



The Mystery
of the
Un-Snowy Mountain
and the
Great Deep Sleep
Miscalculation


Mark Dorey



Cougar Adventurers Edition

This Tomser Cat Book
Belongs To:



See if you can spot Tomser Cat 
hiding somewhere in the pages of this book!

For
Rhiannon
who sleeps under the Mountain



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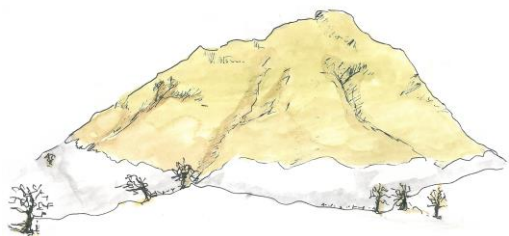
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The Mystery
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Mark Dorey

illustrated by Liz Dorey



Cougar Adventurers Edition

Tomser Cat Books

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Dragon Appendix:

A Brief History of Dragons

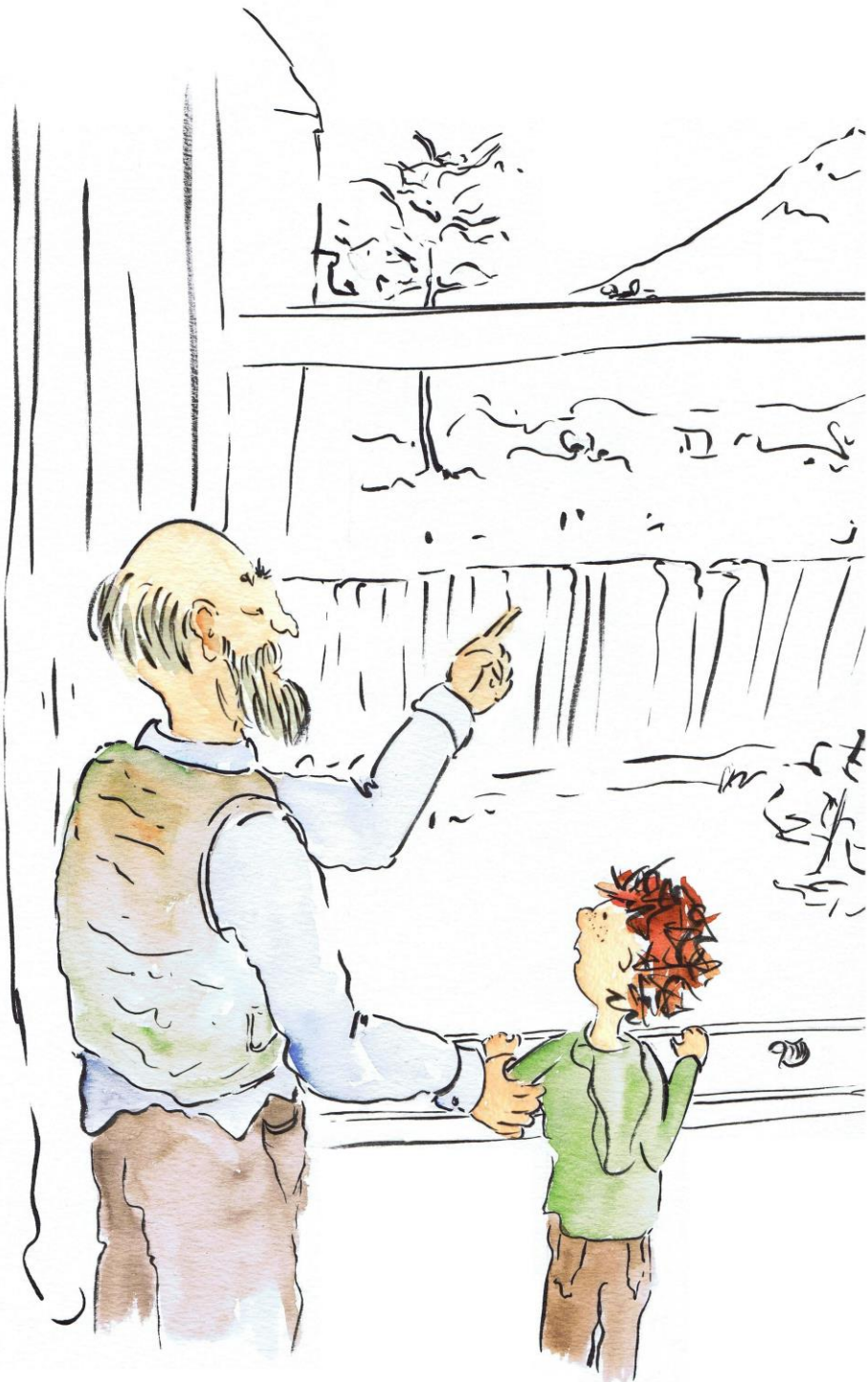
*A Dragon
is to be
Admired and Feared
in equal measure
but
under no circumstances
Ignored*

