

The Dragon Wizard

Ben L. Hughes

Dragon Adventure Series, Jr.

The Dragon Egg That Rolled Away

Dragon Adventure Series 1

A Dragon Named Splinter

The Blue Dragon

The Dragon Wizard

Dragon Adventure Series 2

Fire Dragons

The Cave of Secrets

The Lost Dragons of Fire Island



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Chapter 1

David saw the Animal Control Officer drive by his house early one morning and park across the street. He didn't stay there very long, but the sight of the man unnerved him. It was as if he was unable to concede defeat, and spying on David's house was some form of petty retribution.

Once the Animal Control Officer left, David immediately called Kevin on the phone.

"Hello?" Kevin answered in a groggy voice.

"Hey, did I wake you?" David asked.

"Yeah, I was having a dream that something important popped out of the Celtic box," Kevin replied.

"Like a dragon," David joked.

"No, it was something else, but I can't remember what," Kevin admitted.

"I still have the box at my house, do you want it back?" David asked.

"Yeah, my dad was asking me about it the other day. You know how he gets when he can't find something," Kevin remarked.

"No problem. If you're going to be around I can bring it over after I get dressed," David suggested.

"Yeah, I'll be here. I was just going to play on the computer after I get up," Kevin replied.

"Alright, see you in a little bit," David said before hanging up.

"Who was that?" Splinter asked as she peered down from the top bunk of Kevin's bed.

"It was David," Kevin replied.

"Is he coming over?" she asked.

"Yeah, in a few minutes."

"Oh, good. I'll get up then."

"You do realize it's still morning," Kevin joked.

"Ha-ha!" Splinter replied. Then she flew down and grabbed Kevin's pants before he could put them on.

"Give those back!" he demanded as he chased her down the hall in his underwear. Splinter dropped them at the top of the stairs and then camouflaged herself so he couldn't find her.

"I will get you back," Kevin said as he started putting them on. "Eew, you got dragon slobber on them!"

“He-he-he,” Splinter laughed, until Kevin reached down and grabbed her off the stairs.
“Hey, no fair! You can’t see me,” she grumbled.

“No, but I heard you snickering,” Kevin replied.

“What diabolical punishment are you planning to unleash on me?” Splinter joked as she wiggled in his arms, pretending to try and break free.

“None, you’re off the hook this time. David just texted me and he’s waiting at the front door,” Kevin said as he set her down.

“I win again,” Splinter laughed as she flew off. Kevin shook his head, and then went downstairs to let David in.

“Did you want to stay and hang out?” Kevin asked after David handed him the box.

“I can’t, my parents are taking me out for breakfast,” David replied.

“Okay... thanks again for bringing the box back,” Kevin said in an appreciative tone.

“You’re welcome. I’ll call you later.” David said as he headed out.

After David was gone, Kevin ran up the stairs to give his dad the box, but accidentally tripped on the last step. When he fell, the box slipped out of his hand and tumbled down the stairs. Kevin ran back down to get it, and when he picked it up, he noticed a slight crease on the underside of it.

“Darn it!” Kevin said as he gently opened the box to see how badly it was damaged on the inside. As he lifted out the satin lining, a small folded piece of paper fell out onto the ground. Kevin knelt down and picked it up, but it looked too fragile to unfold.

“Dad!” Kevin called out to get his attention.

“What is it?” Brian replied from the bedroom.

“Can you come here for a minute?” he asked.

“Just a minute, I’ll be right there.”

A moment later his dad came down dressed in a vibrant pink bathrobe with white lacy fringes.

“What are you wearing?” Kevin laughed.

“It’s your mom’s bathrobe or nothing at all. Your choice?” his dad replied.

“The robe, definitely the robe,” Kevin pleaded as he looked away.

“So, what’s the big emergency?” his dad asked when he reached the bottom of the stairs.

“David brought the Celtic box back, and this piece of paper fell out of it,” Kevin said as he handed him the note.

“This looks like parchment,” his dad commented as he carefully unfolded it.

“What is that?” Kevin asked.

“It’s specially treated animal hide that people wrote on before paper was widely available,” Brian replied.

“I was afraid to open it because it looked so fragile,” Kevin remarked as his dad held it up to the light. “I also wanted to let you know that I accidentally dropped the box and it put a small ding on the underside of it... sorry about that.”

“Oh, I think this is a map,” his dad replied without even realizing that Kevin had just apologized for damaging the box.

“There’s some writing on the side facing me,” Kevin remarked.

“You’re right,” Brian said after he turned the parchment over to look at the back of it.

“What does it say?”

