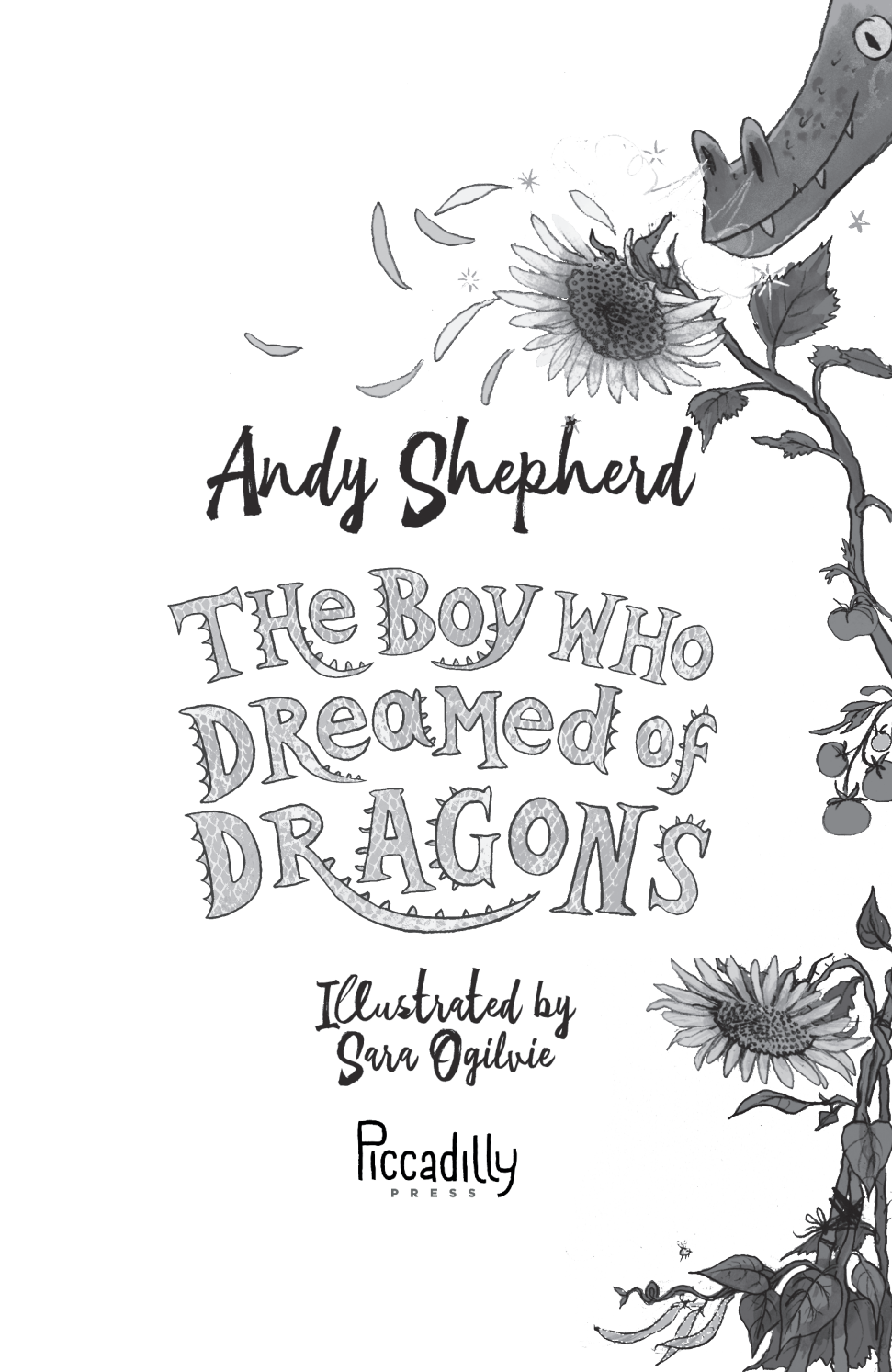


Andy Shepherd

The Boy Who Dreamed of Dragons

Illustrated by Sara Ogilvie

Piccadilly Press





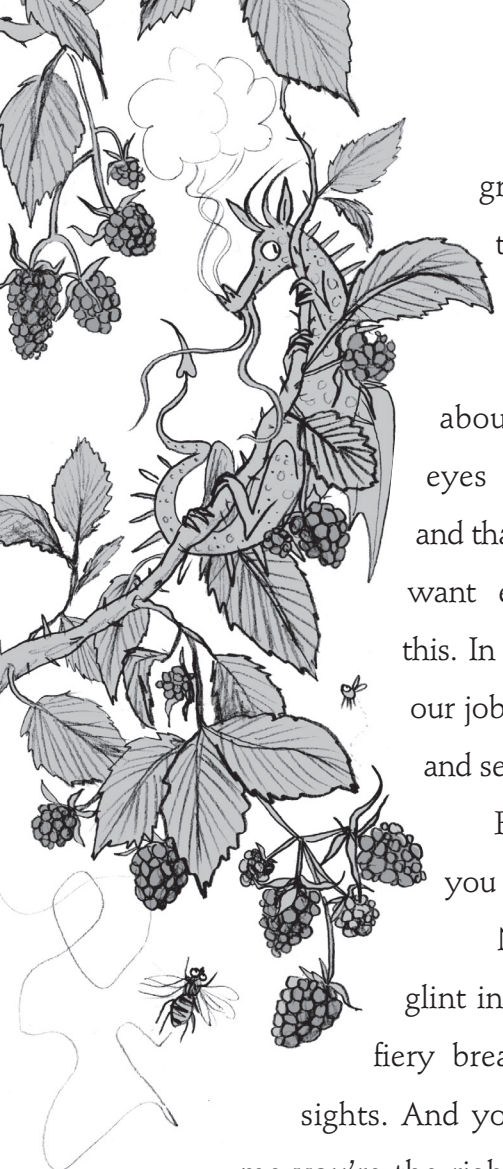
We dream of dragons. Soaring, roaring, fire-flickering dragons. While we're tucked tight in bed, they light up our sleep. Sparking, glittering, aglow.

