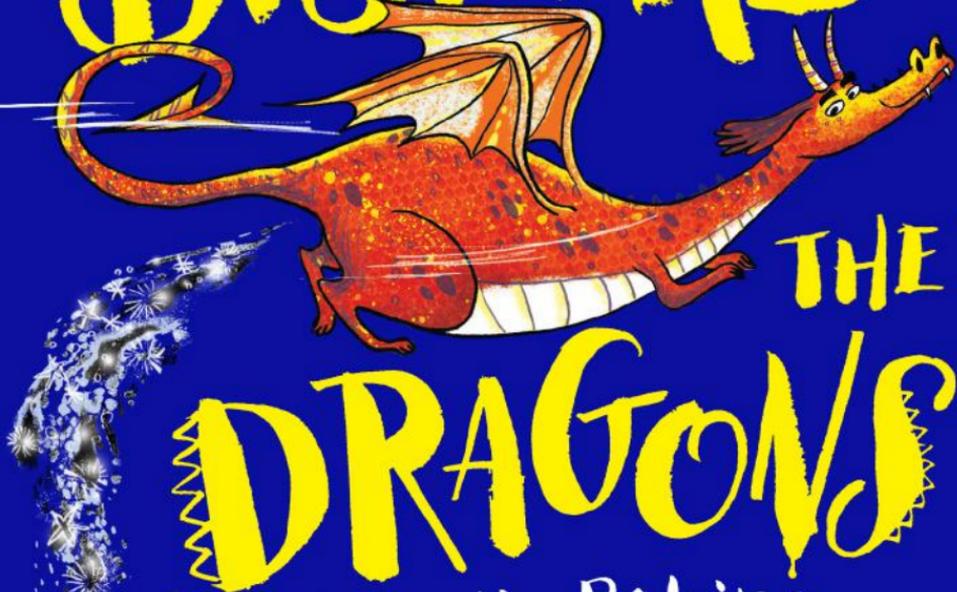


DO NOT
DISTURB



THE
DRAGONS

Michelle Robinson

Illustrated by
Sharon Davey



BLOOMSBURY

DO NOT
DISTURB
THE
DRAGONS

DO NOT
DISTURB



THE
DRAGONS

Michelle Robinson
Illustrated by
Sharon Davey

BLOOMSBURY
CHILDREN'S BOOKS
LONDON OXFORD NEW YORK NEW DELHI SYDNEY

BLOOMSBURY CHILDREN'S BOOKS
Bloomsbury Publishing Plc
50 Bedford Square, London WC1B 3DP, UK

BLOOMSBURY, BLOOMSBURY CHILDREN'S BOOKS
and the Diana logo are trademarks of Bloomsbury Publishing Plc

First published in Great Britain in 2020 by Bloomsbury Publishing Plc

Text copyright © Michelle Robinson, 2020
Illustrations copyright © Sharon Davey, 2020

Michelle Robinson and Sharon Davey have asserted their rights under
the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act, 1988, to be identified as
Author and Illustrator of this work

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced
or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical,
including photocopying, recording, or any information storage
or retrieval system, without prior permission in writing from
the publishers

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN: PB: 978-1-4088-9488-0; eBook: 978-1-4088-9487-3

2 4 6 8 10 9 7 5 3 1

Printed and bound in Great Britain by CPI Group (UK) Ltd,
Croydon CR0 4YY



To find out more about our authors and books visit www.bloomsbury.com
and sign up for our newsletters

For Grace Weatherburn, real-life Wonder

– Miche

To Neve and Alex, always

– SD

CONTENTS

1. DO NOT disturb the dragons
2. Girls DO NOT become knights
3. DO NOT stand at the wrong end of a unicorn
4. Girls DO NOT wear trousers
5. DO NOT stay up all night
6. DO NOT wake a sleeping troll
7. DO NOT lie to the king
8. Princesses DO NOT leave the castle grounds
9. DO NOT use naughty words
10. Girls DO NOT ride unicorns
11. DO NOT stay in the bath until your skin goes wrinkly