“This box and one other contain the last six Fire Dragon eggs in existence. My brother and I are descendants of the Dragon Wizard. And like our forefathers, we have been entrusted to preserve and protect the eggs until the dark days have passed. Our voyage has brought us to the new world, but the ways of the old still cloud the skies. When a new light shines forth, the two clans can be brought together, resurrecting that which has been lost. - T. J. 1874”

“Are there more eggs?” Kevin asked.

“That’s what it sounds like,” Brian replied as he felt a shiver run down his spine.

“Then we have to find them!” Kevin exclaimed.

“Hold on son... I don’t want you to get your hopes too high. This note was written over a hundred years ago and a lot could have happened since then. The other box of eggs may already have been discovered, or they may have been lost through time,” Brian warned.

“But no one else knows about this map,” Kevin insisted.

“That might be true, but even with a map it might be hard to find them. Landmarks change over time, and old mines crumble into ruin. Now having said that, I know how important this is to you, so I will help you find them if I can,” Brian said with a smile as he flipped the parchment over to study the map side.

“Any idea where they are?” Kevin asked as he peered over his dad’s shoulder.

“Well, there are two dots on the map, one marks Mount Antero and the other looks like it’s near a town called Waldorf,” Brian replied.

“Waldorf, where’s that?”

“I don’t know, I’ll have to look it up online,” his dad said as he carried the map into the office. Kevin followed after him, trying not to look at the undersized robe exposed his dad’s backside as he walked.

After a few minutes of searching online, Brian looked over at Kevin and smiled.

“We’re in luck, Waldorf is located near the Argentine Pass, twelve miles southwest of Georgetown.”

“Is that far?” Kevin asked.

“No, it’s west of Denver in the Red Mountain Mining District. The article says that silver was discovered in Waldorf in 1868. The veins were so rich that they produced over four million in silver before the boom ended. It also says the first silver ore produced from the Waldorf mine was sent to Swansea, Wales for processing,” Brian said, as if that fact was particularly fascinating.

“Why would they ship the ore half way around the world?” Kevin asked.

“Apparently there weren’t any smelters in the United States that could smelt the silver ores coming out of Waldorf, so they shipped them to Swansea for processing. It says that Swansea had the largest and most advanced smelters in the world, which used the Welsh Process to extract the precious metals for the ores,” Brian remarked.

“Does the website say how we can get to Waldorf?” Kevin asked.

“Yeah, it shows a paved road from Georgetown to Silverdale, and from there you have to take a 4x4 road up Leavenworth Canyon to reach Waldorf. It says Waldorf is located just over 11,000 feet in elevation, making it one of Colorado’s highest ghost towns,” Brian replied.

“Isn’t that the same elevation where we found the other Fire Dragon eggs?” Kevin asked.

“Yeah, that’s right,” Brian recalled.

“So, when can we go there?” Kevin asked with a hopeful look.

“Since Waldorf is just a couple of hours away, how about I take you up there this weekend?” Brian suggested.

“Really!” Kevin said as he gave his dad a big hug.

“Yeah, your mom has plans with one of her friends, so it can be a father and son outing,” Brian replied.

“What about me?” Splinter said as she flew down the stairs.

“We weren’t going to leave you behind,” Brian remarked.

“Good, because I was in the bathroom brushing my teeth and I heard you might be going somewhere fun without me,” Splinter replied.

“You don’t have a toothbrush,” Kevin interrupted with a look of concern.

“I know, I just borrowed yours,” Splinter admitted.

“Are you kidding me! I might have put that in my mouth after you’ve had it in yours!” Kevin said with a look of disgust.

“Well, I guess I won’t tell you what else I’ve used it for recently,” Splinter said as she flew off.

“I’ll buy you a pack of toothbrushes on my way home from work,” Brian laughed.

“Thanks dad. I’m going to go wash my mouth out with soap now that I know my toothbrush has gone where no toothbrush has gone before,” Kevin said as he slowly walked away.

Chapter 2

The next day, Kevin woke up early in anticipation of going to Waldorf. After he got dressed, he went over to the bunk bed to wake up Splinter. When he pulled back her blanket, he saw that she was lying on her back with her feet pointing straight into the air. "I wonder if dragons are ticklish?" he said to himself. Then he slowly reached over the edge of the bed rail and tickled her belly for a second. Splinter kicked her feet back and forth for a moment, and when she stopped, he tickled her again. Then he covered his mouth with one hand so his laughter wouldn't wake her, and as he reached in to tickle her once more, she suddenly flipped over and bit his finger.

"Ouch!" Kevin cried out as he withdrew his hand.

"Oh come on, that didn't hurt," Splinter insisted.

"I know, I was just faking it," Kevin confessed.

"So, are we going on a Fire Dragon egg hunt today?" she asked.

"Yep, my dad is already up and once he gets dressed we're heading out."

"Kevin, it's time to go," Brian called out.

"Okay dad, we'll be right there," he replied before heading downstairs with Splinter.

