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Opening extract from
The Dragonsitter: Trick or Treat?

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The Dragonsitter: Trick or Treat?

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Josh Lacey
Illustrated by Garry Parsons

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London



From: Edward Smith-Pickle

To: Morton Pickle

Date: Tuesday 24 October

Subject: Halloween



Attachments: Ghost and monster



Dear Uncle Morton

Can I borrow your dragons?

Next week there is a Fancy Dress Competition at the Halloween Parade.

The first prize is a new computer, which is exactly what we need.

Our computer is Dad's old one. He left it behind when he moved out, and that was four years ago, and it was already ancient then.

Also Emily spilt a glass of milk on the keyboard and now the keys only work if you press them really hard.

All our problems would be solved if we won that prize.

Unfortunately we don't have very good costumes.

I was planning to go as Frankenstein's Monster, but I can't find any bolts for my neck.

Emily wants to be a ghost, but that just means wearing a sheet and going "Whoooo, whoooo" and she's never going to win anything for that.



Could we borrow your dragons?

With them we'd be sure to win first prize.

We would only actually need Ziggy and Arthur for one night, but Mum says you are welcome to stay for the whole week, as long as you don't mind sleeping on the sofa.

Granny is staying for half-term, and I bet she would really like to see you too.

Love from

your favourite nephew

Eddie

From: Morton Pickle
To: Edward Smith-Pickle
Date: Wednesday 25 October
Subject: Re: Halloween
Attachments: I ♥ Oregon