But dreams are only the beginning of an even greater story. And if you carry on reading, you'll discover that there's a whole lot more story still to be told.

Because the truth is, our dragons don't just visit us in our dreams.

You see, a few of us know a secret. And that secret is that some dragons grow on trees. A very special tree, which grows at the bottom of my





grandad's garden, in among the brambles and nettles.

If I blurted this out to most people, right about now they'd roll their eyes and think I was joking – and that's good. Because we don't want everyone knowing about this. In fact, it means we're doing our job. Keeping the dragons safe and secret.

But how about you? Do you think I'm pulling your leg?

No, I think you've got that glint in your eye, like a dragon's fiery breath sparking across your sights. And you know what? That tells me you're the right person to hear this. So, are you ready?



1
The Marshmallow Wins It

I gripped my knees tightly to Flicker's back and wrapped my arms around his neck. A flash of colour pulsed across his scales, lighting up my hands. Red, green, indigo and bright gold. It was like there was a rainbow shooting from my fingertips, as the colour raced on towards his head.

He twisted, one diamond eye catching mine. And then we dived.

Yup! This was my life now, riding on the back of dragons!

I kept my head low and hung on, the wind tugging

at me, trying to pull me free. But there was no way I was letting go. Even though I'd left my stomach doing somersaults up there somewhere.

A roar came from behind me and I saw the golden shape of Ted's dragon, Sunny, rocketing towards us as we levelled off.

'I'm coming for you, Tomas,' Ted yelled, as they shot past. Flicker swerved to avoid the fiery blast coming from Sunny's rear end.

'Not fair,' I shouted. Flicker was fast, but he didn't stand a chance against Ted's dragon when he got one of those turbo boosts. I was beginning to think we should disqualify Ted, or at least ban Sunny from scoffing giant marshmallows before a race.

And then came the rest of the superhero squad. First Liam, riding Maxi, one hand raised, a massive grin plastered across his face. And to my left, Kat and Kai riding Crystal and Dodger, still neck and neck, their tails flicking out every so often, trying to make the other veer off course. Good. That meant they were too

busy trying to beat each other to be a serious threat.

There was a rumble and Flicker opened his jaws and blue flames shot out. This race wasn't over. Not by a long shot. Flicker's wings beat hard and fast. He let out another bellow as he gained on Sunny.

Back when Flicker was only small and hiccupping sparks, I used to dream of flying, wondering what it would feel like to ride on a dragon. And now I knew. Above the clouds, arcing through the sky like a shooting star, I hollered with him.

Up here everything was so bright and clear, with the colours of the sunset lighting our way. Just us, in this brilliant moment that might last forever. Everything else hidden below.

Even at dusk, the dragons wouldn't fly down through the cloud cover until we were right over Nana and Grandad's house. The people in our village might be too wrapped up in their busy lives to notice they were living alongside small hatching dragons, but we couldn't risk someone glancing up and spotting five

fully grown dragons flying over the neighbourhood!

The trouble was, if we left it too long we'd overshoot and have to double back. And then the race would be over for me and Flicker. It was all about timing it just right.

I felt myself tilt forward as Flicker flew lower.

'Not yet . . .' I whispered.

But he didn't listen. I opened my mouth, about to urge him to pull up, but then I stopped. Sometimes you just have to trust your dragon.

So I wrapped my arms around his neck and braced myself as Flicker headed straight into the billowing cloud.

The blue sparks that he blew out crackled like a tiny lightning storm. I just hoped those diamond eyes of his could see more than I could. Which was absolutely zilch.

Just when I was beginning to wonder if he'd actually got lost, he finally flew down through the cloud and we were out the other side. I couldn't help

giving a whoop of delight as I shook off the water dripping from my hair.

There below us was Grandad's garden. I could see the trees with their little twinkly fairy lights sparkling through the dark, and the glittery horns of Tinkle, Lolli's dragon, lying curled beneath them. And then I spied Grandad. He was walking very slowly in a straight line, arms outstretched. I wondered what he could be doing, until I saw Lolli brandishing a stick, her other hand holding down the wobbly pirate hat that was far too big for her. She looked up and waved. Then pointed her sword away from her lily-livered captive and up to the sky. I turned just in time to see Sunny rocketing out of the cloud. Seconds later Ted was flying alongside me, grinning.

'Thought you had us there, Tomas,' he cried.

As I was about to answer I saw Lolli reach into her pocket. I grinned.

'Not over yet.' I laughed and nodded towards Lolli, who was casually hurling marshmallow after marshmallow into the air.

‘Not fair,’ Ted wailed, as Sunny swerved away from the finish line, all his attention on the sweet treats raining down onto the grass.

I yelled in triumph as Flicker flew over Grandad’s shed in first place.

Best dragon race ever!