"Are you ready to go?" Brian asked once Kevin and Splinter had climbed into the truck.

"Yep, we're ready," Kevin replied.

"Did you bring you know who her treats?"

"Of course, there're in my backpack," Kevin said as he felt the side pocket to make sure he remembered them.

"Can I see them?" Splinter asked, blinking her eyes innocently.

"You can have one if you're good," Kevin promised.

"I'm always good," Splinter proclaimed as she climbed up onto Kevin's lap expectantly.

"Alright, I'll give you one now, but that's it until we get there." Kevin said as he rolled his eyes at her.

"Thank you," Splinter replied after gulping down the treat. Then she curled up into a ball next to him, and closed her eyes.

Kevin looked down and smiled at her, then pulled a small blanket out of his pack and covered her with it.

"Dragons sure are lazy," Brian remarked as he looked over at her.

“Dad, she’s not lazy, she just gets bored when were in the truck,” Kevin insisted.

“You’re right, she’s a ball of fire,” Brian joked. Splinter poked her head out from under the blanket and glared at him for a moment before going back to sleep.

Once they reached Georgetown, Kevin’s dad pulled into the gas station and parked.

“I see ‘twinkle toes’ is still asleep,” Brian joked.

“I know, she’s so darn cute,” Kevin replied as he pulled the blanket back so he could rub her ears.

“I’m going to grab a drink from the convenience store, do you want anything?” Brian asked.

“Can I have some potato chips?” Kevin replied.

“I’ll take a large package of beef jerky,” Splinter interrupted.

“Hey, I thought you were asleep,” Brian remarked.

“I was until I heard the word snack. As you know, dragons are always on the lookout for an impending food emergency,” Splinter remarked.

“How can this possibly be a food emergency?” Brian asked.

“You said Waldorf was a ghost town high up in the mountains, so I doubt there will be any food there,” Splinter contended.

“Okay, go back to sleep and I’ll get you some jerky.”

“Hotdogs sound good too,” Splinter added.

“And some hotdogs,” Brian said with a sigh as he got out of the truck.

When he returned, he dropped the bag of snacks on the seat and then went out over to the gas pump to get some gas. When he got back in the truck, he noticed the bag of snacks was missing.

“Give it back Kevin,” Brian said as he looked over at his son.

“What, how did you know it was me and not Splinter?” he asked as he pulled the bag out from under the seat.

“Because Splinter would never do anything naughty if she thought there was a chance you would get blamed for it.” Brian replied.

“It was just a joke,” Kevin insisted.

“And there is nothing wrong with that. It’s just something I noticed about dragon behavior that is different from ours,” Brian remarked.

“Oh, kind of like how siblings blame each other when one of them does something wrong?” Kevin asked.

“Yeah, I think dragons might be a little more evolved than us in that regard,” Brian admitted.

“Well, they are wonderful creatures,” Kevin said as he patted Splinter on the head.

The road heading out of Georgetown was steep and windy, but it was paved most of the way. Once they reached the sign that marked the town site of Silverdale, Brian shifted into four-wheel drive and started up Leavenworth Canyon. It quickly became apparent that what the map on the website had shown as a 4x4 road, was actually little more than a rutted out creek bed that other adventure seekers had tried to drive up.

“Do you think we’ll be able to reach Waldorf?” Kevin asked as he was tossed around in his seat.

“As long as the road doesn’t get any worse,” his dad replied as he fought to navigate around large boulders, and over deep wash-outs.

When they finally reached the base of the Argentine Pass, Kevin’s dad parked next to an old weathered building that appeared to be all that was left of the once bustling mining town of Waldorf.

“Is this all that’s left?” Kevin asked after he hopped out of the truck and looked around for a moment.

“I’m afraid so,” Brian replied.

“At least we’re off that awful road,” Splinter remarked.

“I know, I thought my insides were going to bounce out,” Kevin joked.

“Can that really happen to a human?” Splinter asked.

“No, it’s just a saying,” Kevin smiled.

“Oh... I wasn’t sure. I know lizards can drop off their tails if they are attacked,” Splinter remarked.

“Can dragons do that?” Kevin asked as he gently pulled on her tail a couple of times.

“No, but I can barf up some partially digested food on you,” Splinter said kiddingly.

“Yuck,” Kevin responded with a sour looking face.

“If you think that is gross, snakes will poop on you if mess with them,” Splinter added.

“You’re full of all kinds of useful information,” Brian remarked as he walked over to them with the parchment in his hand.

“Any idea where the eggs are hidden?” Kevin asked as he looked over his father’s shoulder at the map.

“Well, the other dragon eggs were inside an abandoned mine, so that’s where we should look first,” his dad replied as he glanced over at the multitude of mine tailing piles that dotted the mountain side above them.