Chancer proverb

Author's Note

Throughout this story footnotes are used at the bottom of some pages to give the reader extra information about something they have just read.

These footnotes are marked using ^{1...} ^{2...} ^{3...} etc.





Chapter One

SOMETHING VERY STRANGE...

“**T**here’s something very strange about that mountain,” said Grandpa, his voice low and even more gravelly than usual as he stared out of the window at the mountain in the distance. Tyler joined his gaze, the nine-year-old bursting with curiosity.

“What is it, Gramps?” he asked, his eyes alight with expectation.

Grandpa leant forward, their noses almost touching. “Can you keep a secret?”

Tyler’s head bobbed up and down so fast that it was in danger of falling off!

“Snow,” said Grandpa, his voice barely a whisper.

“Snow?” echoed Tyler.

“Snow,” repeated Grandpa, “or rather, the lack of it.”

Tyler was confused.



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Grandpa's eyes widened beneath bushy silver-grey eyebrows arching to the top of his bald head. "When it snows, the Mountain will reveal its secret."

Tyler's chin dropped. "Aw, can't you tell me now?"

Grandpa smiled a sad-and-not-quite-a-smile sort of smile that Tyler had never seen before. "Patience, Tyler lad, patience."

"But Gramps—"

There was a knock on the door.

"Looks like your mother's here."

Tyler sighed. Now he'd never get to the bottom of the snow mystery. "See you next week then," he said, trying not to sound too disappointed.

"I'll be here," said Grandpa.

Tyler swung open the door, shivering as the chill wintry air snapped at his skin like an invisible frost monster.

His Mum peered over his shoulder. "You okay, Dad?"

"Fine, love," said Grandpa.

"Thanks for looking after him. We've got to rush, but I'll pop back over tomorrow. Come on, Tyler, wrap up warm. It's cold enough for snow."

Snow!

Tyler's spirits lifted as he pulled on his coat, hat and scarf before scampering over to give his Gramps a goodbye hug. Grandpa ruffled a calloused hand through his grandson's brownny-orange spiky mop. The old man's smile vanished into the depths of his beard as soon as the door closed behind his grandson.

“There’s something strange about that mountain...” he said to no one in particular.



T Tyler’s house was a ten-minute walk from his Grandpa’s.
“Mum, is Grandpa all right?”

“He’s not too bad, although he can’t get about like he used to.” Her piercing blue eyes probed her son, looking for hidden secrets. “Why do you ask?” her steamy breath billowed on the frosty air.

“No reason,” he tried to sound casual, but inside Tyler was bursting to ask her if she knew anything about the mountain and the snow; after all, Mum had grown up in the village.

They walked in silence for a bit before Mum spoke again. “It’s quite difficult for him, you know, especially since Grandma died.”

Tyler nodded. It had been difficult for him too. Visiting his grandparents was always something Tyler looked forward to, with lots of fun, laughter and games. But best by far had been the stories. Grandpa was the best storyteller in the whole world but the stories stopped when Grandma died.

Everything stopped.

Grandma was gone. All that was left was her picture in a little silver frame on the mantelpiece above the fire, and Grandma’s old walking stick with its coppery coloured head.



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The ornately carved walking stick leant sadly against the back door, as if waiting for her return, and no one, but no one was allowed to touch it.

