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Opening extract from

Draglins: To The Rescue!

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CHAPTER ONE

It was very early in the morning.

Danny opened his eyes, and couldn't remember where he was. He stared at the low ceiling, the tiny window, the birch bark walls – and then let out a long happy whistle.

He'd remembered. He and his family had moved. He wasn't in boring old Under Roof any more. Not only had they moved, they'd moved to Uncle Plant and Uncle Puddle's house, and the house was OUTDOORS. Outdoors, where all kinds of adventures were possible.

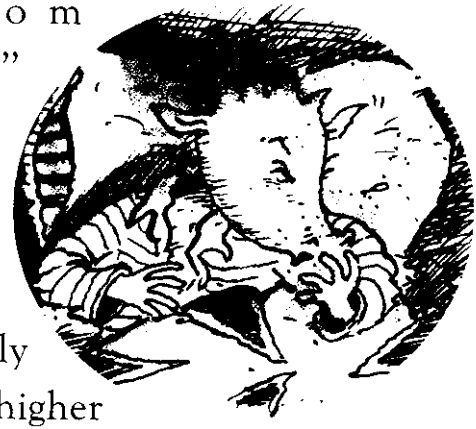
What was more, he and Dennis had been given their very own mowser. They'd spent all the day before taking turns riding her and feeding her seeds and nuts from Uncle Puddle's secret store cupboard until Uncle Puddle had caught them.

Uncle Puddle had not been pleased. Danny shifted uncomfortably on his sleeping mat as he remembered just how extremely not pleased Uncle Puddle had been. Dennis had shrugged it off, as usual, but Danny decided it wasn't worth risking upsetting Uncle Puddle ever again. Well, not unless it was for a quite extraordinarily good reason.

Danny yawned, and looked at Dennis who was asleep with his mouth open. It was too good an opportunity to miss. Danny peeled a piece of bark off the wall, and flicked it across the room.



"M m m w o o o m W O O O M P H !" spluttered Dennis. He rolled over, sat up, and threw himself at Danny. They wrestled happily as the sun rolled higher into the sky, and the birds began to sing.



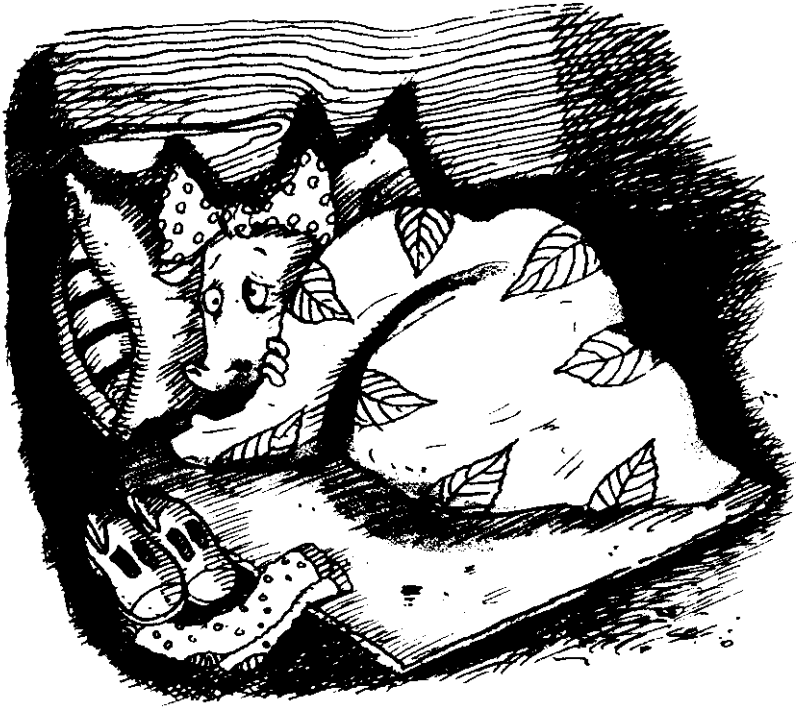
Next door Dora lay curled into a ball, her blanket pulled over her head. Beside her Daffodil was sleeping peacefully, looking as if she hadn't a care in the world.

Dora sighed heavily. Everything was strange. Even the smell of the blanket was unfamiliar. All her clothes and her few little possessions were far, far away, bundled up in a plastic wash bag, and swinging from a bent nail at the top of a tall high building.

