

# DRAGON GIRLS

**Hana the Thunder Dragon**

by Maddy Mara

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Hana ran to the front of the banquet hall and pushed aside the curtains. The big windows looked out onto a beautiful garden. Today was her grandma's eightieth birthday. People were coming from all over the country to celebrate. Hana's family was huge and she loved everyone in it.

But there was one person in particular she couldn't wait to see: her cousin Zora.

"Is she here yet?"

Hana jumped, then turned to see her twin sister, Mina.

"I never hear you coming!" Hana laughed. "Then in a flash, you're there."

Her sister smiled. "I definitely don't have that problem with you. I can hear you from a hundred miles away!"

People always said Hana and Mina didn't seem like twins. They looked different, for one thing. Their personalities were very different, too.

Hana loved talking with everyone she met, and somehow, noise just seemed to burst out

of her. When they'd chosen an instrument to learn at school, Hana didn't think twice. She HAD to learn the drums!

Mina, on the other hand, had chosen the flute. She was much quieter, but she was also a bright spark. Mina always knew what to do when a problem struck.

But there were lots of things they both loved. Music. Gaming. Their cousin Zora. She was cool and calm, and really fun. The three girls often met in online worlds and played together. But they only saw each other in real life a few times a year.

Mina stood beside Hana and looked out the window.

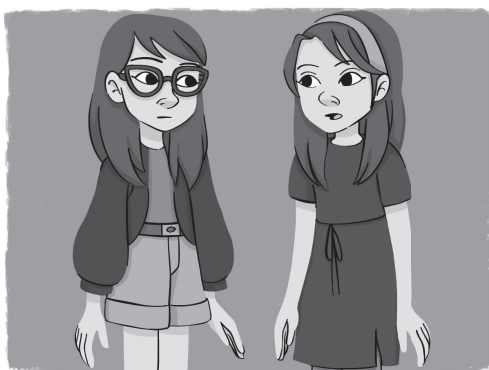
“A storm is on the way,” Mina said.

Hana nodded. Normally, the twins loved storms. There was something so exciting about them. But today, the timing was terrible. A storm could slow down Zora’s family.

“She’ll be here soon,” Hana said. “Hopefully she’ll beat the weather.”

“Hana? Mina? Where are you? Come here so I can finally do your hair!”

The twins exchanged a look. This was another thing they shared: a hatred of getting their hair done. All day they’d been avoiding their mom, who was determined to give them French braids.



“I want you to look nice and neat for your grandma,” she kept saying.

But the girls liked their hair being free!

“Let’s split up,” whispered Hana. “We’ve got a better chance of escaping that way.”

Mina gave Hana a mischievous smile. “Good idea. You should go somewhere noisy, though. Otherwise Mom will find you instantly!”

Mina dashed off as quickly and silently as she'd arrived.

Hana looked around. Where could she hide? People were bustling around, getting everything ready for dinner. Maybe she could hide under one of the tables? No, too boring! Could she sneak into the kitchen? That was bound to be noisy. But she knew she'd get in the way.

The garden! Her mom couldn't possibly hear her out there. Even better, she'd be there when Zora arrived. Hana glanced through the window at the thick gray storm clouds. She saw a flash of lightning. Several seconds later, thunder rumbled. The storm was still a long way off.



“Girls! Where ARE you?” Her mom sounded closer, and grumpier.

If Hana was going to avoid hair torture, she had to escape now!

As quietly as she could, Hana dashed over to the main entrance. The glass doors automatically slid open. She was going to get outside without making a single sound!

Hana glanced over her shoulder. Where was her mom? She couldn't see her. But she also didn't see the stand of brochures next to the door. With a loud crash, Hana knocked over the stand, sending brochures flying.

It felt like everyone in the whole lobby froze and looked at her.

Her heart pounding, Hana leapt over the mess and ran out the door. Once outside, she dashed across the smooth lawn and ducked under the foliage of a huge weeping willow tree.

She collapsed to the ground, half groaning, half laughing. Why did things like that always happen to her? She just could NOT be quiet!

There was another flash of lightning and rumble of thunder. They were closer together this time. Hana stood up and brushed off her knees.

She knew she had to go back inside. She couldn't leave that mess at the entrance. Her mom would find her, and she'd have tight, painful braids put in.

But then Hana heard singing.

*Magic Forest, Magic Forest, come explore . . .*

Hana knew that a band was going to play at her grandma's party. But that wasn't until after dinner. Maybe the musicians were warming up? She heard the song again.

*Magic Forest, Magic Forest, come explore . . .*

The singing wasn't coming from the banquet hall. It was coming from somewhere in the garden!

Once again, the thunder boomed. The wind

picked up, rustling the long, drooping branches of the willow tree.

Hana's heart began to beat very fast. She had a feeling that something extraordinary was about to happen. The wind grew stronger, blowing her hair in all directions.

Again, she heard the song. This time it seemed to be riding on the wind itself.

*Magic Forest, Magic Forest, come explore.*

*Magic Forest, Magic Forest, hear my roar!*

There was a flash of light, an extremely loud crack of thunder, and then everything went black.