Tyler and his family had moved to just outside Rudry village to be close to Grandpa. But even two years on, things were never quite the same. Always a person with a love for the Great Outdoors, Grandpa now rarely left the house.

“Don’t worry, love, things will be all right,” Mum draped a comforting arm over his shoulder.

Tyler nodded but said nothing, his thoughts filled with lost Grandmas, lost stories and a Grandpa full of secrets...



The stars glittered like diamonds on a blanket of night as the Dragon soared across the sky. Clouds loomed on the horizon waiting to pounce. He would have to be quick. The white of the clouds would blow his cover. The Dragon only ventured out on moonless nights and when he did, it was for one thing:

FOOD!

But this Dragon didn't hunt for sheep or cattle that might have strayed in the night. No, that would be unthinkable! When this Dragon went hunting, he would scour the countryside for...



The Dragon plummeted out of the sky like a huge black dart towards a garden allotment with a large greenhouse. Someone moved in the darkness below. Someone was standing guard outside his greenhouse. A lot of fruit had gone missing over the past few months...

High above the Dragon circled and smiled. He loved this game! Drawing in a deep breath, the *Dragon Magic* burbled and bubbled deep inside his fiery body. Seconds later, he breathed out sending smoky rings drifting down over the unsuspecting night watchman. Within a few seconds the greenhouse guard was fast asleep, still standing bolt upright! The giant beast chuckled with delight. He breathed some more *Dragon Magic*, this time wispy strands of smoke, weaved and danced as they wrapped around the handle of the greenhouse door, opening it without a sound.

This was going to be easy!

The smoky strands split into octopus-like tentacles, wrapping around all kinds of fruit – bananas, pineapples, oranges, nectarines, melons, tomatoes, mangoes and the Dragon's favourite, strawberries! (He always avoided lemons as he found that they gave him terrible farty wind and a very bad tummy!)

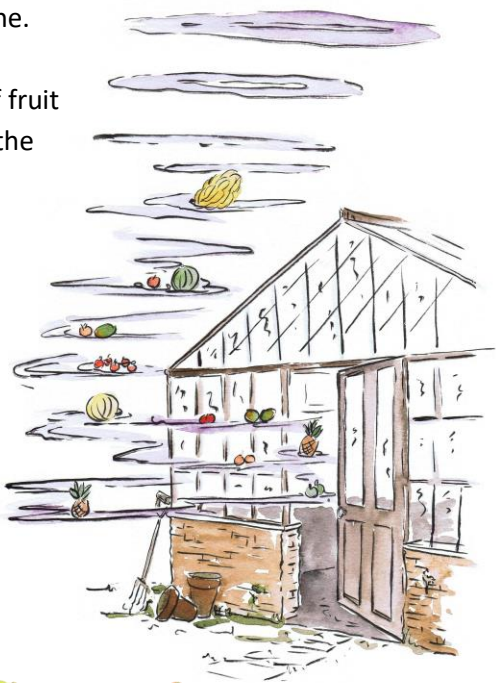


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The Dragon licked his lips, his belly gurgling and popping like an old steam engine.

Not long now...

The bobbing line of fruit snaked silently out of the greenhouse, rising up towards the hovering Dragon, who was eagerly awaiting the captured bounty. Then disaster! The last piece of fruit, a large pineapple caught the doorframe and toppled free.



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The pineapple clattered into a stack of empty pots. The spell broken, the sleeping gardener sprang awake, his eyes growing wide as the stolen fruit bobbed past on a wispy conveyor belt of magical smoke up into the night sky. The startled man's eyes grew wider still as he followed the fruity trail skywards...

There, filling the darkness was a huge

D-D-D-D-DRAGON!

The Dragon looked at the man.

The man looked at the Dragon.

The man promptly fainted face down in a bed of cabbages!

"Oh dear," sighed the Dragon.

The wispy strand closed the glass door as the hovering Dragon gathered in the last of the fruit. Letting out a long breath, the Dragon bathed the whole greenhouse in a flaming blaze of *pink Dragon Magic.*

Then, in an instant, everything returned to darkness.

The Dragon was gone.

Seconds later, the gardener stirred, sat up and looked around.

