Opening extract from

Werewolf vs Dragon

Written by

The Beastly Boys

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TONIGHT,

LOOK UP AT THE MOON.

LOOK AT IT CLOSELY.

STARE AT IT.

NOW ASK YOURSELF:

AM I FEELING BRAVE?

CHAPTER ONE

Ulf watched the radar screen. A green line swept around it like the speeding hand of a clock. The radar bleeped twice as two green dots came into view.

'It's the dragons!' Ulf said to Dr Fielding. 'They're coming!'

Ulf and Dr Fielding were in the observatory, the lookout room high above the rooftop of Farraway Hall.

Dr Fielding was standing by a huge map on the wall. She had been tracking the flight of two dragons from their nesting grounds on the other side of the world.

'They've flown all the way from the

Great Volcanoes,' she said. She pointed to a red line drawn on the map, showing the dragons' migration route. 'They're firebelly dragons. An adult female and her baby. They're about ten miles south and coming this way.' Dr Fielding carefully moved two red pins on the map, marking the dragons' location.

Ulf had never seen a dragon before. He looked out of the observatory window. It was night. Above the clouds the moon was nearly full. It cast a silvery light over the beast park, and down on the Great Grazing Grounds he could see lumbering shadows. The beasts were becoming agitated. They could sense the dragons too.

Ulf picked up a pair of binoculars and peered through them. Beyond the Dark Forest he could see the serpents writhing on the gorgon's head as it looked up at the sky. The spined armourpod was waving its trunk, and the long-necked giranha was peering from the top of its enclosure, snapping its jaws.

Orson the giant was standing on the bridge

above the meat-eaters' enclosures, keeping watch over the beast park. In the moonlight he looked like a mighty rock, his huge shoulders silhouetted against the midnight sky.

From high above the clouds came a flash of fire. 'Dr Fielding, look!' Ulf called.

A moment later he saw another, bigger flash.

'That's the mother dragon,' Dr Fielding told him.

There was a rumbling sound in the sky.

The clouds turned red as the dragons flew nearer, over the Great Grazing Grounds and the Dark Forest. The sky was glowing with dragon fire.

Ulf held his breath. The rumbling grew louder.

Suddenly, two dark winged beasts emerged from the clouds.

Ulf looked up through the glass-domed ceiling of the observatory. 'LOOK, DR FIELDING!'

He could see the two huge dragons, their wings beating black against the night sky, their

tails weaving like rudders, steering them through the air.

The mother dragon blocked out the moonlight, casting a black shadow down over Farraway Hall. She was flying beside her baby, sheltering it with her huge wing. She let out a series of short, high-pitched screeches.

'She's calling to it,' Dr Fielding said excitedly.

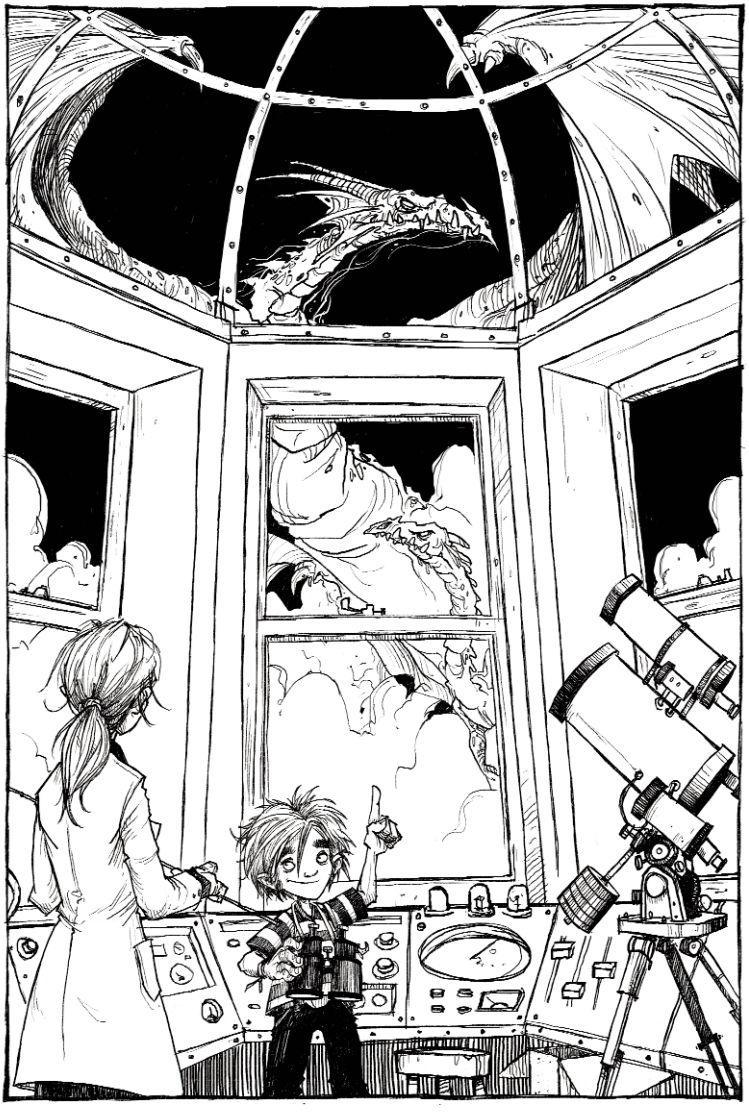
The baby dragon straightened its path, staying close to the mother, as both dragons flew overhead.