“Is that where the tunnels are?” Kevin asked as he looked in the same general direction as his father.”

“Yep, each tailing pile marks the location of an old silver mine,” Brian said as he started heading up the hill towards the first one.

Once they reached the first tailing pile, the three of them spread out looking for the mine’s entrance.

“I don’t see anything,” Splinter said after a few minutes of looking around at the barren landscape.

“I don’t either,” Kevin replied discouragingly.

“I think the opening caved in,” Brian remarked as he pointed to a large depression on the hillside just above the tailing pile. “Let’s go up to the next one, maybe it will still be open,” he suggested optimistically.

“There is an opening,” Splinter called out when she reached the tailing pile ahead of them.

“If it looks safe, go inside and check it out,” Brian recommended as he and Kevin rushed up the hill after her.

“Okay,” she replied as she disappeared into the darkness.

A few minutes later she came out shaking her head discouragingly. “I’m sorry, there wasn’t anything in there worth mentioning,” she reported.

“Nothing?” Kevin asked.

“No, the tunnel goes back a few hundred feet and it’s just bare rock the entire way. Whoever owned the mine didn’t leave anything behind,” Splinter remarked.

“Well there are a bunch more tailing piles about a half mile over to our left, or there is a small one further up the mountain that looks hard to reach. It’s up to you,” Brian said as he waited for Kevin to decide.

“If a tailing pile is larger, does that mean the mine is deeper?” Kevin asked.

“Yep, the more on the outside, the bigger it is on the inside,” his dad replied.

“Then I think we should go over to the larger tailing piles,” Kevin suggested.

“Alright, cross your fingers, and claws, that we have better luck over there,” Brian said as he started across the rocky slope.

When they reached the first of the large tailing piles, there was some discolored water flowing out from the mine entrance and Brian rushed over to examine it.

“Darn it! It’s completely blocked off about twenty feet back,” he said in a disappointed tone.

“Can we dig through it?” Kevin asked as he looked in.

“Not without heavy equipment,” Brian remarked.

“How does that one look?” Kevin asked when he noticed that Splinter had flown over to the adjacent mine.

“It’s blocked off too,” she answered with a snort. Then she flew over to the next large tailing pile while Kevin and Brian looked on. A moment later she came back looking defeated.

“The mines are just too old and dilapidated for us to get into them,” Brian said as he patted Kevin on the back affectionately.

“We never checked that little one out that was up near the top of the mountain,” Kevin suggested.

“It has such a little tailing pile, I don’t know if it’s worth it,” Brian replied.

“I’ll fly up there and check it out for you,” Splinter offered.

“Would you?” Kevin replied with a glimmer of hope in his voice.

“Sure, it’s easy for me. I’ll be back in two flicks of a dragon’s tail,” she joked.

“If she doesn’t find anything, I’m afraid the search is over. There aren’t any other mines around here,” Brian remarked.

“Are you sure... what about on the other side of the Argentine Pass?” Kevin questioned.

“There is another mining district further south, but that’s not even on this map,” Brian said as he examined the parchment one last time.

“Alright, I guess the box is either lost or in one of the mines we can’t get into,” Kevin said when he saw Splinter flying back without seeing a box in her claws.

“Was it closed off?” Brian asked.

“Not completely. There are a couple of large rocks blocking the entrance, but I think you might be able to move them so Kevin and I can squeeze through,” Splinter suggested.

“That sounds a little iffy,” Brian replied.

“We have to go look,” Kevin insisted.

“Alright, but if I think it looks unsafe I’m not letting you go in,” Brian replied.

When they reached the mine, Brian rolled the rocks out of the way. Then he shined his flashlight through the narrow opening so he could judge if it was safe for them to enter the mine or not.

“Can we go in?” Kevin asked.

“What I can see looks pretty good... but my flashlight doesn’t reach the back of the mine...”

“Dad, we’ll be careful. If it looks even the tiniest bit unsafe, we’ll turn back,” Kevin promised.

“I’ll be right there with him,” Splinter added. Brian peeked into the mine again and then shook his head. “Your mom would never approve of this.”

“You’ll be right outside if we need anything,” Kevin pleaded.

“Alright, you can go in, but don’t touch any of the old timbers and keep your voices low. Any sudden movements or vibrations can cause trouble,” Brian warned.

“Okay,” Kevin agreed as he and Splinter cautiously entered the mine. Brian anxiously watched as Kevin and Splinter slowly disappeared from sight.

A few minutes later, Brian heard a deep rumbling sound echo out from the depths of the mine. His heart skipped a beat as a cloud of dust gushed out of the opening of the mine, choking him. Brian wanted to shout out Kevin’s name, but he was afraid that his booming voice might cause a further collapse of the tunnel. It was the worst, most helpless feeling that he had ever felt. His flashlight was useless in the dust filled air, he couldn’t fit through the narrow opening, and he couldn’t even call out for his son. Brian collapsed to the ground as the fear of losing his son overwhelmed him. As his eyes began to tear, he saw a faint glow in the distance.