He'd had the strangest dream...

What was it...?

No, it couldn't have been...



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Brushing off the squashed cabbage leaves, he opened the greenhouse door. The most wonderful fruity smell filled the air. Broken pots littered the floor. More fruit had gone missing. But far from being empty, the greenhouse was laden with fruit...

HUGE FRUIT!¹

He scratched his head, sighing as he picked up the broken pieces.

“Ah well, I suppose I could always enter them into the *Largest Fruit Competition.*”

And that’s what he did; winning the *Largest Fruit Prize* in every category.

Of course, he never told anyone what happened. After all, who would believe him?



¹ If the Dragon Magic made the fruit bigger, then why didn't the Dragon simply take less fruit and use Dragon Magic to make it bigger for himself to eat? The answer is that the fruit, even though it may look bigger and feel heavier, the increase in size and weight is in fact an illusion, and so would not fill the Dragon up any more than 'un-Dragon-Magic-ed' fruit!



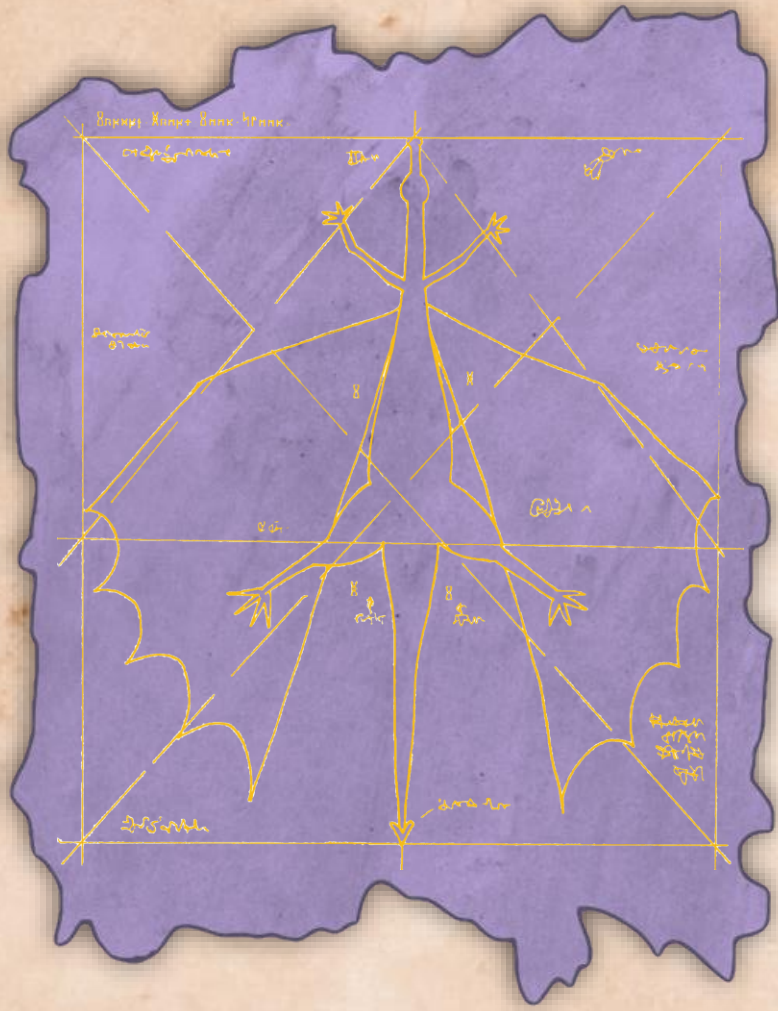
The Dragon entered his secret lair deep under Rudry Mountain, heaping his fruity hoard on to a large mound already piled high on the cavern floor.

“Now, what shall I cook tonight?” A rumble escaped from the depths of his tummy. “Oh, do be quiet! Now, let me see, maybe some roast pineapple stuffed with bananas and strawberries, or smoked tomatoes covered in a light barbecue sauce made from mango juice, or perhaps... both! Yes, yes, yes, both, with some fresh strawberries topped with a dusting of seared orange peel for dessert – Perfect!”