'Where are they going?' Ulf asked.

He saw two jets of fire, then a red glow as the dragons disappeared back behind the clouds.

'They're migrating to the Ice Mountains of Greenland,' Dr Fielding told him. 'They won't stop until they get there.'

Ulf looked out from the north window of the observatory, watching the dragon fire fade in the distance. He imagined the Ice Mountains of Greenland, far away in the wild,



somewhere where beasts roamed free.

Ulf put his binoculars down and looked back at the radar. He could see the two green dots on the screen, bleeping further and further northwards. 'It must feel great to be wild like a dragon,' he said.

Dr Fielding opened a drawer and took out an old newspaper clipping. 'Here, look at this. The mother dragon wasn't always wild.'

She handed Ulf the newspaper clipping. On it a headline read:

PROFESSOR FARRAWAY'S DRAGON

Underneath was a photograph of a man and a boy watching a small dragon taking off from a garden lawn.

'That's the mother dragon,' Dr Fielding said. 'The one you just saw.'

Ulf looked at the photograph, scratching his nose.

'That photograph was taken more than fifty years ago,' Dr Fielding explained. 'The dragon was much younger then. She was born here. Professor Farraway hatched her from an egg.'

Ulf looked up at Dr Fielding. 'Who's Professor Farraway?' he asked her.

'Professor Farraway died long ago. He was the world's first cryptozoologist, an expert on endangered beasts. Farraway Hall used to be his home.'

She took the newspaper clipping from Ulf's hand and laid it on the table by the window. 'Come on now, it's time you went to bed.'

'Can't I stay up and watch the radar?' Ulf asked. He glanced back at the green dots on the radar screen.

'Don't worry. I'll keep an eye on them.'

Dr Fielding stroked Ulf's hair. 'You need to get some sleep.'

She bent down and opened a wooden hatch in the floor.

'Goodnight then,' Ulf said, and he climbed through the hatch, heading down the long spiral stairs inside the observatory tower.

'Sleep tight,' Dr Fielding called.

At the bottom of the tower, Ulf opened the door and stepped out into the yard. He

glanced across to the entrance gates in the forecourt, thinking what it must be like to live in the wild.

In the moonlight, the huge iron gates stood like silver wings. At their top were the metal letters: **RSPCB**

The Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Beasts was Ulf's home. He had lived there all his life. It was a rescue centre for rare and endangered beasts of every kind, from trolls to fairies, from sea serpents to demons.

Dr Fielding, the RSPCB vet, had rescued Ulf when he was just one month old. She looked after all the beasts until they were ready to be released back into the wild.

Ulf glanced up to the observatory. Dr Fielding was standing at the window watching him.

He turned away and walked towards the barns and concrete sheds: the feed store, kit room, hatching bay, X-ray unit and quarantine zone. Following a path out of the yard, he

reached a small stone hut at the edge of the paddock. It had bars on the door and windows, and fresh straw on the floor. This was Ulf's den.

He stepped inside and lay on the straw in a patch of moonlight.