"I'll never see my feather collection again," she thought sadly, "or my lovely LOVELY piece of red wool. ALL my best things are in that horrid old bag..."

Everybody else's things were there too, but Uncle Damson and Aunt Plum and Daffodil and her brothers didn't seem to mind. Dora did. She was homesick for the high dusty roof space that had been her home for so long, and she wished more than anything that she was safely back there.

Dora pulled the blanket more tightly round her. Things hadn't gone right from the moment the draglins left Under Roof.

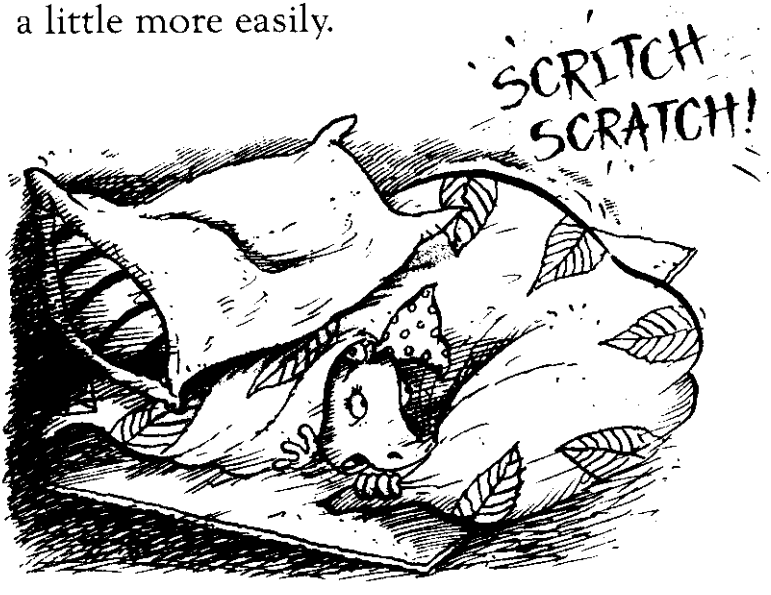


Her heart beat faster as she remembered the dreadful moment when Daffodil had vanished into the terrifying world of Outdoors. Finding her sister safe and sound hadn't made Dora feel any safer. As far as she was concerned, Outdoors was crawling with danger.

She was even afraid of her two newly discovered uncles, Uncle Plant and Uncle Puddle. They had done their best to make Dora and her family feel welcome in Under Shed, but Dora still blushed every time she spoke to them. And the way Uncle Puddle had shouted at Danny and Dennis! Dora shuddered. Why, she'd almost thought she'd seen SMOKE coming out of Uncle Puddle's nostrils, and everyone knew that smoking was the most dreadful thing a draglin could ever EVER do.

Dora swallowed hard, and tried to think Encouraging Thoughts. At least she had Daffodil sharing a sleeping place with her,

even if Daffodil did think the whole terrible journey had been one huge excitement from beginning to end. And Dennis and Danny, her brothers, were on the other side of the wall. They were just as excited about moving to a new home as Daffodil, but at least there was a kind of safety in numbers. Uncle Damson and Aunt Plum and little cousin Pip were across the corridor, and, Dora told herself, Aunt Plum and Uncle Damson were experienced grown-up Collectors who knew all about this scary new world. She began to breathe a little more easily.



Dora gave a loud wail, and burrowed into the blanket more deeply. She was about to be eaten alive by a dawg – she just knew it. Or a chat. Or even – her heart almost stopped – a Human Beanie.





CHAPTER TWO

The scratching grew louder. Daffodil opened her eyes, sat up, and thumped on the wall.

Dennis's voice said, "Are you awake? I've got a PLAN!"

"Dora! Dora – WAKE UP!" Daffodil bounded across and tugged Dora's blanket away. "Dennis has a plan!"

"What sort of plan?" Dora asked anxiously.