The Dragon started to prepare his fruity concoctions. There were times that he would feel a little peckish for something other than fruit, something different. But as he could never figure out exactly what that *something* was, he stuck with his fruit diet.

Meanwhile, outside his mountain lair it

started
to
snow!





Chapter Two

THE GREAT DEEP SLEEP MISCALCULATION

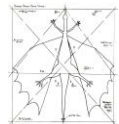
Now, if you know anything at all about Dragons, there may well be some rather perplexing Dragonology questions bouncing around inside your Dragon curious and slightly befuddled head:

Dragonology Question 1

How did the Dragon come to be living under Rudry Mountain in the first place?

Dragonology Question 2

Why did he like eating fruit and nothing else – surely this must go against many Dragon protocols?



Dragonry Question 3

Do all Dragons live under mountains, eating strange assortments of fruit, or more importantly still (especially if they eat other things as well), are there any living under a mountain close to my house?

For those of you who don't know that much about Dragons and would like to know a little more about their various types and characters, please read the *Dragon Appendix: A Brief History of Dragons* at the back of this book.² But in order to answer those more immediate Dragonry questions, you need to know about one of the Earth's oldest secrets...

The Great Deep Sleep Miscalculation!

Many thousands of years ago, a great Ice Age swept across the Earth. It happened very quickly and a lot of creatures caught out by the sudden climate change unfortunately became extinct. The Dragons (who were extremely clever and saw these changes coming), realised that they would have to do something until the Ice Age was over in order to survive the bitter cold. Even the cold-loving Blue Dragons were worried at the prospect of an Ice Age, which caused even greater alarm amongst all Dragonkind.

A Grand Dragon Council was called and all the Dragons were summoned. Such was the importance of the meeting

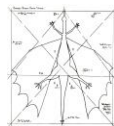
² When you see a § in a footnote, it means more information is available in the '*A Brief History of Dragons*' Appendix at the end of this book.

that even the nasty and unruly Red Dragons were ordered to attend. After much debate, it was agreed that all the Dragons would go into a magical *Deep Sleep* encased in *Dragon Magic* stone until the Ice Age was over.

It was decided that the best place for the *Deep Sleep* would be in the highest and deepest mountains situated in what we now know as North Wales.³ After the Council meeting all the Dragons migrated North to hide themselves deep in the Snowdonia mountains and make preparations for their mass hibernation.

Complex calculations for determining how long the Ice Age would last were left to the Silver Dragons who were considered to be the cleverest. They calculated that the impending Cold Snap would last for *8,167 years*, give or take a month or two. Everyone agreed it would be a good idea to round up the *Deep Sleep* spell to *10,000 years*, so that everything would have time to thaw out and Mother Nature could get her act back together. Unfortunately, in the rush and confusion of the last minute preparations (and a skirmish breaking out between a number of Black and Red Dragons, who were prone to fooling around and generally making nuisances of themselves), a small but significant error was made in the *Deep Sleep* calculation. An extra '0' was accidentally added, meaning that the spell was cast for *100,000 years* by mistake!

³ For reasons why Wales was chosen in particular, see *A Brief History of Dragons* (if you have not already done so). §



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A final count was made to ensure that all Dragons were present and correct,⁴ all of them completely unaware of this catastrophic error. Then the powerful *Dragon Magic* of the *Deep Sleep* spell was cast, transforming all the Dragons into solid stone deep within the Welsh mountains – all the Dragons that is, except one. One Dragon was unfortunately overlooked because at the time of the Great Spell casting, he was still an Egg; a white-coated egg that was missed in the falling of the ancient snows of long, long ago.

No one thought to include any Dragon Eggs in the count because the Dragon Egg-Laying Season was over.⁵ During this time all the Dragons had laid their eggs, including this Dragon's Mother, who laid five Dragon Eggs – of which his was the last. After the incubation period, all the eggs had hatched successfully apart from one, who showed no sign of hatching even after a few extra months of careful incubation.

