First published in 2019 by
Andersen Press Limited
20 Vauxhall Bridge Road
London SW1V 2SA
www.andersenpress.co.uk

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British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data available.

ISBN 978 1 78344 800 5

This book is printed on FSC accredited paper from responsible sources.

Printed and bound in Great Britain by
Clays Limited, Elcograf S.p.A.

The Dragonsitter in the Land of the Dragons



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Illustrated by Garry Parsons

Andersen Press
London



From: Edward Smith-Pickle

To: Mum

Date: Saturday 31 March

Subject: My confession

Attachments: Ulaanbaatar statue



Dear Mum

I have to tell you something.

I am not in Glasgow with Uncle Morton.

We are actually a bit further away.

In fact we are four thousand, three hundred and twenty-nine miles further away.

I know we said we were going to Glasgow for the weekend to buy a new washing machine, but that wasn't exactly true. Instead we went to the airport and got on a plane to Mongolia.

I hope you don't mind.

Uncle Morton thought you would like to have some special time with the baby.

Also Gordon is always saying he needs a quiet day in the new house to do some serious DIY, and this could be the perfect opportunity.

You'll just have to ask Emily to keep out of his way.

We arrived in Ulaanbaatar this afternoon.



We had to spend ages in customs because the officials were very suspicious of our luggage. They couldn't understand why we needed so much chocolate. Finally Uncle Morton gave them two boxes of Maltesers and they let us through.

So far, Mongolia is nice. Our hotel is cosy. We're having delicious dim sum in the hotel restaurant. Then we need to find someone to drive us to the mountains tomorrow.

When we get there, we're going to watch the Great Dragon Battle Ceremony with Uncle Morton's old friend Professor Baast. Apparently this is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, so I didn't want to miss it.

We should be back in a week or two.

Love from

Eddie

From: Mum

To: Edward Smith-Pickle

Date: Sunday 1 April

Subject: Your April Fool



Hi Eddie

Ha ha ha!

Mum xx

PS How did you and Morton make those photos of Mongolia look so realistic?

From: Edward Smith-Pickle

To: Mum

Date: Sunday 1 April

Subject: This is not a joke



Attachments: Room with a view

Dear Mum

I'm not joking.

Actually I had forgotten it was even April Fools' Day today.

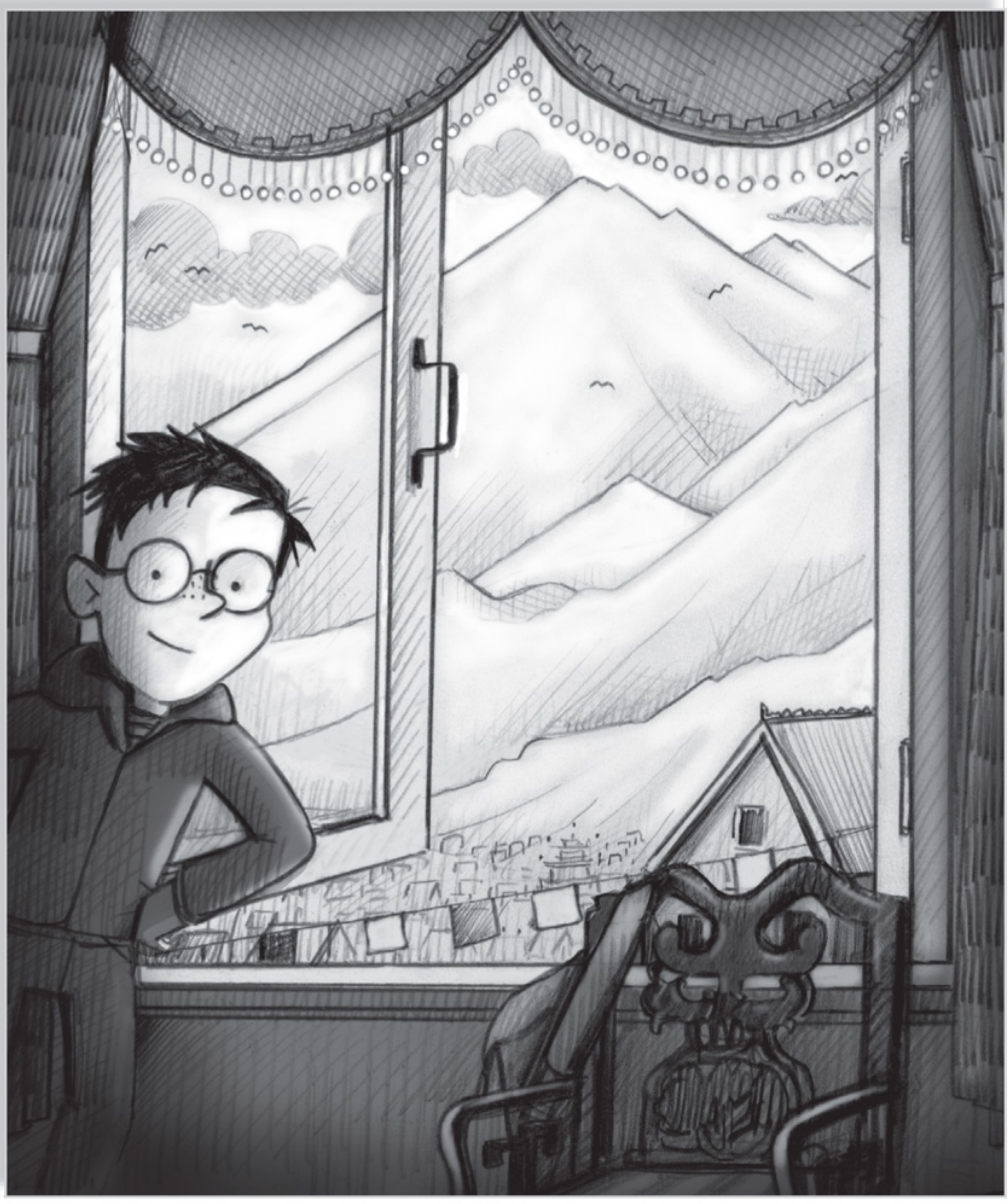
I really am in Mongolia.

