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Opening extract from

# Draglins: In Danger!

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# CHAPTER ONE

"A Chat?" Daffodil's eyes sparkled. "A real chat? And it's near here? Can we go and see it? Can we go now?"

Uncle Damson frowned. "Certainly NOT, Daffodil. All sensible draglins—" he paused to glare at his niece, "—treat chats with the most extreme care and caution. If you had paid *any* attention to me in the past, you would remember me telling you that I myself was once unlucky enough to have met one. The result was TERRIBLE." And Uncle Damson solemnly turned his back on his nieces and nephews to demonstrate his lack of tail.

Daffodil caught Dennis's eye, and the two of them shook with giggles. Danny tried hard to keep a straight face. Dora began to wail.

"Oh NOOOOOO! I was just beginning to like it here...and now we're all going to be eaten!"

"We are NOT going to be eaten, Dora," Aunt Plum said sharply. "But Uncle Puddle has heard wowling, and we do need to be careful. I think the four of you should stay inside until the coast is clear."

"It won't be for long," Uncle Puddle said comfortingly. "These things happen from time to time. Chats wander into the area, but they soon go away again."

"I know! We could trap it!" Daffodil said.

"And then what would you do with it?" Danny wanted to know.

Daffodil looked blank, then grinned. "I'd tame it, of course. And then we could use it to chase all the other chats and dawgs away."

"But dawgs chase chats," Danny argued. "Aunt Plum told us. Dawgs chase chats, chats chase mowsers, mowsers chase – what do mowsers chase, Aunt Plum?"

Dennis decided it was time to interrupt. "*Our* chat will be a FIERCE chat with long gnashy teeth!"

Dora clutched at Aunt Plum. "But I don't WANT a chat. Aunt Plum, tell them we can't have one!"

Aunt Plum folded her arms. "You're all being ridiculous," she said. "Chats are very VERY dangerous, and you must never think they aren't, but I'm sure this'll just turn out to be a scare. Now, if you can't think of anything else to do you can go and tidy your bedrooms."





# CHAPTER TWO

"I'm bored," said Danny. It was the following day, and he was sprawled on the sitting room floor. Dennis was stretched out beside him, and Daffodil was flopped on a pile of thistledown cushions. Only Dora was sitting upright. She was trying to teach herself to knit with a twist of wool and two rusty pins that had once belonged to Human Beanies, but she wasn't finding it easy.

"Me too," said Daffodil. "I'm VERY bored."

"Huh!" Dennis tweaked her ankle. "I bet you're not as bored as I am. I'm the MOST BORED DRAGLIN IN THE WHOLE WIDE WORLD!"

"No you're NOT!" Daffodil never liked to be beaten by anyone, especially Dennis.

"NO ONE could be as bored as me." She picked up a cushion and whacked Dennis over the head. The cushion split, and thistledown floated everywhere.

"Wheeeee!" Daffodil shouted, and began to blow as hard as she could.

At once Dennis and Danny jumped up and joined in, and Dora was surrounded by a whirling storm of soft white down. "ATCHOO!" she sneezed. "ATCHOO!"

"WHATEVER is going on in here?"



Aunt Plum was standing in the doorway.

"Oops!" Daffodil said cheerfully. "Sorry, Aunt Plum. The cushion just sort of collapsed, and all this stuff came whooshing out of it. We were trying to catch it and put it back."

Aunt Plum turned to Dora. "What REALLY happened?"

Dora shook her head. "I don't know, Auntie. I wasn't looking. I was trying to get my knitting to work, and it was all going wrong."





Aunt Plum sighed. "I'll fetch a dustpan and brush. I know it's difficult for you being stuck indoors, but DO remember this isn't our house. Uncle Plant said this morning that the hallway was so full of junk he couldn't find his Collecting Bag."

"It's not JUNK," Dennis said indignantly. "It's our collection of Useful Things!"

"And it was Uncle Plant who said we couldn't bring it in the sitting room," Daffodil pointed out.

Danny nodded in agreement. "And YOU said we couldn't keep any more sticks and stones in our bedroom, Aunt Plum."

"We haven't been here a month," Aunt Plum said, "but if you bring in one more thing there'll be no room for any of us."

The four little draglins looked at each other. They were still getting used to the wonders of Outdoors. All their lives they had been cooped up in Under Roof at the top of tall, high flats, but now they had escaped, and their world was spilling over with all sorts of strange and exciting things.

Aunt Plum understood how they were feeling. "I know it's hard," she said. "Look, why don't you go and find a proper place for your Collections?" She paused, and went on. "I've got an idea. I think you'll be safe as long as you keep to Under Shed. This house only takes up a tiny part of it. If you go past the mowsers' hole, and the box shed where Daffodil keeps Speedy, you'll find masses of space. Just don't interfere with any of the uncles' things. And promise you WON'T go any further into Outdoors!"

"WOW!" Dennis was thrilled. "Our very own Collecting Store!"

"Can we have a space each?" Daffodil wanted to know.

"Oh YES!" Dora's eyes shone as she tidied her knitting into her pocket.



Aunt Plum smiled. "Why don't we see if we can find a Collecting Place for each of you? After all, you are draglins, and Collecting is what draglins do best. I'm sure Uncle Plant and Uncle Puddle will think it's a very good idea. Especially if it clears out the hall..."

"Hurrah!" Dennis, Danny, Dora and Daffodil clapped loudly.

"I'll just check that Pip's still asleep in his cot," Aunt Plum told them, "and then I'll be with you. Oh, and I expect this sitting room to be SPOTLESS by the time the uncles come home this evening. Deal?"

"DEAL!" chorused the draglins.