12. Princesses DO NOT shop at the forest market
13. DO NOT pretend to be a princess
14. DO NOT eat ice cream for breakfast
15. DO NOT be late on wondermere day
16. DO NOT snack between meals
17. Stable boys DO NOT wear dresses
18. Girls DO NOT play troll-o
19. DO NOT argue with the ball-troll
20. DO NOT disobey your king
21. DO NOT break the rules
22. DO NOT climb the castle turrets

23. RULES were made
to be broken!





TO THE OUTER OCEANS

LAKE WONDERMERE

DO NOT SWIM

Forest Market

DO NOT Haggle

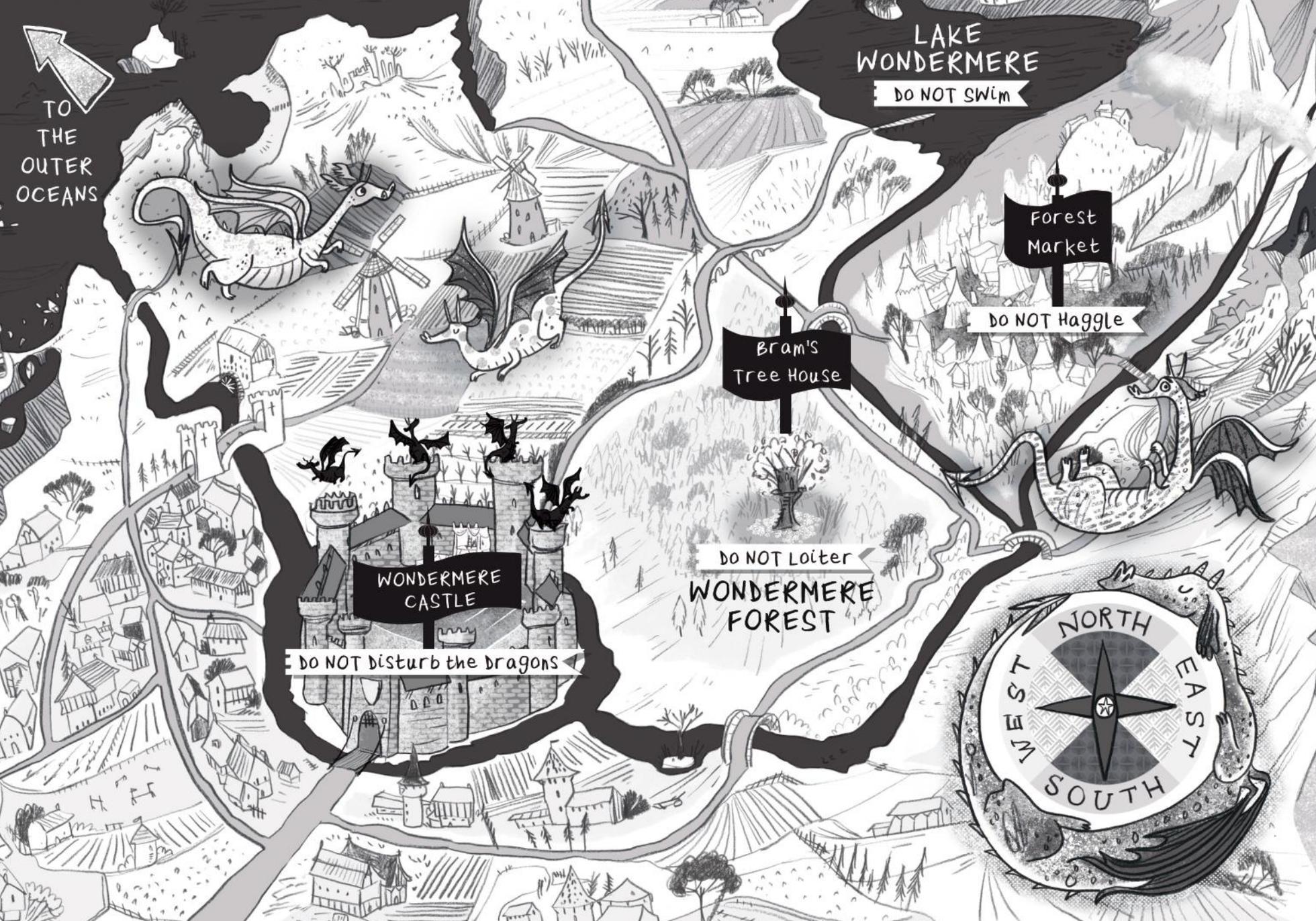
Bram's Tree House

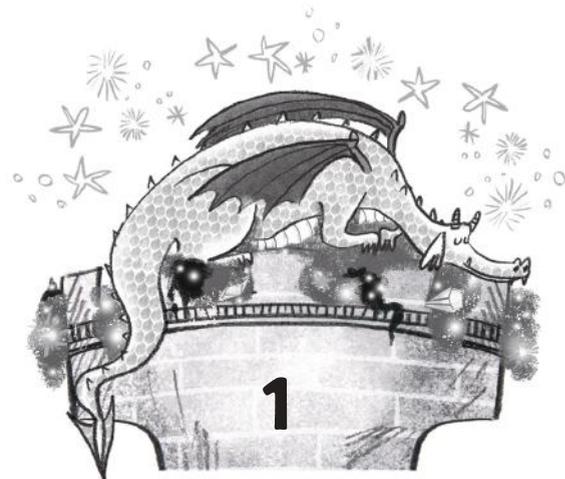
