

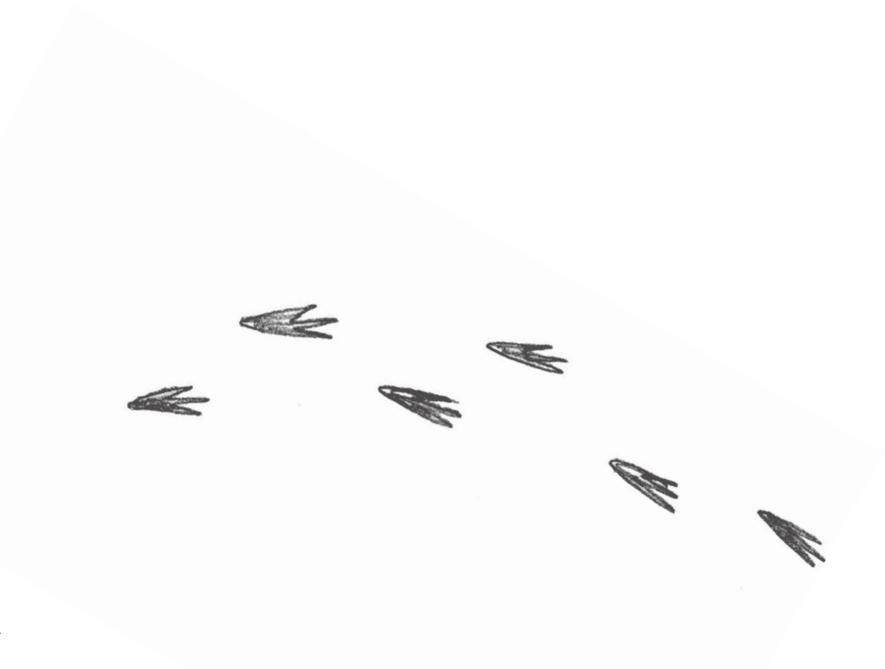
Did you see it? Right there among the brambles and nettles? A bright fleck of colour, darting into the green. A butterfly? A bird? No, too leathery. And it had a tail.

You saw it though, didn't you? I knew you would! Because you've got your eyes open.

Sometimes magic is right there, just hiding out of sight. Sometimes you have to really look for it. Grandad says sometimes you have to want to look for it.

We found it right here in his garden, where tiny dragons flit and flicker, shining and shimmering in the star-bright night.

And let me tell you, once you've seen that brilliant burst of colour, there's no going back!



1

An Excitable Idea

So, are you ready? Ready to grow a dragon?

The answer to that question is NO. You're not ready. Because honestly, you're never really ready for a dragon. I know I wasn't when Flicker first arrived.

Of course, if you've followed the story so far – and it's been quite a ride! – you'll be better prepared than most, and that's good. But honestly, if you're new to all this, don't worry. Just keep your eyes open and some oven gloves and water pistols handy and you'll be fine.

Anyway, as some of you might remember, I'm known as the Grand High DragonMaster.



What's that?

Fine.

You're right. The closest I get to claiming that name is when Ted calls me Grand High PongMaster. Just call me Tomas then.

The first thing you should know about me is that I get ideas. All the time. And the biggest ones often come barging into my room just as I'm about to fall asleep.

They don't seem to care about being polite and waiting until I'm sitting somewhere sensible with a pen and a piece of paper. This idea bounced on my bed till I was properly awake. And because it was so big it was like having an elephant and a gerbil on the same trampoline, with me being the gerbil, almost boinging across the room. It even woke up Zing, who immediately started zooming around.

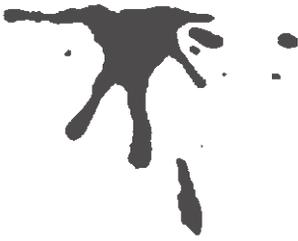




Zing is a pretty excitable dragon and when he zips about he charges up with electricity and can zap from one place to another. You never know where he might pop up, which is not exactly relaxing. So with an excitable dragon and an excitable idea on the loose, I knew I wasn't going to get any sleep.

I switched on my rocket lamp and grabbed a notebook. The first page only had a doodle of Mr Firth drinking a cup of coffee. You might think that a picture of your teacher having a drink was a pretty weird and boring thing to draw. Until I tell you my dragon Flicker had just done a poo in it! That was back when Flicker was small enough to fly round my classroom. Now anytime Mr Firth annoys me, I just remember that day.

