

## **Dragon Balloon Day Submission: The Cosmic Lantern**

You are in the company of immortality when you encounter the Cosmic Lantern. Do not, however, fall to the deception of its name. It is not the moon, the sun, or any other celestial body. Although it may see the end of such galactic wonders, it is instead an artifact bearing the accumulation of years yet to live through and never enter the cold embrace of death.

You will know you are in its presence when you start to feel quite thin, a lessening figure, subject to the pressure all around you. You may use your eyes as well, but you won't see much of it, largely because there is so much of it. Those who get a good look at it can only do so from a reasonable distance. It is a dragon, air sac all stretch with ages and ages it intends to be alive. Like the dragons of the West, it has its own hoard; not only the years fill its belly, but the breathing room you or I could be sharing. It has air. Miles and miles of air.

Also like western dragons, its possessions are subject to the inheritance of anyone who slays it. If you so desire immortality, you must set free those countless years it holds prisoner of its belly. That round, planetary orb of air must shatter to rubber shards, and the longevity is yours to collect. It would, perhaps, be wise to unleash it all from a distance; the air within is not only but to avial use, but as a turbonic supply for flammatory respiration.

Of course, you may very well ask how it's possible to burst something supposedly so immortal. If it does burst, then the immortal years filling up its belly aren't so immortal after all. They are something else entirely. Mortal. Mortal years aren't much in demand these days. Time that lasts is where its at, and anything that failed to protect he who held it last, that's not anything very lasting.

To answer such a question, we must depart from our western associations with Dragons and their hoards, the inheritance of their conquerers. Eastern philosophy informs us that immortality and invincibility are not one and the same. While an immortal may never die from a natural cause, the invincible never succumbs to unnatural causes. The two are incompatible. Invincibles may decay and rot when they've spent enough years on Earth, but no blade or bullet may conclude the heart of an invincible. The cosmic lantern is not invincible.

It is quite natural that a dragon of all animals should take up the position of artifact of immortality. With their penshin for hoarding, all sorts entered into that collection. That includes breathing room. That includes years it expects to spend upon this Earth. "Collecting" is sissy talk for hoarding. Clearly, much of what dragons hoard leans from the physical realm into the metaphysical.

Literature, gemstones, batteries, and used toilet paper is what you will find in some hoards. Love, schadenfreude, personal business, and gossip in others.

Of course, there's always the question of what one would do once it gained immortality besides freak out everyone who saw you never aging. Anybody who ever bothers to ask the Cosmic Lantern how it spends its own eternal life doesn't get a chance to ask much more.. And those who spy don't get much of a look, either. It seems to just float around, existing. Does it revel in its immortality? Perhaps. Does it ever get lonely? Does it think about those who knew it before it gained its eternal Earthan life? One might never truly experience true eternity. What do you say we harvest those years of its and see for ourselves?

To be continued...