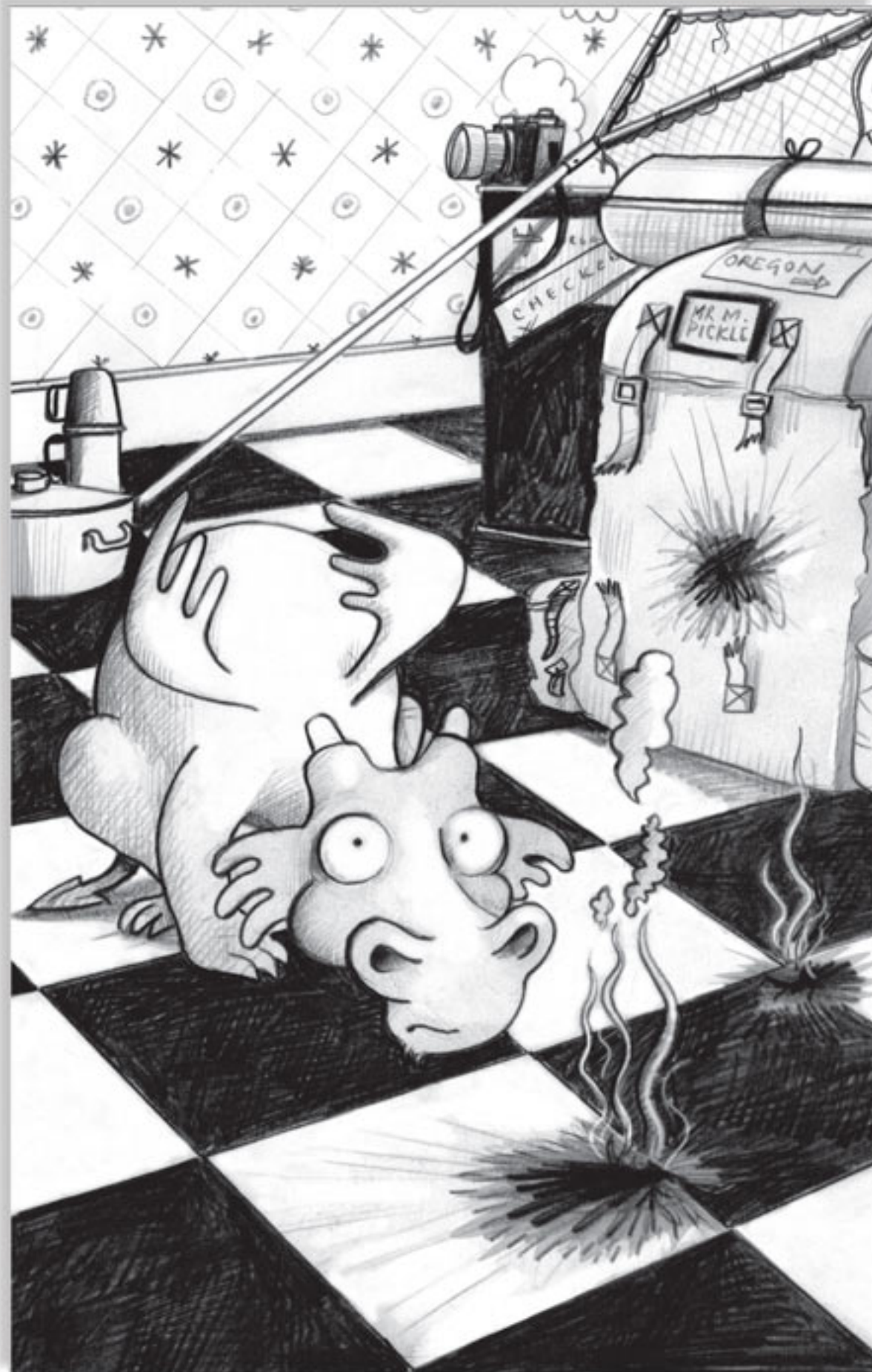


Dear Eddie

I would have loved to join you for Halloween. There are few things that I like more than tricks and treats. Sadly though I must stay here in Scotland, because I am hard at work preparing for my trip to Oregon in search of Bigfoot.

However, Gordon has kindly volunteered to come in my place. I think he just wants an excuse to see your mother. He is always complaining about how much he misses her.

As you will see for yourself, Arthur is going through a growth spurt at the moment, and hasn't quite mastered the art of breathing fire. You may want to keep an extinguisher handy.



Thank you for the picture of your costumes. You both look lovely, but I can see why you need a little help. I'm sure the dragons will be just the job. If they aren't, perhaps you could persuade your mother to buy you a new computer? Or a second-hand one? Surely they aren't too expensive these days.

What a pity that I shall not get to see my own mother. But please do send her my best wishes.

With love from
your affectionate uncle
Morton

From: Edward Smith-Pickle
To: Morton Pickle
Date: Thursday 26 October
Subject: Thank you!



Dear Uncle Morton

Thank you very much for sending the dragons with Gordon.

I promise we will take very good care of them.

I know we've had a few disasters before, but this time will be different.

I just hope we win first prize. The computer isn't going to live much longer. It keeps moaning and groaning, and the screen has gone wobbly.

I asked Mum if she could buy us a new one, but she said single-parent families can't afford luxuries like brand-new computers.

She said even a second-hand one would be too much for us in the current economic climate.

I asked what the current economic climate was, and she said gloomy.

Love from

Eddie

From: Edward Smith-Pickle

To: Morton Pickle

Date: Saturday 28 October

Subject: They've arrived



Attachments: Tams; Hamper



Dear Uncle Morton

Do you like our tam-o'-shanters?

Gordon gave them to me and Emily. He says we look like proper wee Scots.



He also brought lots of presents for Mum.



We just ate some of the smoked salmon with our scrambled eggs.

Mum said it was the most delicious breakfast of her entire life, and I think it might have been mine too.

I see what you mean about Arthur breathing fire. He's already had a few accidents. But Mum said it didn't matter.

I think she's just pleased to see Gordon.

Also he had a pee on the carpet. (Arthur, I mean, not Gordon.) But you can't blame him for that. He must have been desperate after driving all the way from Scotland.

When everyone has recovered, we're going to make our costumes.

I've changed my mind about Frankenstein's Monster. I'm going to be an Egyptian mummy instead.

Emily is still planning to go as a ghost, and the dragons can just be themselves.

I'll send you lots of pictures.

Love from

Eddie

From: Edward Smith-Pickle

To: Morton Pickle

Date: Saturday 28 October

Subject: HELP!!!!!!!!!!



Attachments: The proposal

Dear Uncle Morton

We have a big problem and we need your help.

This afternoon Gordon asked Mum to marry him.

Obviously that's not the problem. We all really like Gordon. Especially Mum.

The problem is he got down on one knee and pulled a ring from his pocket.

Then he said, "Will you marry me?"

Mum literally couldn't speak.

If only she had said "yes" straightaway.

Then Gordon could have put the ring on her finger and everything would have been fine.

Unfortunately Mum just stood there with her mouth open, staring at the ring as if she'd never seen anything like it before.



Which gave Arthur enough time to fly across the room and snatch it out of Gordon's hand.

I don't know why he did that. I've never eaten a ring myself, but I can't imagine they're very tasty.

Even so he swallowed it quicker than you could say "I do".

Mum and Gordon tried to force Arthur's mouth open and pull the ring straight out again, which wasn't exactly sensible.

Gordon is very upset. Not just about his burnt fingers, but also about the ring.

It belonged to his great-aunt Isla. She wore it every day for sixty-seven years.

Now it's inside Arthur's tummy and we don't know how to get it out.

Do you have any brilliant ideas?

Love from

Eddie