DO NOT Loiter

WONDERMERE FOREST

WONDERMERE CASTLE

DO NOT Disturb the Dragons





DO NOT DISTURB THE DRAGONS

It was the first and most important rule in
Wondermere:

DO NOT disturb the dragons.

The other nine hundred and forty-six rules
were there to make sure the *first* rule was
never broken. Rules like:

DO NOT distract the knights
who *guard* the dragons,

DO NOT dilly-dally beneath the
castle turrets

and **DEFINITELY DO NOT**
attempt to climb them. **Seriously.**
Don't even think about it –
especially you, Princess Grace.

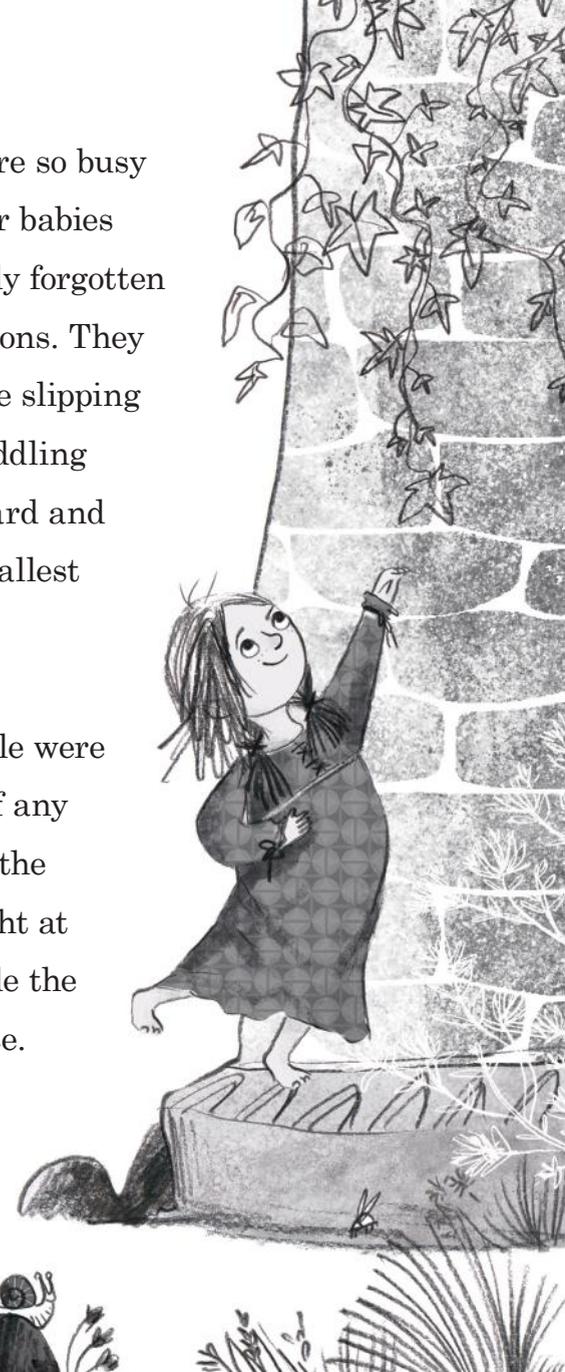
No kidding. That one time was enough.