Uncle Morton says didn't you get his message? He popped a note through the front door, explaining everything.

He says he might have got the wrong door, because he's only been to our new house twice, so maybe you should ask the neighbours.

Everything is fine here. We spent the whole day driving. Now we're staying in another hotel.

This one isn't as nice as the one in Ulaanbaatar. The food in the restaurant was horrid. I asked Uncle Morton if I could eat some of our chocolate, but he said we've got to save it all for the dragons.



For supper we had zblg, which is a famous local delicacy made from a special bit of a sheep. I asked Uncle Morton which bit, but he said it would be better if I didn't know.

I can tell you one thing about zblg. Spaghetti bolognese is a lot nicer.

The villagers said Professor Baast came through this village two weeks ago, but they haven't seen him since. Tomorrow we're going to hire some horses and follow his route into the mountains.

I just hope we don't miss the Great Dragon Battle Ceremony.

Love from

Eddie

From: Mum

To: Edward Smith-Pickle

Date: Monday 2 April

Subject: No more fooling

Attachments: Meg



Hi Eddie

Don't you know April Fools are meant to stop at midday on the 1st?

Please don't send me any more silly emails. Or fake photos. Just come home.

I didn't get any messages from Morton.

In fact, I have rung him about ten times, but he isn't answering his phone.

Are you hiding on his island? If so, please ask him to bring you straight home in his boat.

We are all missing you. Emily says the house is much too quiet without you here. And baby Meg is miserable without her favourite big brother. She keeps looking around and making funny little noises.



If she could talk, I'm sure she would be saying, "Where's Eddie?"

We're having spaghetti bolognese for supper tonight. I'll make it with extra tomato, just how you like it.

See you later.

Love from

Mum xx

From: Edward Smith-Pickle

To: Mum

Date: Monday 2 April

Subject: Spaghetti

Attachments: Our hosts



Dear Mum

Your message made me feel so hungry!

Right now, there is nothing I would like more than a big plate of spaghetti bolognese with lots of grated cheese.

Unfortunately I can't come home and eat it, because I am four thousand miles away.

I know you're worried about me, but you really don't have to be. Mongolia is very nice.

Today we drove to the end of the road.

It really was the end of the road.

The road went higher and higher into the mountains, then stopped in the middle of

a field. The taxi had to turn around because it couldn't go any further.

We walked to the nearest village, which took about three hours. When we arrived, the villagers all came out of their houses to stare at us. The little children reached out their hands to touch me as if they didn't believe I was real. Uncle Morton said they had probably never seen a foreigner before.

We are staying the night with a very friendly family. There's a mum and a dad and six children. They're all going to sleep in one bed and we're going to sleep in the other.



There is one good thing about this hotel: our room has a brilliant view of the mountains. Tomorrow we are going to drive up there and look for Professor Baast.

Uncle Morton had a message from him three days ago, saying the Great Dragon Battle Ceremony would be starting any minute now. Apparently he's found a cave in the mountains which is the perfect place to watch the ceremony from.

Unfortunately, Professor Baast didn't say exactly where this cave is, but we're going to go and look for it.

Love from

Eddie