



After school, we were sitting around my room talking about caterpillars – Hah! Only kidding – I just wanted to see if you were paying attention. Obviously we were talking about dragons. Kat was poring over pages of the library books while Ted and Kai were feeding Flicker runner beans and laughing as he let out smoky hiccups.

‘Have you read this?’ Kat asked. ‘About the legend, I mean.’

‘Yeah,’ I said.

‘But it’s horrid.’

‘What’s horrid?’ asked Ted. ‘Flicker’s exploding poo? Yeah, I know. I had one on my forehead remember.’

‘No, this legend. What it says about how when a dragon breathed out its last fire, it’d also breathe out a dragon fruit. But there were warriors who would seek out and slay the dragons, so they could present the pre-

cious fruit to the emperor as a treasure. It's so cruel,' she said crossly.

The others nodded.

'Dragons always get a raw deal in stories,' I said. 'There's always some stupid knight stomping off to flush out a dragon somewhere, who was probably just minding his own business anyway.'

Ever since my grandad had read *The Reluctant Dragon* to me, we'd never liked pumped-up heroes looking for glory. We'd both sided with the dragon.

We all looked at Flicker, who had settled on my lap. Kat reached over and stroked him.

'I hope they were just stupid stories,' she said quietly. 'How could anyone hurt something as fantastic as him?'

'So you're sure these flowers mean more fruit is coming?' Ted asked for the gazillionth time.

'Yes,' I sighed, 'I'm sure. I told you, first you get those long vivid tendrils. Then over one night these moon-white flowers blossom and after that the fruit starts to grow. When they're red they're ready to hatch.'

'So now all we have to do is wait,' Ted groaned.



I don't know about you, but I find waiting for something is just about the hardest thing to



do in the world. Imagine if Christmas, your birthday and a trip to Disneyland all happened to be on the same day and you'd just been told you could be magic for that day and ride there on a flying carpet while being served free ice-cream sundaes. But first you had to wait. And you didn't know how long. So imagine yourself *that* excited. And that's about half as excited as we felt.

Every day before school I raced over to Nana and Grandad's, hoping to see signs of the fruit.

And as I got into class, three eager faces waited for me. Every time I shook my head it felt like I'd just told them someone had gone back in time and uninvented TV. And they weren't the only ones who were disappointed. I could tell Grandad was too. He kept asking if I was coming back in the afternoon to help out. But ever since I'd told the others the truth, all they wanted to do was play with Flicker. And I didn't want to miss out on that.

At last, after several agonising weeks, I ran into school. And I didn't need to say anything. Because Ted, Kat and Kai could see the news written all over my face – like I had a neon sign there declaring it.

The fruit had come. And although they were only teeny tiny and nowhere near red and ripe, we all knew what it meant. We were officially growing dragons!