To be fair, Grace was only two years old
when she climbed up into the dragon's nest.
Too young to know any better. And she
wasn't a princess at the time. In fact she'd
never even been to the castle before.

She'd arrived on the orphan cart. The

guard knights were so busy
cooing at the other babies
they'd momentarily forgotten
all about the dragons. They
didn't notice Grace slipping
out of the cart, toddling
across the courtyard and
gazing up at the tallest
turret.

The turrets of
Wondermere Castle were
much like those of any
other – except for the
dragons' nests right at
the top. They made the
perfect nesting site.
They were the
highest point for



miles, giving the dragons a clear view over their hunting grounds.

The dragons hunted for *sparkle* – and they didn't have to go far to find it.

The surrounding forests were coated in pixie dust. The hills wore soft blankets of sparkling spangle moss. Gold, diamonds and rubies glittered in every rock, stone and pebble from the south coast to the north. Even on a dull day, Wondermere put on the glitz – and the dragons' nests gave the biggest *bling* of all.

Grace had never seen anything so *sparkly*.

A particularly chunky diamond seemed to wink at her. The nest looked so pretty and cosy... Much more appealing than the back of a crowded cart.

The guard knights were distracted.

Grace dilly-dallied.

But not for long. She started to climb the turret.



Grace wrapped her pudgy little hands around the thick tangle of honeysuckle and ivy, and began to shimmy up.

By the time the guard knight had spotted her, Grace was already halfway to the top.

At least she was heading towards an *empty* nest. The dragon it belonged to was out hunting. The others were dozing in their own turret-top nests, their great scaly tails wrapped around their treasures.

Even so, getting Grace down was a serious challenge. Climbing the tower was easy enough for a little girl, especially a brave and curious one like Grace. It was *not* so easy

for a full-grown man in armour.

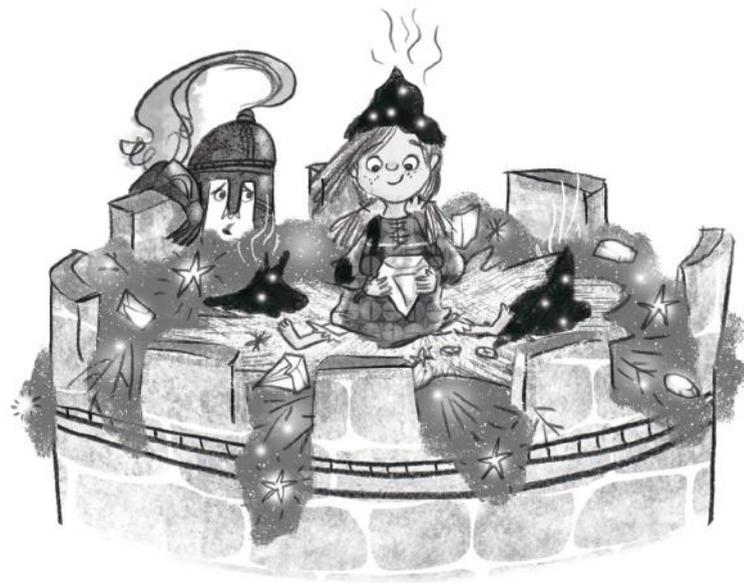
By the time the guard knight called for help, she'd managed to clamber right into the nest.

She seemed quite happy there, playing with jewels and coins. But if the dragon who'd collected them came *back* ...