To look at him, curled up in his T-shirt and jeans, Ulf could easily be mistaken for a human boy. But if you looked closely, you'd notice his bare, hairy feet, the coarse hair above his eyes and on his cheeks, and the soft hairy palms of his hands.

Ulf was beast blood.

Each month, on the night of the full moon, he would undergo one of the great miracles of the beast world: a complete physical transformation from boy to wolf.

Ulf was a werewolf.

CHAPTER TWO

Twenty miles north of Farraway Hall, at the top of a rocky mountain, a figure stood in the moonlight.

His long fur coat was flapping in the wind, its high fur collar turned up, casting a shadow across the man's face. He wore a shiny silk handkerchief tied around his nose and mouth.

From inside his coat the man pulled out a telescope and looked up at the sky.

'Splendid. This will do nicely,' he muttered.

The man glanced down the rocky slope. 'Blud! Bone! Hurry up!' he called.

Two men were clambering up the

mountainside.

The first, a small man in a ragged suit, skittered over the rocks like a rat, dabbing his runny nose with a soggy red rag. 'We're coming, Baron,' he answered.

'You're supposed to *wear* the handkerchief, Blud, not wipe your nose on it. We're incognito, remember?'

'Sorry, Sir,' the small man said, tying the snotty red rag around his face. He looked behind him.

'Come on, Bone!' he called down. 'The Baron's waiting!'

Further down the mountain was a huge man with long greasy hair. He had a thick beard poking out from the handkerchief around his face. Slung over his shoulders were chains and nets. He was pulling on a rope, dragging a large wooden crate up the mountainside.

'Come on, you fat lump of lard!' the Baron called.

The Baron was standing at the top of the mountain with his hands on his hips. He lifted

his foot, placing a pointed serpent-skin boot on the top of a rock. 'How do I look?' he asked.

He ran his fingers through his hair.

The small man named Blud clambered to the top of the peak. 'You look splendid, Sir.'

Blud sniffed, then lifted his handkerchief and spat in the dirt.

'Good,' the Baron said. 'I want to look my best on the night I send the RSPCB to their doom.' He laughed behind his handkerchief, and it echoed around the mountainside.

'What are we going to do, Sir?' the small man asked.

'We're going to get a dragon.'

'A dragon, Sir? How?'

'You'll see,' the Baron told him.

The big man named Bone grunted as he heaved the crate on to the top of the mountain. He lifted the front of his filthy vest to wipe the sweat from his forehead. 'Where do you want this?' he gasped.

'Put it there,' the Baron told him, pointing to

a piece of flat ground on the edge of the mountain. 'Quickly.'

Bone grumbled as he pushed the crate into position. 'I'm going as fast as I can.'

'Bone hates mountains,' Blud said to the Baron.

'Stop complaining. Remember what you're here for!'

The Baron raised his right hand, holding it up to his side. His little finger was missing. 'Now repeat after me: Death to the RSPCB!'

Blud and Bone looked at one another, then folded down their little fingers and held up their right hands. 'Death to the RSCPB,' they said.

'The RS*PCB*, you imbeciles!'

Blud and Bone sniggered.

Then the three men fell silent, looking up into the night.

A chill wind whipped at their faces.

In the distance, to the south, a burst of red lit up the sky.

‘Quick! The dragons are coming!’ the Baron shouted.

There came a thundering roar.

‘OPEN THE CRATE!’

CHAPTER THREE

Ulf woke late the next morning and found a note pushed through the bars of his den.

Gone on a rescue mission. Back soon.

Dr Fielding

Ulf scrunched the note in his hand. In all his time at the RSPCB he had never been allowed to go on a rescue mission. He had never even been beyond the perimeter fence.

He stepped out of his den. It was a clear, bright day and the sun was shining above Farraway Hall, glinting on the windows.

'She left in a hurry,' a little voice called.

From the paddock, Tiana the fairy came flying towards Ulf. A trail of sparkles was bursting in the air behind her. Tiana was Ulf's friend, and always had been since the day he'd first arrived at the RSPCB. She was a woodland fairy, the size of a dandelion, with clothes made from petals and stitched with spiders' silk.

'Did Dr Fielding say where she was going?' Ulf asked.

'It was probably an emergency,' Tiana said, hovering in front of him. 'Orson went too.'

Ulf headed up the path to the yard and looked in the feed store. There was a huge dent in the mound of grain where Orson the giant had slept, but he was nowhere to be seen.