“I’m okay,” Kevin cried out.

“Oh thank god!” Brian exclaimed as his son came rushing out of the darkness and into his arms.

“Splinter is badly injured,” Kevin cried as he unfolded his jacket to reveal her limp body still clutching a small silver box.

“What the hell happened?” Brian asked as he looked down at Splinter.

“Everything was fine until she removed the box from a small pile of rubble. I think it triggered a rock fall and Splinter was caught in it. Please tell me she’s going to be alright!” Kevin pleaded as he wiped his dusty face with his sleeve.

Brian gently lifted Splinter out of the jacket and touched her side to see if she would respond. Then he put his hand over his mouth and handed her back to Kevin.

“I’m so sorry son, she’s gone.”

“Nooo!” Kevin cried out as the tears gushed down his face, falling like raindrops on her lifeless body. “It’s not fair!” he yelled as he closed his eyes in pain, cradling her in his arms as the gravity of his loss slowly set in. Then as he was about to set her down in his jacket, he felt a gentle licking on the underside of his chin.

“What happened?” Splinter said in an innocent voice as she looked up at his tear stained face.

“Oh my god, I thought I had lost you!” Kevin cried as the tears of pain suddenly turned to tears of joy.

“I’m fine, a little tingly inside... but I feel fine.”

“We thought you were dead,” Brian remarked as though he had just witnessed a miracle.

“I told you dragons were tough,” Splinter remarked as though nothing had happened to her.

“Dad, was she just unconscious?” Kevin asked, but Brian did not reply. He knew she had not been, but the alternative seemed impossible.

“Stop worrying about me,” Splinter insisted. “I just want to know if the eggs are okay?”

“I think so,” Kevin replied as he picked up the box so Splinter could unlock it with her tail. Then he stood as she carefully inspected each one.

“Three little Fire Dragons... alive and well,” Splinter exclaimed.

“Well, I think we have had enough excitement for one day. Who’s ready to head back home?” Brian asked.

“I am,” Kevin replied after he closed the lid to the box. Then he glanced over at Splinter to see if she wanted to be carried back to the truck, or was going to fly down to it.

“I’m a little hungry,” Splinter said as she unfolded her wings and took to the air.

“Don’t eat all the snacks,” Brian joked when he saw her heading straight for the truck. Splinter looked back and stuck out her tongue, then folded back her wings to glide down the hill even faster.

“She’s a little stinker,” Brian remarked as he started down the hill after her.

“I know, but I love her,” Kevin admitted in a low voice.

“I heard that!” Splinter announced.

Chapter 3

When Kevin got back home, he plugged his phone into the charger and called his friend David.

“Hello,” David answered in a friendly voice.

“Hi, guess what I have?” Kevin said with a hint of excitement.

“A new Xbox game?”

“No... my dad took Splinter and I up into the mountains and we found three more Fire Dragon eggs.”

“That’s amazing, I wonder how many more are out there waiting to be found?” David remarked.

“These are the last ones,” Kevin replied.

“How do you know that, you keep finding more?” David asked.

“I discovered a note inside the box after you brought it back, and it said there were only six eggs left in existence,” Kevin replied.

“Wow, they really are rare,” David remarked.

“I know, and I was hoping that you would be willing to take care of these eggs, just like last time?” Kevin asked.

“I would love too. Raising baby dragons is my specialty. I’m just not sure if they would be safe at my house?” David questioned.

“Is the Animal Control Officer still spying on your house?” Kevin asked.

“I haven’t seen him lately, but I don’t trust him,” David admitted.

“Yeah, he’s not a nice man. I guess I could ask one of my other friends to take the eggs if you’re really worried about it!” Kevin said with a sigh.

“No, I’ll take them. I already know how to care for them and we can always move them if the Animal Control Officer comes snooping around,” David suggested.

“Really, you’ll take them?” Kevin asked.

“Yeah, I miss having the other Fire Dragons around, David admitted.

“Even Ironstone?” Kevin joked.

“Yeah, even that little trouble maker,” David chuckled.

“When would you like me to bring the eggs over?”

“Anytime, I’ll get the basement ready for them this afternoon,” he replied.

“Do you need any help setting up?” Kevin offered.

“No, just come over when you you’re ready.

“Okay, I’ll see you in a little bit.” After Kevin got off the phone with David, he immediately called Emalyn.

“Hi Kevin, what are you and Splinter up to?”

“Oh the usual, hiking, exploring, and finding more dragon eggs,” he replied.

“What did you just say?”