I seized the idea zooming round my room with Zing and caught it in my book. And this was it: a plan to write everything down **EVERYTHING I KNOW ABOUT GROWING DRAGONS.**



All the things it would have been good to know back at the start, in one easy-to-read and easy-to-find place.

Of course, what I didn't know when I started this guide was just how much I still had to learn!

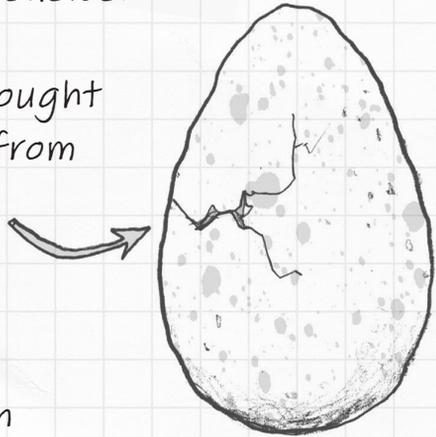


THE ULTIMATE
GUIDE TO GROWING
DRAGONS

THE BIG SECRET

Let's start with the basics.

I bet, like me, you thought that dragons come from eggs like this one.



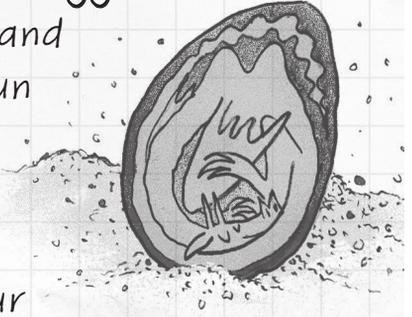
They may be found on beaches or in caves or hidden on mountaintops and vary in size and colour.

Sea dragon egg – soft shell with blue and green ripples like sunlight on the sea.



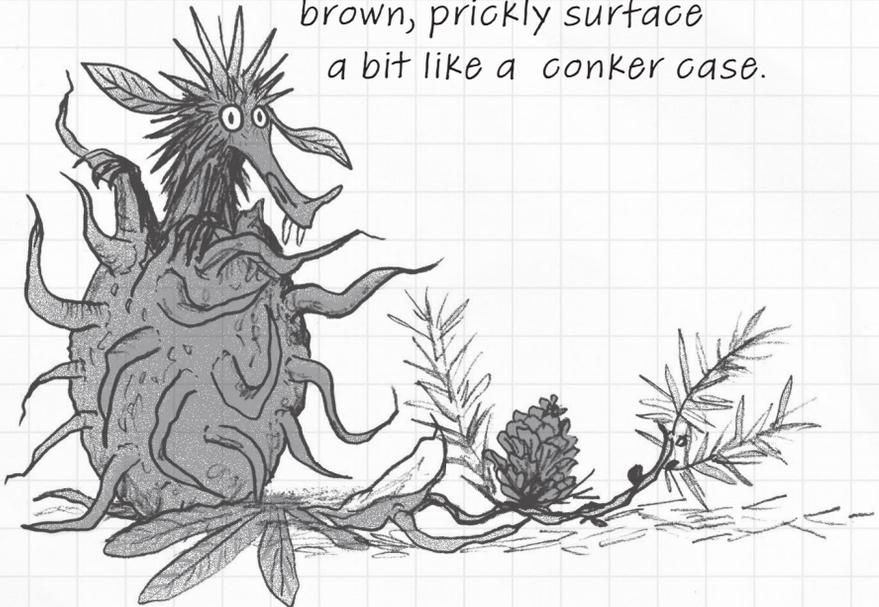


Mountain dragon egg –
glints red and
gold like the sun
at sunrise.



Sand dragon egg
– small (size of your
thumbnail), can withstand
extreme heat and cold.

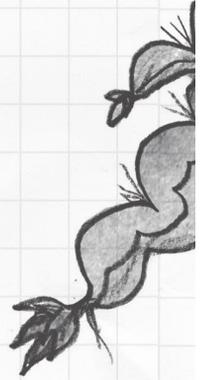
Forest dragon egg –
mottled emerald green and
brown, prickly surface
a bit like a conker case.





Well, we were kind of right, because some do come from eggs.