King Wonder himself ordered his entire band of knights to fetch the infant down. The men formed a human ladder that clanked ... and clanged ... and wobbled ... but held fast as the bravest knight clambered to the top.

By the time he reached her, Grace was covered in coins and gemstones and dragons' toenails, stuck to her baby-soft skin by dragon poo.

Every single one of these things was said to bring good luck, even the poo. Judging by the state of her, Grace must be the luckiest girl in



the kingdom. At least that's what the knight said as he handed her gently over to the king.

And so it was that Grace came to live in Wondermere Castle. She was adopted by King Wonder himself and raised as a twin sister to the little Princess Portia.

Eight happy years passed. Princess Portia and Grace became best friends. Grace adored her sister and the king, who was the most

wonderful father anyone could have wished for. Perhaps she really *was* the luckiest girl in the kingdom?

But she would happily have swapped her life of luxury for a unicorn and a suit of armour.

The knight who rescued her had made quite the impression. Such bravery. Such selflessness. Such *fun*.

Serving the king! Guarding the dragons! Riding a unicorn across the realm! Grace longed to do it all.

But that's where her luck ran out. She might not have known the rules when she *first* arrived at the castle, but she was all too familiar with them by now.

Girls DO NOT become knights.



GIRLS DO NOT BECOME KNIGHTS

'It's a stupid rule,' Grace said, taking a seat in the royal balcony. 'We'd make just as good knights as the boys.'

'We'd probably be better at playing troll-o too,' said Portia, sitting down too.

'Not this again?' the king said. 'The Rules of Wondermere clearly state—'

Grace held up her fingers and began

making a list. ‘Girls can’t ride unicorns ...’

‘Too risky,’ her father agreed.

‘Or wear armour ...’

‘Too heavy.’

‘We can’t wield weapons ...’

‘Absolutely not.’

‘Or go on epic quests.’

The king frowned. ‘How could you *possibly* go questing in a *dress*?!’

‘We wouldn’t *have to* if we were allowed to wear *trousers*,’ said Portia.

Grace gave her sister a high five, then turned her attention to the troll-o pitch below.

The courtyard was filling up with young knights on unicorns. Half the boys wore red armour, the other blue. The two teams lined up beneath the royal box.



A boy in blue took off his helmet and bowed to the king. ‘Permission to whack the troll, your majesty?’

‘Permission granted, Sir Oliver!’

A boy in red lifted up his visor. ‘M’ladies,’ he said with a bow, ‘I hope our manly sporting doth not overwhelm thee.’

Grace rolled her eyes. ‘Thanks, Sir Arthur, but I’m sure we’ll manage.’

She’d do more than manage. She’d follow every last twist, turn and whack of the troll, imagining *she* was playing too.



The ball-troll dashed across the cobbled pitch. It weaved between the unicorns’ pounding hooves and ducked to avoid the knights’ mallets.

Not that trolls minded being walloped. Their skin was so thick they barely felt a thing.

WHACK!

Grace applauded as a blur of fur went flying through the round goal hoop.

Every troll in the realm dreamed of becoming a ball-troll, just as every boy dreamed of becoming a knight.

Every boy and Princess Grace.

If only she were allowed to give troll-o a try. It would be the perfect practice for knighthood. It tested your strength, stamina, balance and skill. Although right now the boys weren’t practising anything – they’d put down their mallets for a meadow-juice break.

A twinkle up among the clouds caught Grace’s eye. A large purple dragon was

returning to its nest, a blue gem glittering in its beak.

She watched as it landed with a thud, waking another dragon. The second dragon screeched, flapped its wings and flew lazily off over the surrounding treetops.

‘The dear old things are getting excited,’ said an elderly troll, waddling into the royal box. ‘Only two weeks until Wondermere Day!’

Taffy Trafalgar was the king’s oldest friend and closest advisor. He was also the girls’ tutor. Grace sank lower in her seat. She’d much rather stay and watch the troll-o than face another day of princess lessons.

‘I daresay they’re looking forward to the celebrations,’ the king said. ‘How are the preparations going, Taffy?’

‘All on track, sire,’ the troll said, clicking

his furry heels together. ‘Just the bunting to finish and we’ll be all set. Come along, girls! Time for your sewing lesson.’