“We found a note with a map on it hidden inside the first box of Fire Dragon eggs. That map led us to a second stash of dragon eggs hidden in an abandoned mine on Mt. McClellan,” Kevin revealed.

“Wow, you’re so lucky,” Emalyn replied.

“Well, this last trip was a lot more dangerous. When we found the box inside the mine, it was partially buried in rubble. When Splinter pulled it out, it triggered a cave-in and Splinter got caught in it. After I freed her from the debris, I rushed her back to the surface and my dad and I looked her over. She wasn’t breathing and her eyes were dull and lifeless... we thought she was dead,” Kevin admitted as he paused for a moment to regain his composure. “Then after I held her for a few minutes, she just woke up in my arms and looked around as if nothing had happened.”

“Oh my gosh, it sounds like you are both lucky to be alive!” Emalyn gasped.

“I know, the rocks just barely missed me, but poor Splinter was trapped in it. I have no idea how she survived,” Kevin admitted.

“You know that’s the second time that she’s made a miraculous recovery under your care,” Emalyn observed.

“What do you mean?” Kevin asked.

“Well, do you remember the condition she was in when you found her at the base of that tree after being struck by lightning?”

“Yeah,” Kevin replied.

“She was half-dead that time as well. I think you’re her guardian angel, or something,” Emalyn suggested.

“I don’t know... Splinter always says that dragons are hard to kill every time something happens to her,” Kevin remarked.

“I think there’s more to it than just that,” Emalyn hinted.

“Really?” Kevin replied.

“I think so. I overheard Splinter telling her brother that you’re connected to the Fire Dragons in some mysterious way. She also said Luxor believes you’re tied to some dragon prophecy,” Emalyn confessed.

“That’s ridiculous!” Kevin scoffed.

“I’m just telling you what I heard, you can believe whatever you want,” Emalyn contended.

“I’m sorry, I didn’t mean to be rude. I just think the dragons have some silly ideas,” Kevin said apologetically.

“I know, Striker comes up with all kinds of crazy schemes,” Emalyn joked. “Usually they involve food in some way or another.”

“Speaking of that, I should probably get going. I still need to take the eggs over to David’s house and then it will be time to feed you-know-who dinner,” Kevin whispered into the phone.

“What’s that about dinner?” Splinter called out as she flew into the kitchen.

“Are you kidding me! There’s no way you could have heard me talking about food from that far way,”

“You always underestimate our keen senses,” Splinter replied.

“Yeah, but the most remarkable thing about dragons, is the size of their stomachs,” Kevin joked.

“That’s a good one,” Emalyn said while laughing in the background.

“I wish you could see the look Splinter just gave me,” Kevin chuckled.

“I guess you better go feed her before she faints from hunger.”

“I will, have a good night,” Kevin replied.

“Now that you’re off the phone, can I get something to eat?” Splinter asked as she rubbed her stomach.

“Alright, I’ll give you something to eat before I go over to David’s house,” Kevin said as he opened the refrigerator door and looked inside. Splinter jumped up on the countertop and then paced back and forth expectantly while licking her lips in anticipation.

“How about this nice succulent carrot?” Kevin offered. Splinter glared at him and then shook her head from side to side.

“What about this juicy, moist, stick of celery?” Kevin snickered.

“Dragons don’t eat vegetables!” Splinter snorted.

“Oh, that’s right, I forgot about that,” Kevin replied while pretending to be surprised by her remark. Then he reached all the way to the back of the refrigerator and pulled out a forgotten piece of bread that looked like the heel of an old shoe.

“Are you kidding me!” Splinter cried in a huff. “The hot dogs are right in front of you! I can see them from here. You actually had to reach over them to get those other yucky things!”

“He-he,” Kevin laughed as threw the bread into the trash and then pulled out the package of hot dogs for her.

“Thank you,” Splinter begrudgingly replied as she angrily bit into the first one.

“You’re welcome,” Kevin chuckled, before going upstairs to retrieve the box of dragon eggs.

When he returned, he immediately noticed the empty hot dog wrapper tossed down on the floor next to the trashcan.

“You ate them all?” he asked in a surprised tone.

“Oops, was I not supposed to?” Splinter said in an innocent tone.

“Well, at least put the evidence in the trash,” Kevin scolded.

“Alright,” Splinter replied.

“Are you coming with me to David’s?”

“No, I’m going to take a quick nap before dinner,” she yawned.

“You can’t possibly be hungry after all those hotdogs,” Kevin said in disbelief.

“I will be after I have a refreshing nap,” Splinter replied.

“Wow... I’ll be back in a little bit,” Kevin said as he headed out the door.

