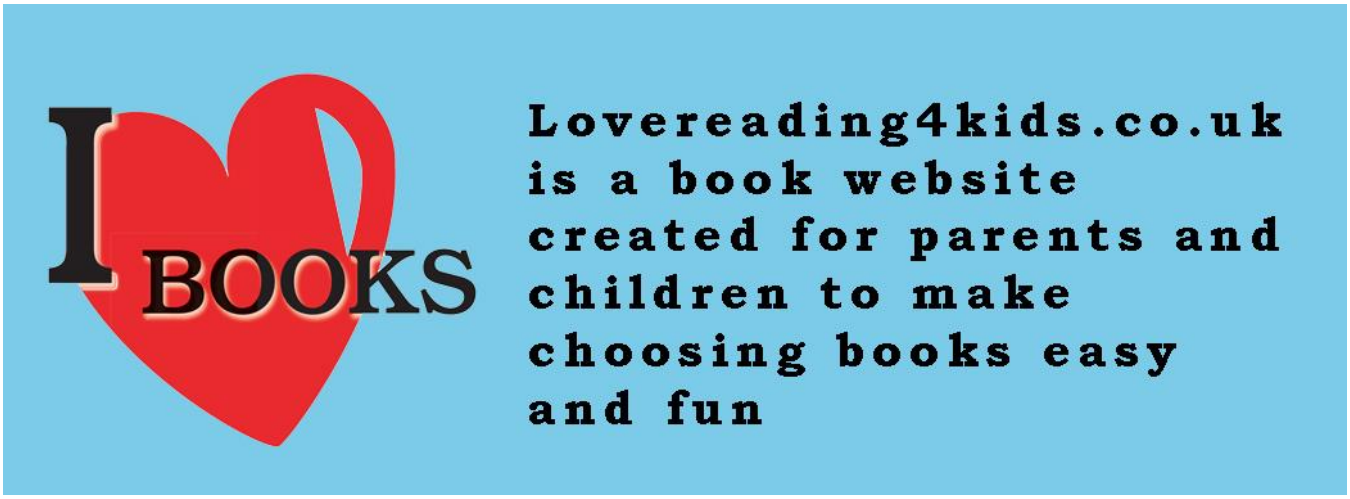


Opening extract from

Dragon Red

Written & Illustrated by

Shoo Rayner

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Dragon Red

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Chapter One



The tall tower loomed over the town. At its foot, the hooded figure of a man pressed back into the dark shadows. He waited a moment, to make sure he'd not been seen.

There were no security cameras watching that part of the castle, as no one would would be stupid enough to do what he was about to try. Slowly, hand over hand, inch by inch, fingers tightly gripping the sharp granite blocks, he scaled the fortress walls.

A short while later, he appeared on top of the battlements, raised his arms, punched the air and let out a wild cry of triumph.

As the sound faded, another shape overshadowed him. Huge wings unfurled against the bright, moonlit sky. The unmistakable silhouette of a dragon! It opened its mouth wide, roaring jets of

red and yellow flame into the night. The man's face glowed in the blazing light. A smile spread across his face.

The man climbed up awkwardly onto the dragon's back. As one, the dragon and its master swooped over the rooftops, blazing fire and leaving a trail of gleeful laughter in their wake. Curtained bedroom windows lit up, as the townsfolk were woken from their peaceful dreams.



An alarm sounded. Sirens wailed in the distance. A loud, electronic voice broke into Harri's dream.

'This is a police emergency announcement. All residents must stay indoors. Do not leave your house for any reason. I repeat, stay indoors. A dragon has escaped. If you see it, report it at once. Under no circumstances should you approach it yourself.'

'Wake up, Harri! The police are here. They want

to talk to you.' Harri's mum gently shook her son awake.

Harri threw the covers off and sat up in bed, blinking and shaking the sleep out of his eyes. He felt confused and muzzy. He'd been dreaming of the dragons. Was this still the dream?

'What's that noise?' he croaked.

'They've set off the old air raid sirens,' Mum explained.



'Why? What's happened?'

'It's Ryan's dad,' said Mum. 'He's managed to free his dragon from the tower. No one knows where they've gone. The police are downstairs. They want to talk to you.'

He wasn't quite sure if he was really awake or still dreaming. He put his dressing gown on and followed his mum downstairs. 'But I don't know anything about it,' he grumbled. 'I haven't seen Ryan's dad for weeks.' Ryan and Harri were good friends and in the same class at school.

Imelda, Harri's sort of adopted granny, put a mug of tea on the kitchen table in front of him.

'It's serious,' she said. 'This is the Chief Constable. And this is Detective Chief Inspector Griffiths and Detective Sergeant Hughes. They want to ask you some questions.'