With the threat of the impending Ice Age looming ever closer, the Dragon Doctor suggested they try the uncommon

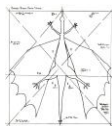
⁴ Green Dragons decided they did not want to be part of the *Deep Sleep* and so left before the *Great Dragon Magic* was cast. §

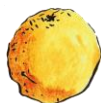
⁵ The *Dragon Egg-Laying* season starts on the first *Full Moon* after the *Spring Equinox* and ends on the last *Full Moon* of the *Autumn Equinox*. This only occurs on a twelve-year cycle, which is thought to have something to do with the orbit of the planet *Jupiter*. This may seem like an awfully long time between *Egg-Laying* seasons, but *Dragons* never seem too bothered about it as they age very slowly and live for a very long time.

practice known as **H.A.T.C.H. (Heat And Thermal Coaxing Hatching)**, which involved gently warming the un-hatched egg on specially heated coals. Before any warming could take place, the precious egg was carefully wrapped in masses of orange and banana skins, followed by the further copious wrapping of lots and lots of coconut leaves around the outside. This was to protect the un-hatched Dragon from becoming too hot, too quickly from the warming coals.

The **H.A.T.C.H.** process is a dangerous procedure not often used by Dragons for a number of reasons:

1. If the egg is not wrapped in enough protective fruit skins, it will get too hot and the poor un-hatched Dragon will be poached inside. Conversely, too much wrapping stops the heat getting to the egg and the poor un-hatched Dragon eventually dies inside the shell, as Draglets (baby Dragons) can only survive for a maximum of six months once fully formed.
2. In cooler climates like Wales, to give just one example, these exotic fruit cannot be grown locally (remember, this is before greenhouses were invented). Therefore, the Father Dragon has to fly to warmer, exotic countries to bring back the necessary egg-packaging fruit materials.
3. Bringing all these exotic fruits into the Dragon's lair has the unfortunate effect of filling the inside of the mountain with a fragrant fruity smell, which unfortunately for Dragons is like the smell of mouldy rotten socks!





At the time of the *Great Dragon Migration*, the Dragon egg's Mother, Father, and four siblings hastily prepared to move out from their lair deep inside Rudry Mountain to head for the mountains of North Wales. The egg was unwrapped and nestled amongst the rest of the Dragon family's precious treasures, balanced on the Father's massive scaly back. During 'take off' the egg toppled unseen into the snow, quickly becoming invisible amidst the falling snowflakes.⁶ When the Dragon family got to North Wales they had no idea of their unfortunate loss, entering the *Deep Sleep* hibernation assuming that their unborn son was still with them.

Meanwhile, in the lower foothills of South Wales lay the abandoned egg containing the 'newly-orphaned' Dragon getting **colder...** and

COLDER...

and

COLDER...

⁶ Dragon Eggs usually reflect the colour of the little Draglet inside. For example, Gold eggs = Gold Dragons; Silver eggs = Sliver Dragons, etc. This un-hatched egg was still coated in white baked-on ash formed as part of the H.A.T.C.H. process, masking its Bronze colour. White Dragon eggs are very rare, as are White Dragons. §

C-R-R-A-A-C-K!

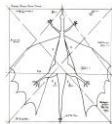
The freezing cold snow caused the egg to fracture. Now, once a Dragon egg begins to hatch, a whole sequence of events are set in motion, as the tiny Draglet breaks free to begin its life in the Great World.



When this baby Dragon finally hatched out of his shell he was alone.

Alone in a vast sea of white nothingness.

What's more, he was being splattered and covered with strange cold white flaky things falling down on him from the sky above.



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His fledgling Dragon instincts told him that this wasn't right; it wasn't right at all.

Everything was white – well, almost everything – the mountain next to him refused to turn white, regardless of how much of the white cold wet flaky stuff fell on to it. More importantly still, there was warmth coming from the inside of the mountain.

Now, Dragons have amazing eyesight and can see things invisible to others. Things magically hidden away from all other living creatures.

Firstly, they can see their precious Treasure. Dragons are extremely jealous of their Treasure and use ancient *Dragon Magic* to hide it away from everyone, including other sneaky Treasure-seeking Dragons. Most Dragons respect the lairs of other Dragons, except Black and Red Dragons, who 'like to visit' while their owners are not at home, pilfering free food or better still, unguarded Treasure.⁷ For those Dragons who have not protected their Treasure with *Hiding Magic*, it is all too easy to find even in the darkest of corners of their lair because of the invading Dragon's phenomenal eyesight. If the Treasure is magically concealed, then the intruder has no chance of finding it because it will remain invisible to all but their owners.