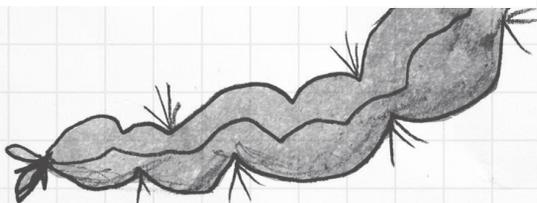
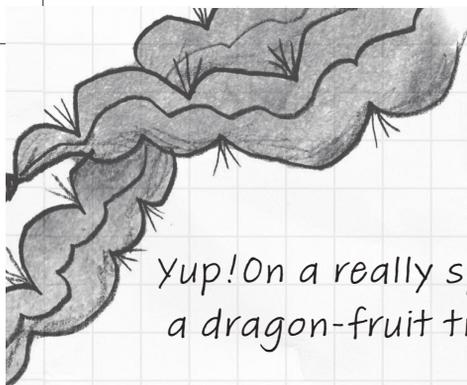
But I discovered a secret.



(You can keep secrets, right? I probably should have checked that before I let you read this. I know I told Ted, Kat and Kai, and Grandad, and I did blurt it out to Aura, oh and there's . . . never mind. I'm not talking about me. Anyway, they're all part of the superhero squad now. And you can be too. But first I absolutely need to know that you'll keep this secret to yourself. OK?)

So here goes – here's what you might not have heard from all the dragon stories you've read before.

SOME DRAGONS GROW ON TREES!



Yup! On a really special tree called a dragon-fruit tree.



And I bet I can guess your next question – where do I find myself one of these dragon trees?



You want a map? Sorry but it doesn't work like that. There's no 'you are here', 'dragon is here'. You just have to keep your eyes open.



