to the Netherlands. His mother and father, Ro and Bing, were going to work at the Dragonian Embassy in the Hague, and Mu would start primary school in the fall.

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The dragon family had heard that the Netherlands was a tolerant country where they would feel welcome. Bing wanted to see the windmills and understand how the Dutch make dikes, whereas Ro looked forward to seeing fields of tulips like the ones in Dragonia.

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Mu bought a little bag of bulbs at the airport shop in Schiphol.

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Travelling by train from Amsterdam to the Hague Mu looked out the window and was amazed to see a very large ship sailing above the railroad. How could that be?

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Bing explained that much of the Netherlands is lower than the level of the sea. Over the centuries the Dutch people have made their country larger by building dikes and pumping the sea water out.

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Mu's new home was above an Indonesian restaurant. There were several other restaurants and many shops along the street. It was called *Lange Poten*, which meant 'Long Legs Street'. Mu thought that was funny and laughed at the idea of a street having legs.

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The Dragons' house had a garden in the back where Mu could play outside on sunny days. But the weather was getting cold, so Mu decided to plant the tulip bulbs in a pot on the windowsill.

Little Dragon Mu liked going to school. His schoolmates enjoyed hearing about Dragonia and he learned all about life in the Netherlands.

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In History class, Mu discovered that a long time ago the Netherlands was called the United Provinces. People driven out of other countries because of their religion were allowed to live in Amsterdam. The Dutch conquered lands all over the world, in Surinam, in the Caribbean Sea, in Malesia and Indonesia. In North America they founded New Amsterdam - which later became New York City. They had great sailing boats to carry merchandise and huge war ships too.

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Mu asked where all those lands were now, and why the Dutch needed to build dikes and pump out the sea water if they were so rich and powerful. "Those faraway countries regained their independence long ago", said the teacher, "but many of their people still lived in the Netherlands." Mu could see that his classmates came from different parts of the world. They were of various sizes, shapes and colours. Mu felt right at home.

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The teacher said that today the Netherlands are devoted to the principles of peace and justice. The Hague is the seat of important international organisations. The class visited the International Court of Justice, called *Palace van de vrede* or the 'Peace Palace'. People accused of horrible crimes are tried there. To make it fair judges come from all over the world. Mu was impressed.

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One day Mu came home from school and found that there was great news. Bing and Ro told him that soon he would have a little sister or brother. Dragon mothers lay big spotted eggs, and Ro showed him hers.

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They would have to keep it nice and warm until it hatched. Mu could hardly wait to go to school the next day to tell all his friends. But there was a big problem. How could Ro keep the egg warm while she was working? She could hardly sit on the egg in her office. Ro decided to ask the Hospital if they could put the egg in one of the incubators used to keep infants warm.

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The hospital staff scarcely listened to her request. The Director told her that dragon eggs were not allowed in the hospital, especially in incubators which must be

kept sterile. "Dutch hospitals are not prepared for dealing with dragon problems," he told them, "wouldn't it be better if you went back to your own country?"
Ro took Mu's little clawed hand into her big clawed hand and they started home, worried and disappointed.

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The neighbours on Long Legs Street saw that there was something wrong. Ro explained that she was expecting a little dragon, but that no one at the hospital could help her. The neighbours wanted to help but didn't know what to do either. Ro would have to leave her job. She would sit on the egg. But even so, would it be warm enough in the winter climate?

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Mu told his friends about the egg and about his fear that it wouldn't be able to hatch. (xxxxx 4 kids names) were shocked that no one knew how to help.

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The next day, everyone brought an electric blanket from home. After school the whole class went to Mu's house on Long Legs Street. They built a special nest for Ro's egg in the living room and their teacher helped them to test the thermostats.

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Every afternoon the children hurried home with Mu to see how the egg was doing. Outside it was freezing cold and when Saint Nicolas day came, Mu received a pair of ice skates so that he could skate on the frozen canals. There were no boats going up and down them now.

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Slowly the weather got warmer and then, one day Tessa, Friso, Femke, Hugo and Mu saw a tiny crack in the eggshell.

Everyone crowded around to watch. The crack grew larger and larger. The egg was hatching!

What a surprise! The next moment Mu realised that he had a little brother...

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... and a little sister too!

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There was a big celebration in Long Legs Street for Ling and Ko. The neighbours all came, and some of them were even doctors and nurses from the hospital. The happiest of all - besides Bing and Ro - were Mu and his friends. They had had a very

good idea and proved that the Netherlands is a place of solidarity and tolerance - for dragons too.

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Mu's tulips were blooming now,
and he showed them to Ling and Ko.

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How long do you think the dragon family stayed in the Hague?
Where did they go next?

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To your country?
Or did they stay for a while on Long Legs Street?