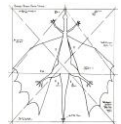
⁷ Black and Red Dragons take great pleasure in making off with Treasure belonging to other Dragons, insisting that they are only 'borrowing'.

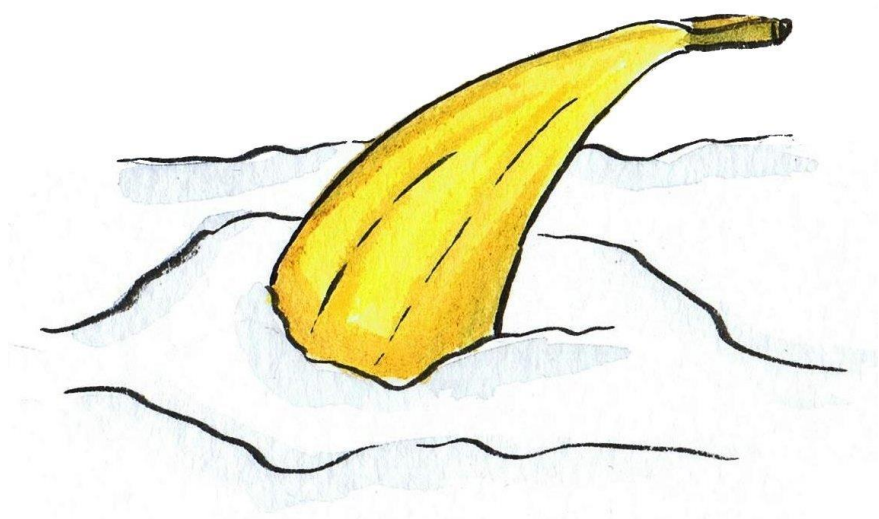
Secondly, the entrances to Dragon lairs are magically hidden – not to other Dragons, but to other animals, particularly humans. This is so that we don't catch them sleeping and try to kill them or cause them mischief. Humans have a nasty tendency to want to kill Dragons, using their scales as armour and carrying their teeth around as trophies. Dragons understand this fact all too well.

Having spotted the magically hidden entrance to his Family's deserted lair, the newly orphaned Dragon entered the cosy warmth and security of the inside of the mountain. His family had taken all their food with them for their trip North, but had abandoned all the fruit that had been collected for the failed **H.A.T.C.H.** process. The little Draglet knew nothing of eating sheep and cows that a normal Dragon might feast on, but he did know that he was hungry. Very, very hungry. So when he found himself faced with small mountains of discarded fruit, he simply tucked in, and because he never knew any different, fruit became his diet from then on.

This all happened many thousands of years ago, and since then the world had changed a lot. The Ice Age came and went in less than 9,000 years, (as the Dragons had correctly predicted), and this last Dragon spent most of this time hibernating and eating small bits of fruit until the warmer climate returned.⁸

⁸ Obviously fruit cannot last 9,000 years in its natural state, unless it is carefully preserved with Dragon Magic.







Chapter Three

HALF A BANANA!

Snow fell heavily that wintry Saturday morning. For the first time in years everywhere was covered in a glistening blanket of snowy white. Everywhere that is, except Rudry Mountain. For some strange reason, snow never *ever* settled on the Mountain. Some thought it was magic; others said the Mountain was simply made up of hot rock. But the truth lay somewhere in between.

Tyler's Dad looked out of the window with boyish excitement. Racing into the hallway, he shouted up the stairs. "Come on, Tyler, it's time for some tobogganing!"

Tyler, still half-submerged beneath his cosy warm bedclothes and desperately not wanting to do anything, pulled the covers resolutely over his head.

"Come on, Tyler, quick, before the snow melts!"



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Tyler didn't care about the stupid snow, all he cared about was staying in his lovely warm—

Something clicked in Tyler's head.