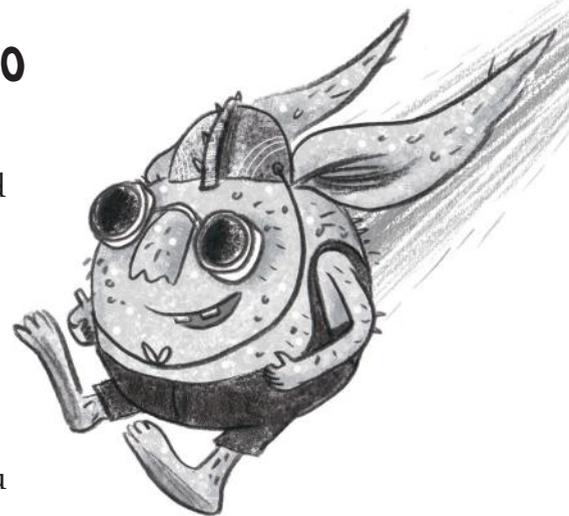
Grace groaned. ‘Do we *have* to? They’ve just started goal practice!’

The boys were taking turns to try and whack the ball-troll through the goal hoop.

‘THREE-NIL TO THE REDS!’

the ball-troll cried gleefully as it sailed past the royal box.

Taffy puffed out his chest. ‘You most certainly *do* have to – the rules say so.



It won't take long. You've already sewn three thousand metres of the stuff. Just another seven thousand to go!

Grace put her head in her hands, peeping out through a gap in her fingers so she didn't miss any goals.

'I don't see why we can't just fetch last year's bunting up from the dungeons and use it again?' Portia said. 'It's still in perfect condition.'

Taffy shook his head. 'That would never do.'

'Quite right, Taffy,' said the king, stroking his beard thoughtfully. 'We must stick to our rules and traditions. The aim of Wondermere Day is to *delight* the dragons, not *disturb* them.'

'I bet the dragons wouldn't care if we recycled last year's decorations,' Grace said,

looking back up at the turret. The purple dragon had fallen asleep, ignoring the noise the knights were making down on the pitch.

Taffy shook his head, his long, rabbit ears flapping. 'Breaking the rules disturbs the dragons – and the rules quite clearly state that new bunting must be made *every year!*'

'The rules are stupid,' Grace said. Taffy gasped.

'The rules are vital,' King Wonder said, shaking his finger at Grace. 'They're there to protect us all. So long as the dragons remain in their nests, Wondermere will be blessed with good luck. We follow the rules for the sake of the realm. As a princess, you must set a good example.'

Grace scowled. 'I'd rather set an example with a mallet than a needle.'

‘Me too,’ Portia agreed. ‘Anyway, we don’t know *for sure* that breaking the rules would disturb the dragons. No one’s ever studied them to find out. If we were allowed to get close enough to see ...’

The king began to argue back, but Grace had stopped listening. The very thought of wielding a mallet had triggered a wonderful daydream.

She’d just scored the winning goal in the Wondermere Day Troll-o Tournament. The crowd was chanting her name as her father handed her the trophy, saying, ‘*Arise, Sir Grace! Champion of Champions! It’s time for your sewing lesson!*’

‘You what?!’ Grace said, blinking.

‘That bunting won’t sew itself,’ her father chuckled.

‘You know what they say,’ Taffy said, pulling her to her feet. ‘*A stitch a day helps the dragons to stay.*’

‘Can we please watch just *one* more goal ... ?’ Grace begged as her tutor tugged her towards the door.

The balcony was plunged briefly into shadow as a dragon flew directly overhead. Its belly gurgled like thunder. It had obviously eaten a lot of spangle moss that morning ...

SPLAT! Grace was covered in steaming poo.

‘Eew!’ she said, trying to wipe the runny mess from her shoulder. It was no use. Every last inch of her was covered in glittering dragon dung.

Portia gazed at her in awe. ‘Amazing.’

‘Remarkable,’ Taffy said, adjusting his spectacles.