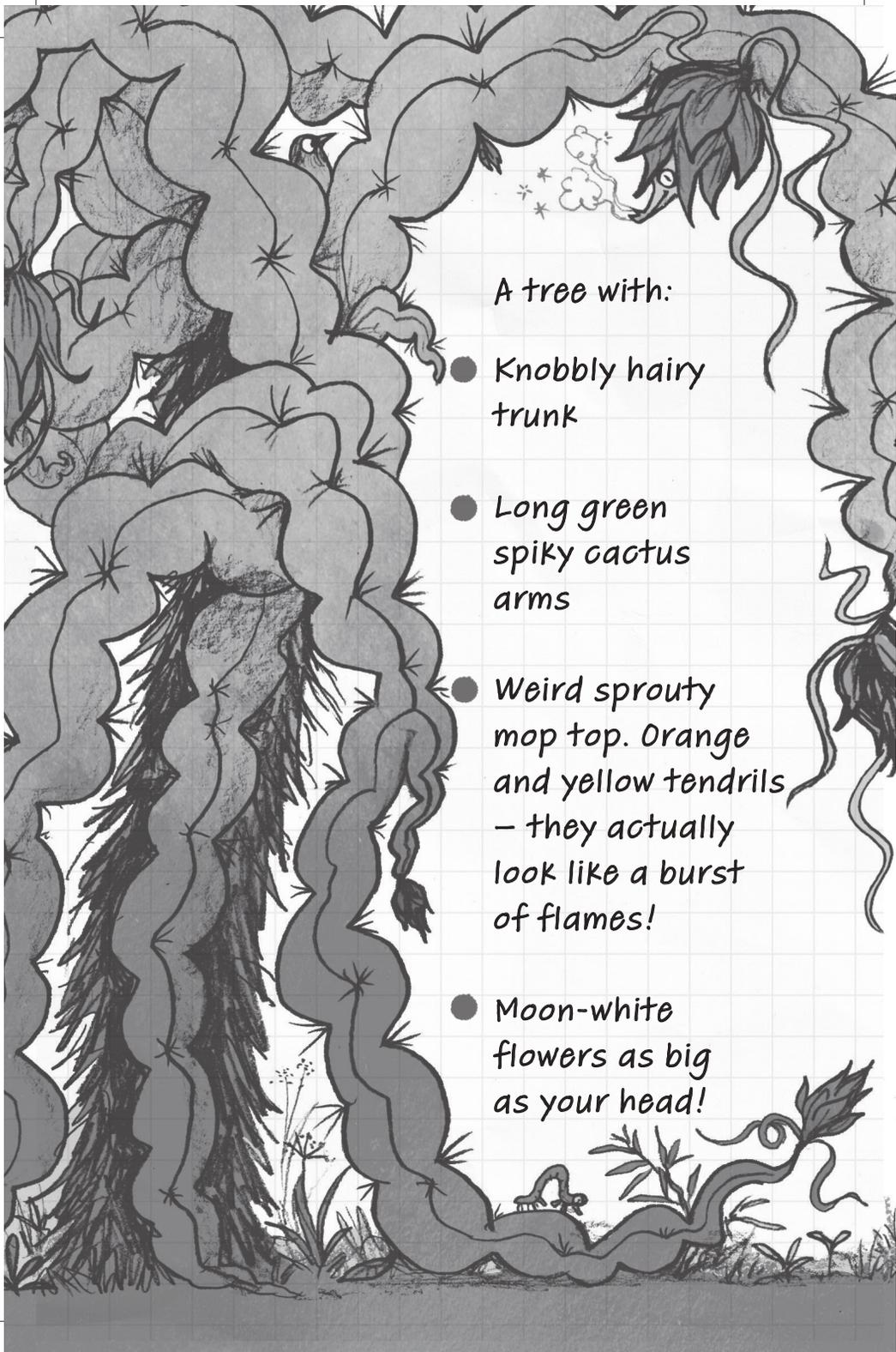


Dragon-fruit trees originally came from Mexico, but nowadays you can find them all over the world. I found one in my grandad's garden!

Kat and Kai have gone to live in Suzhou in China and they've seen loads there. So I guess if you want me to narrow it down, somewhere between Mexico and here and China is your best bet. Of course, not all of them will grow dragons – but we'll come to that later!

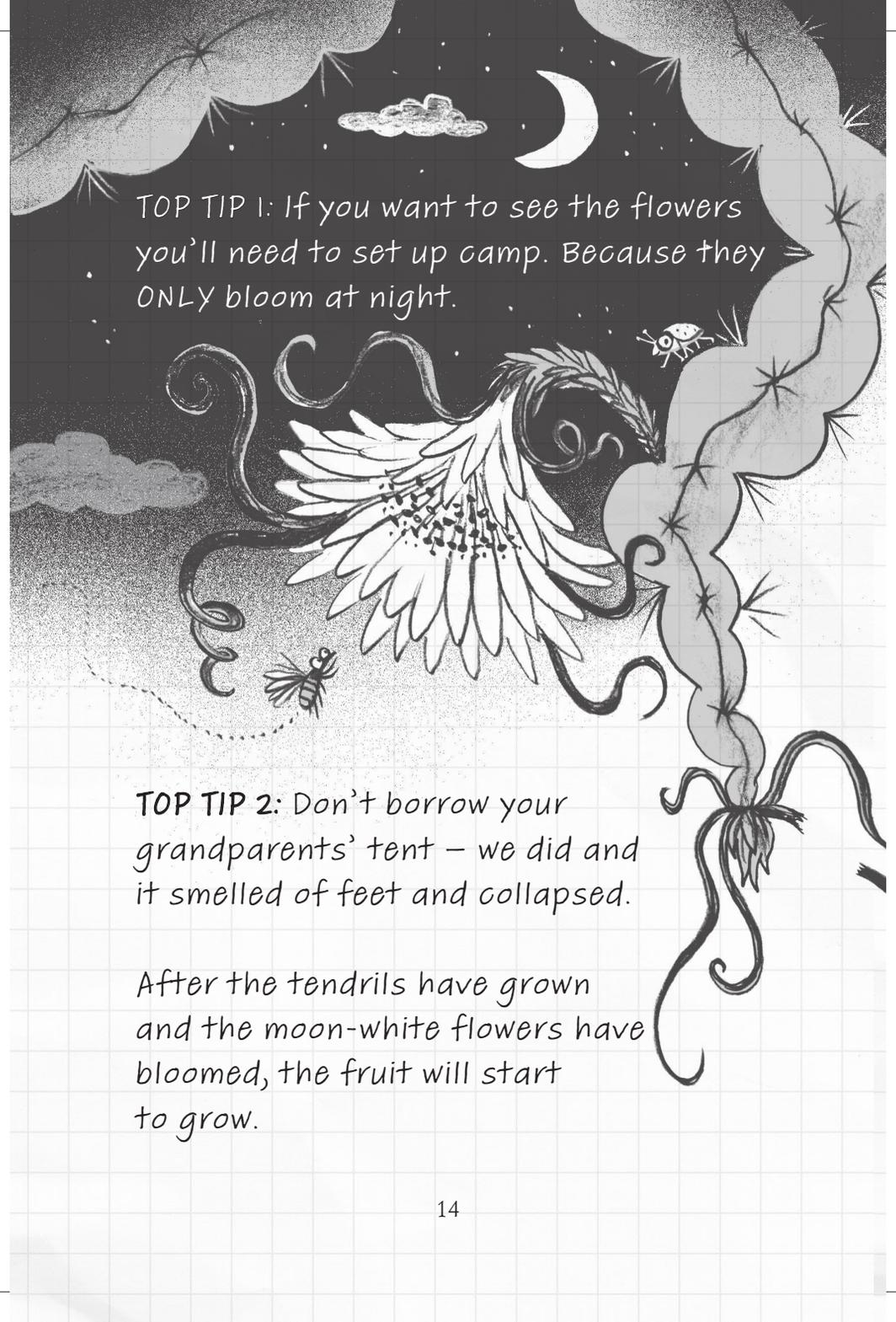
Here's what you need to look for:





