The Talking Dragon

"Welcome to the museum! I'm Malak and I’m here to guide you through our fascinating exhibits and share the incredible stories behind each piece."

Behind every piece and statue in the Louvre Abu Dhabi lies a story. One of the museum’s main goals is to showcase stories from around the world. During my visit to the museum, a statue of the River Dragon caught my attention, and it had a wonderful mythical story behind it. The story begins with Jia, a curious girl who loved stories, living in a northern village in China along the great river, which was the lifeline of the area. In the village, traditional ways of life, including farming and livestock keeping, were important. Jia asked her grandfather about the river and where it got all its power to flow. Her grandfather smiled and said, "I once asked my grandfather the same question." Then, he began to tell her the story of the time before the river.

Long ago, there lived a quirky king in a great kingdom. One day, he gathered the people of the kingdom and announced a challenge:

"In the high mountain palace lives a great dragon, but it has been silent forever. Whoever can make it speak will receive half of my kingdom!"

Everyone was stunned by the odd request, but a poor man named Rao stepped forward and said:

"I will accept the challenge, but on one condition: a request like this requires time, and I ask you, O King, to give me ten years with all the supplies I need, without questioning me about anything." The king laughed and agreed immediately, thinking he had nothing to lose. Rao then went to live in the mountain palace next to the dragon. His goal was the supplies he would receive during these ten years, such as food, livestock, and tools for the land. His aim was to develop the village and its people, making them self-sufficient. And so, the ten years with the dragon began.

When Rao arrived at the high mountain palace, he found the dragon standing majestically, its wings folded and eyes gazing into the distance like a great statue. Rao cautiously approached and said, "I am here to stay with you for ten years. I will not force you to speak, but I want to understand you." At first, the dragon completely ignored Rao. But over time, Rao noticed that as he brought food to the dragon daily, cleaned the area around it, and sat with it at night telling stories, the dragon showed no interest. By the fourth year, Rao had become part of the dragon's life. He learned that the dragon communicated in its own way: when it was hungry, it scratched the ground with its claws; when it was upset, it fluttered its wings without flying; and when it was at ease, its eyes glowed softly.

"It doesn't need words," Rao said to himself. "But I will continue to honor my promise." During these years, Rao used his time to learn more about nature from the dragon. He studied the winds that fluttered beneath its wings and the earth it scratched with its claws. Rao realized that the dragon was not just a creature but a symbol of nature itself. He marveled at what he found in the dragon and realized that he now had a new goal.

By the tenth year, the king and his entourage returned to the mountain palace to witness the result of the challenge. Rao stood next to the dragon while the king, with a mocking smile, said:

"Well, Rao, where is the speech you promised us?"

Rao responded confidently: "The dragon did not speak, and it will never speak, because it simply cannot. But I did not waste these ten years; I learned the language of silence, which it masters."

Rao stepped toward the dragon and gently patted its wing, then said to the crowd: "Look at the ground beneath its feet, marked with signs of upcoming droughts and floods. Watch its wings; their flapping indicates changing winds. Its eyes shine when it is at ease, and they dim when danger threatens. The dragon speaks all the time, but you never tried to understand it."

The king stood in confusion and said:

"But the challenge was to make it speak, and you failed!"

Rao smiled and replied: "The real challenge was to make you realize that wisdom does not come from words but from listening. The dragon taught me how to understand nature and how silence is more eloquent than any speech. Now, the most important thing is to save the village or the entire kingdom from what is coming."

The king and the attendees were amazed by what they heard, and they realized that Rao was not just a poor man, but a wise one who could see what others could not. He was not exiled; on the contrary, the king gave him a high position to help save the kingdom.

When Rao returned to his village, his lifelong friend asked him why he accepted the challenge, knowing how it would end if he didn’t convince the king of the coming drought. Rao replied: "My goal was only the people of the village. In ten years, either the king would die, the dragon would die, or I would die."

Jia asked her grandfather what happened after that, and he told her another story for another time.

Goodbye for now! Visit the Louvre again sometime.