Once Kevin was gone, Splinter went up to his room and curled up on the top bunk of the bed. After arranging the pillow to her liking, she closed her eyes and fell asleep. She instantly started dreaming about growing up with her brother near Wellington Lake. Back then, they would camouflage themselves and go down near the campsites looking for unsuspecting campers. If they found one, they would take turns distracting the humans by knocking something over near the edge of their campsite, while the other one would swoop down and grab whatever tasty food was left unguarded. Then they would fly back up to Castle Mountain, and share the bounty.

In her next dream, she saw Luxor, and he was telling her about some prophetic vision that he had had years ago. “The law of dragons will be broken, but the blood spilt on the stone of punishment will be from another. When a young dragon’s life hangs in the balance, the one with power shall be revealed. A forgotten descendant from the dark times will reignite the fire of destiny.” Splinter woke from the dream feeling uncertain and confused. She never liked Luxor’s premonitions because they were always dark and cryptic. As she tried to purge the awful dream from her memory, it dawned on her that part of what he had foretold, might have come true. “I did break the law of dragons, and Kevin did shed his blood on the stone of punishment... but I never came close to dying,” Splinter scoffed. Then she felt a shiver run down to her tail as she thought about the day the mine caved in. “Let’s see... I helped Kevin slide the rocks off of the box, and after I picked it up there was a thunderous roar and I was knocked to the ground. I remember feeling the air being pressed out of my chest as I struggled to get free. I know Kevin was calling my name, but each time he did so, it seemed like he was getting further and further away from me. I saw a bright light and then the next thing I remember was a warm tingly sensation. When I opened my eyes, I saw Kevin’s sad face and I kissed him on the chin to comfort him... did Kevin save my life?” she thought to herself. Then she suddenly realized that Kevin didn’t just save her, he actually brought her back from the brink of death as Luxor had predicted. “Oh my gosh, Kevin is a Dragon Wizard!” Splinter blurted out in excitement.

Chapter 4

When Kevin returned from David's house, Splinter rushed down to greet him.

"Hi, you must be really hungry," Kevin said as she flew into his arms and started licking his face.

"Dinner can wait!" Splinter announced.

"What?" Kevin interrupted in astonishment.

"While you were gone, I had an epiphany. You're a Dragon Wizard!" Splinter exclaimed with elation.

"I don't think so," Kevin replied.

"No, it's true. Remember when I told you about the great dragon Draig Gogh, and how the child he saved became a Dragon Wizard when he grew up?"

"Yes, I remember that story, and it seemed like you didn't really believe it when you told it to me," Kevin replied.

"Well, I admit it did seem pretty far fetched that a human could heal animals and dragons, but something remarkable has happened that changed my mind," Splinter revealed.

"Okay, what's that?" Kevin asked suspiciously.

"You healed me when I was struck by lightning, and you brought me back from the brink of death after the rocks crushed me in the mine," Splinter insisted.

"I didn't heal you, you were just knocked unconscious," Kevin asserted.

"You did heal me, I felt it on the inside," Splinter argued. Then after a brief pause she said, "If you and your dad thought I was unconscious, then what were you two crying about when I opened my eyes?"

"I prayed you weren't dead, but that doesn't mean I'm a Dragon Wizard," Kevin replied.

"Kevin, it's more than just those two things," Splinter declared. "Remember when you showed me the book about your ancestry, and some of them were from Wales?"

"Yeah," Kevin replied as he tried to follow her reasoning.

"That's where the Dragon Wizard lived. I think it's a safe bet that he was responsible for taking the Fire Dragon eggs in hopes of keeping the species alive," Splinter concluded.

"I think you're right about that, but even if he did take the eggs, how does that connect his family to mine?" Kevin questioned.

“Well, the boxes have Celtic motifs on them so we know they came from the same area where the Dragon Wizard lived. The boxes were also crafted from silver, so obviously they were made by a silversmith from that region. We also know the boxes were designed specifically for the eggs, so it had to be someone who knew what was going to be put inside the boxes. Given the fact that dragons were feared by most everyone back then, I believe the Dragon Wizard was the silversmith who made them. If he was a silversmith, there is a good chance that he passed his trade down to his sons, and so on,” Splinter concluded.

“Okay, that makes sense. I know that there were a few miners in my family around the turn of the century,” Kevin admitted.

“Your dad said that when silver was discovered in Waldorf the first ores were sent to Swansea, Wales for refining. I doubt that discovery went unnoticed by the local silversmiths over there. I would bet my dragon skin that some of them decided to come to the new world to see if they could strike it rich,” Splinter said confidently.

“My last name is of Welsh origin... perhaps there is a connection,” Kevin admitted.

“So you’re a Dragon Wizard,” Splinter exclaimed while nudging him with her head.

“No, but something Emalyn said to me makes more sense,” Kevin replied.

“What’s that?”

“She said I was your guardian, and I kind of like the sound of that,” Kevin confessed with a smile.