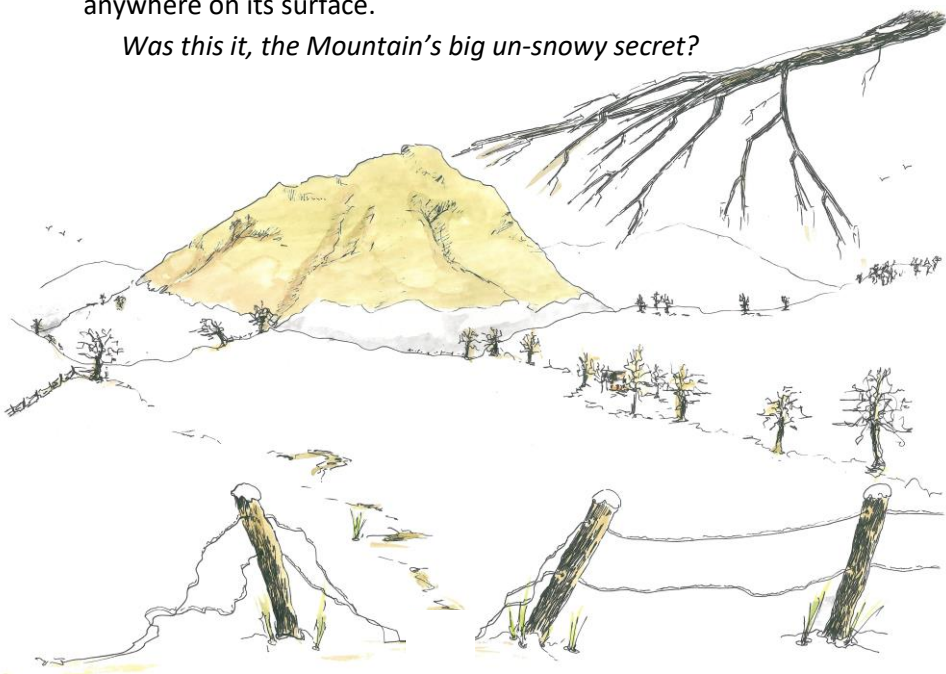
Something his Gramps had said.

'When it snows, the Mountain will reveal its secret!'

Tyler was up and dressed in under two minutes. Scooting downstairs, he hastily munched through some last-minute toast, and with his breakfast barely settled, they headed outdoors, clad in boots, woolly hats, scarves and gloves. As they set off with their toboggan in tow, Tyler was deep in thought, wondering what the Mountain's secret could be. As they rounded the bend, the Mountain came into view.

Both Tyler and his Dad stood open-mouthed at the spectacle before them: the Mountain was an island of green in a sea of white, with not so much as a snowflake settled anywhere on its surface.

Was this it, the Mountain's big un-snowy secret?



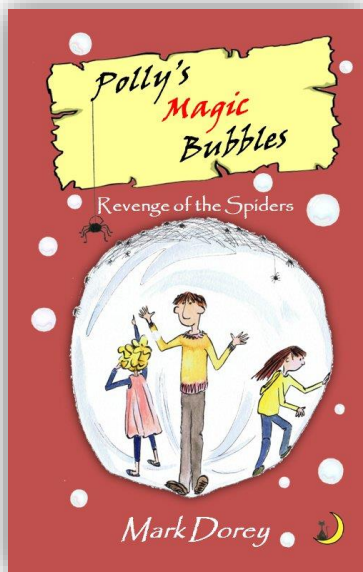
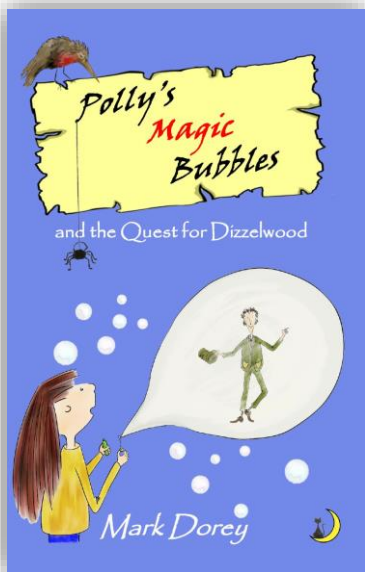
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