A tree with:

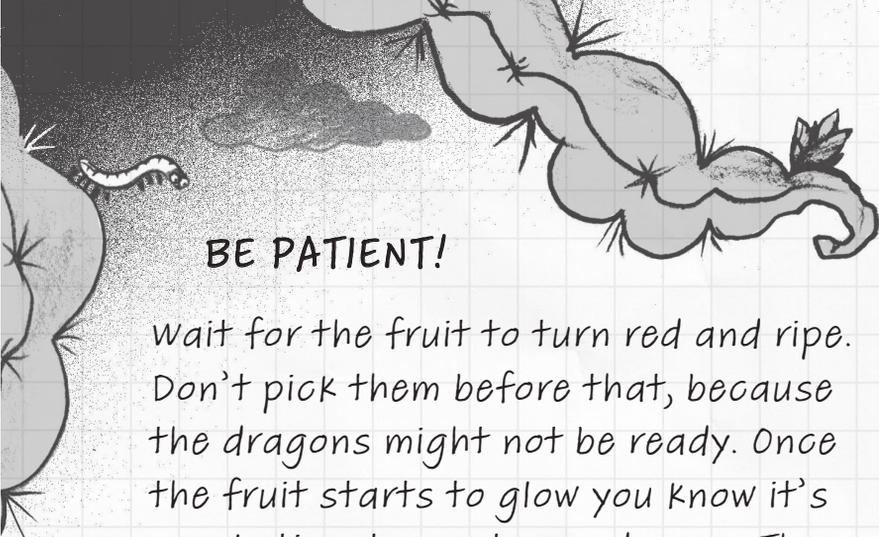
- Knobby hairy trunk
- Long green spiky cactus arms
- Weird sprouty mop top. Orange and yellow tendrils – they actually look like a burst of flames!
- Moon-white flowers as big as your head!



*TOP TIP 1: If you want to see the flowers you'll need to set up camp. Because they **ONLY** bloom at night.*

TOP TIP 2: Don't borrow your grandparents' tent – we did and it smelled of feet and collapsed.

After the tendrils have grown and the moon-white flowers have bloomed, the fruit will start to grow.



BE PATIENT!

Wait for the fruit to turn red and ripe. Don't pick them before that, because the dragons might not be ready. Once the fruit starts to glow you know it's nearly time to meet your dragon. The fruit will fall – onto the ground or into your hand – when it's time for it to burst. Some of us wonder if the dragons choose whose hand their fruit will drop into.



If Ted and Sunny are anything to go by, dragons do seem to seek out someone a bit like them.





I was pretty pleased with all that writing. It'd taken ages, and by the time I put my pen down my hand was aching and Zing had fallen asleep on my bed.

I was so excited to tell the rest of the superhero squad about my big idea that I sent a group message to them all.

Then I crawled under the covers and thankfully no more ideas barged in to wake me up again till morning – when my little sister Lolli woke me up with my own personal drum roll.

