



I knew if I was going to look after Flicker properly I needed to know more about dragons and more about the dragon-fruit tree. Once Mum and Dad were back and Grandad had left, I sat down at the laptop. Just to warn you here, computers and dragon poo really don't mix – I'd managed to clean the smelly stuff off before it ignited, but the heat must have fried the keyboard. I grimaced, closed the lid and headed downstairs to use Dad's work computer.



But I found him staring at a blank screen, muttering things that it was a good job Lolli wasn't near enough to hear.

'Tomas,' Mum called, 'I'm just taking Charlotte to the library. We won't be long. Why don't you help your dad while we're gone?'

I looked at Dad's face, scrunched up in fury, and the screwdriver he was waving threateningly at the back of the laptop. And I backed away.

'Actually, Mum, I've got some homework I need to research. The library's just the place I need to be.'



When she wasn't standing in our school playground at lunchtimes, Mrs Olive also worked at the village library.

She smiled as I walked in. 'Lovely to see you, Tomas. And your little friend of course.'

For a second I thought she meant Flicker and my hand shot to my hoodie pocket, but he was still hidden, curled up and fast asleep. Then I realised Mrs Olive was smiling at Lolli, who was struggling her way out of the buggy.

I smiled back, relieved.

The village library is tiny really, not like the big town library. But you can fill in these request forms and get books sent from any of the other libraries in the area.

'Little bit of magic,' Mrs Olive always says. 'I can summon your book with one click.' I



got the feeling Mrs Olive liked the idea that the world was a little bit magic.

'Me-wan-dagon me-wan-dagon,' Lolli gabbled as she tottered in behind, her hands reaching for me.

Mum looked frazzled, which I guess is what walking half a mile with a demanding two-year-old does to you.

'What do you want now, Charlotte?' Mum said, feebly dangling a series of half-chewed toys, a biscuit and a carton of juice in front of her.

Lolli started pulling at my pocket and I tried to push her hands away.

'Mewanna dagon,' she insisted.

I backed away, aware that both Mum and Mrs Olive were staring at me now.

'Whatever it is, just give it to her,' Mum pleaded, obviously fearing a Lolli meltdown.

If I wasn't careful this was not going to end well. I bent down to my little sister and whispered in her ear, 'Flicker's sleeping.'

It was enough to make her let go of my pocket. But I could feel Flicker stirring at all the tugging, and when Lolli saw my pocket wriggle she announced, 'Me sing lullyby peas.'

Trying my best to smile sweetly at the adults, I took Lolli's hand and led her down to the far end of the library. Mrs Olive's husband had made this kid-sized train you could sit in, with carriages full of picture books and cuddly toys. I settled Lolli on a cushion

and lifted Flicker out of my pocket. He gave a little shudder and his scales rippled. But he still looked half asleep as he lowered his head and tucked in his wings.

Lolli grinned and clapped her hands. 'Lol-liby lullyby,' she giggled. 'Lolly byebye!'

I put the little dragon on her lap and he curled up quite happily. She started humming and flicking through the pages of a book. A little ripple of turquoise flashed along Flicker's body from snout to tail. It was like a contented purr in colour. He'd be asleep again in no time. I left them to it. I had research to do.

Sadly there was only one computer and there was a sign on it saying it was out of order.

Mrs Olive saw me staring at it.

'Sorry, Tomas, there was a bit of an incident with a carton of juice last story-time. I expect you can find what you need in these though.' She swept her hand towards the shelves of books and smiled.

I nodded.

It didn't take me long. The mythology section had a whole shelf on dragons. I grabbed an armful of books and headed over to one of the comfy chairs opposite the library desk. Mrs Olive had roped Mum into helping her sort some new books and I watched as they disappeared into the stockroom.

I gave a quick glance down to the train, where Lolli was babbling away, her hand



pointing to the pictures in the book as if she was telling herself – and Flicker – the story.

Then I curled up in the chair and leafed through the first book. It was all about different types of dragon. I never knew there were so many. Every country seemed to have its own particular type. Some were snake-like with no wings, and others had three heads. In some places they were seen as terrible fire-breathing monsters, while in others they were actually believed to protect people.

My head was so far away in those distant lands that I didn't notice what was happening down the far end of the library. At least, not until the screaming started.