'I told you,' Tiana said, darting in the doorway.

Ulf went to wait for them to return. Tiana flew alongside him, humming to herself as they headed round the side of Farraway Hall.

On the rooftop a stone gargoyle turned to flesh and began stalking along the guttering, flapping his stubby little wings. 'Poor little Fur Face,' the gargoyle muttered. 'Left behind again.'

Druce the gargoyle had lived on the roof of Farraway Hall since the day it was built.

He leered down at Ulf, pulling a face as ugly as a clenched fist.

'Hello, Druce,' Ulf said.

'Very pretty, Druce,' Tiana said.

Druce flicked out his long yellow tongue, soaking the fairy in spit.

'Eeeyugh!' Tiana cried, wiping her hair. 'Druce, you're revolting!'

'Blurgh!' The gargoyle blew a raspberry. He hugged his knees and rocked back and forth on his heels.

Ulf giggled, then headed across the forecourt to the entrance gates. He pressed his hairy face between the bars and looked up the driveway through the woods. 'How come Orson's allowed to go?'

Tiana perched on Ulf's shoulder. 'Orson's a giant. He can look after himself,' she said.

'But I'm a werewolf,' Ulf told her.

He listened, his ears twitching. He could hear thumping.

The treetops were moving in the distance.

'It's Orson!' Tiana said.

Ulf could see the giant pushing through the branches. Orson was as tall as the trees. His huge boots thumped on the ground as he came down the driveway. The sleeves on his shirt were rolled up and he was wearing a pair of baggy trousers made from a ship's sails.

'What have you rescued?' Ulf called as the giant approached the gates.

'It was too big to carry,' Orson told him.

'Where's Dr Fielding?' Tiana asked.

Orson pointed north above the trees. 'Here she comes.'

Ulf turned to see a black speck in the distance, coming through the sky towards Farraway Hall.

It was the RSPCB helicopter, the loud

thwock thwock thwock of its blades cutting through the morning air.

As the helicopter came closer, Ulf saw a canvas cradle hanging beneath it, attached by a chain. He squinted. Hanging out of the cradle he could just make out two huge green wings and a long green tail.

'It's one of the dragons!' he said.

Orson stepped over the gates, and Ulf followed him to the yard. Ulf watched the cradle swinging as Orson guided the helicopter in.

The helicopter's engine was roaring and the wind from its blades almost blew Tiana away. She perched on Ulf's shoulder and clung to his ear with her tiny hands.

When the cradle was directly overhead, the giant reached up and unhooked the chain from the bottom of the helicopter. He gently lowered the cradle into the yard. It fell open on the concrete, and the dragon's wings dropped flat by its sides.

Ulf stepped back. The dragon was

enormous. He expected it to stand up and breathe fire, but it didn't move. Its neck was curled awkwardly and its head flopped on the ground. The dragon's eyes were cloudy.

'What happened to it?' Ulf asked.

Orson looked down. 'It was dead when we found it.'

Ulf leant forward and touched the dragon's side. Its scales felt hard and cold.

'Poor dragon,' Tiana whispered into Ulf's ear.

Dr Fielding landed the helicopter on the landing pad in the forecourt. Slowly the helicopter blades came to a stop. The yard fell silent. She came hurrying over, carrying her pilot's goggles in one hand and her medical bag in the other. 'The dragons vanished off the radar after you'd gone to bed,' she said to Ulf. 'We found this one dead near Scartop Mountain.'

'Where's the baby?' Ulf asked.

'This *is* the baby,' Dr Fielding explained. 'There was no sign of the mother. Orson,

would you mind taking it to the operating theatre for me, please?'

Orson took hold of the dragon's tail and began dragging the huge beast across the yard.

'What are you going to do?' Ulf asked.

'I'm going to do an autopsy,' Dr Fielding said. 'To find out how the dragon died. I'm going to have to open it up.'

'Urgh! That sounds horrible,' Tiana said. The fairy took off from Ulf's shoulder. 'I'll be in the forest if you want me.'

In a burst of sparkles she flew off over the feed store.

Ulf watched her go. As he turned back, Dr Fielding was unlocking the doors of a large concrete building: the operating theatre for large beasts.

He ran over to her. 'Can I watch?' he asked.