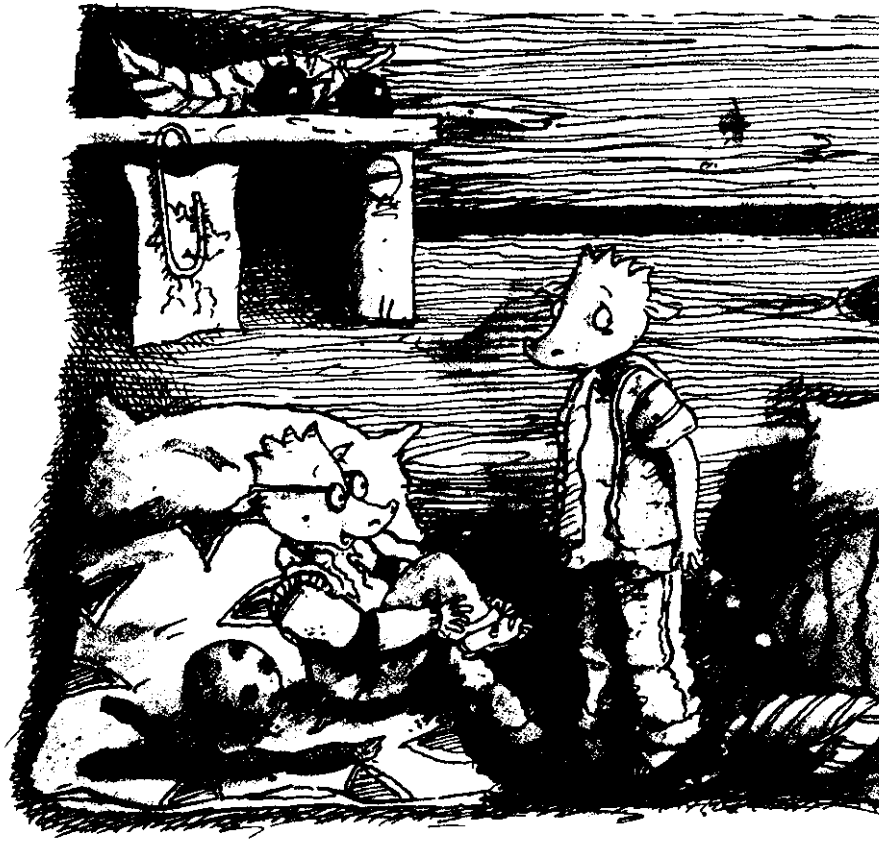
"Don't know," Daffodil said. "Come on! Let's find out!" And she skipped out of the room.

Dora sighed, and slowly followed her sister into Dennis and Danny's room.

Even after just three days Dennis and Danny's room looked as if they'd lived there for ever. There were piles of Useful Sticks, and heaps of Interesting Stones,

and a collection of shrivelled leaves, withered berries, and several snail shells. Under Roof had had nothing in it but dust and a few spiders. Outdoors, on the other hand, was an endless source of the most fascinating things Danny and Dennis had ever seen.

Daffodil and Dora edged their way into the room, and found their brothers fully dressed.



"Haven't you got your clothes on yet?" Dennis sounded astonished. "You'll have to hurry! We've got to go before the uncles and Aunt Plum wake up!"

"Go where?" Daffodil asked. A huge smile spread over her face. "Are we going to hunt for chats?"



Dennis shook his head. "No." Then, before Dora could heave a sigh of relief, he went on, "Well, not unless we meet some on the way. If we do, we'll tweak their wickers! Yah! Boo! Silly old chats!"

Danny saw Daffodil was about to explode with impatience. "We're going to rescue the wash bag," he explained. "We're going to go to Over Roof, and get it back! Dennis says that'll show Uncle Puddle we're not – what was it he said, Dennis?"

"'Thoughtless and selfish,'" Dennis said indignantly.

"That's right," said Danny. "And it'll show Uncle Damson that we can be Collectors too, just like him and Aunt Plum. SOOPER DOOPER Collectors."

"COOL!" Daffodil said. "Come on, Dor – let's get dressed!"

For once, Daffodil was speedier at getting dressed than Dora.

"Do hurry UP, Dor!" she said, her voice muffled as she struggled into her T-shirt.

"We've got to GO!"

Dora stopped buttoning up her skirt. "Go where?"

"Oh, DORA!" Daffodil's furious head popped out like a cork from a bottle. "Dennis SAID! We're going to rescue our stuff! Now come ON! And don't forget to whisper when we go down the hall!"

Dora nodded. It didn't feel like the right moment to point out that Daffodil was far more likely to wake the grown-ups than she was.