“The wizard was a guardian too,” Splinter remarked.

“So, what got you thinking about all this stuff?” Kevin asked.

“Something Luxor told me a few years ago,” Splinter answered, being somewhat vague about the event.

“I should have known that he was involved,” Kevin sighed.

“He may not always be the most personable of dragons, but Luxor is wise and he sometimes sees events in the future,” Splinter revealed.

“Have you actually witnessed that?” Kevin asked.

“I have, but please don’t ask me about it right now. I will share the story with you when the time is right,” Splinter replied.

“Is it about me?” Kevin persisted.

“No, it’s about someone with great power. Someone who believes in himself, and can heal injured dragons... but since you don’t believe in such things, it can’t be about you,” Splinter responded.

Chapter 5

David's house was bursting with excitement the day the Fire Dragon eggs hatched. This time the litter had two girl dragons and one boy. The boy dragon had a deep ruby red body with yellow and orange wings, so David named him Firewing. The two girl dragons were a nearly identical sky blue color with the only difference being that one had a star-like marking on her forehead while the other did not. Emalyn named the one with the mark on her forehead Starfire, and Kevin named the other dragon Luna, after a character in one of his favorite childhood books.

After everyone agreed on the names, Splinter flew over and landed in Kevin's lap so he could pet her.

"Why are you so particular about dragon names?" Kevin asked.

"My birth name was awful," Splinter replied. "I just want to make sure the Fire Dragons don't have to go through life with ridiculous names."

"Is that why you never told us your real name when you got your memory back?" Kevin asked.

"Yep, I like the name Splinter better than my other name," she admitted.

"You can always change it to something else if you prefer," Kevin suggested.

"Nope, it means a lot to me that you and Emalyn gave me that name. Plus, I am the first dragon to have ever been named by a human," Splinter exclaimed with pride.

"Are you ever going to tell us what your birth name was?" Kevin asked.

"Nope, and my brother will keep it a secret too, if he knows what's good for him," Splinter threatened.

"I'm not telling," Striker replied.

"What if we guess it?" David asked as he picked up Firewing and offered him a bottle of formula.

"I'm never going to tell you," Splinter replied.

"Alright, we'll let it go," David said as he picked up Luna and started feeding her.

"They sure do like you," Splinter remarked when the baby dragons just fell asleep in David's arms after they finished eating.

"They're such cute little guys," David replied affectionately.

"Are you going to be able to let them go?" Kevin joked.

“Yeah, I’ll be strong just like last time. Are we going to release them with the others down near Lake Powell?” David asked as he looked over at Splinter.

“I don’t know, what do you think we should do with them Kevin?” Splinter remarked.

“Whatever you think is best,” he replied, sensing that she was testing him for some reason.

“Perhaps we should offer them to a zoo,” Splinter suggested in an effort to get Kevin to reveal what he felt was best for them.

“No, we can’t do that! The Fire Dragons have to be brought together so they can cross-breed and have baby dragons of their own once they mature,” Kevin insisted. Splinter looked up at Kevin and then whispered, “Dragon Wizard” just loud enough for him to hear it.

“I don’t know what you two are teasing each other about, but if the Fire Dragons start to breed and have babies, they’re going to be discovered at some point. I think we need to come up with a plan to protect them,” David suggested.

“David has good point,” Splinter acknowledged. “Unlike us, the Fire Dragons can’t camouflage themselves and they’re going to have to spread out from the lake once their numbers increase.”

“Not to mention the whole fire breathing thing,” Emalyn added.

“They can learn to control their fire, but you’re right about them not being the subtlest of creatures,” Splinter admitted.

“I have an idea... but you’re not going to like it.” Kevin suggested.

“What is it?” Splinter asked.

“I’m sure everyone remembers back when the Animal Control Officer accused David of breaking the law by harboring an exotic pet. The Sheriff even threatened my dad with fines if he was caught breaking the Endangered Species Act,” Kevin recalled.

“How does that help us?” Splinter asked.

“Well, I did some checking online, and dragons could qualify for protection under the right circumstances,” Kevin suggested hesitantly.

“For that to work, humans would have to know of our existence, not just you guys, but all humans. The only way that’s going to work is if some poor dragon comes forward so scientists can poke, prod, and do goodness knows what else to it,” Splinter remarked.

“I told you, you weren’t going to like it,” Kevin confessed.

“I’ll do it if you’re sure that it will lead to our protection,” Splinter sighed.

“No, you can’t trust the other humans!” Striker yelled out. “There has to be another way!”

“I trust Kevin with my life, and if he thinks this will protect the Fire Dragons, then I’ll do it,” Splinter replied.

“You don’t owe them anything, they brought about their own destruction and forced us into exile,” Striker insisted.

“Kevin is my guardian, and he will protect me,” Splinter insisted.

“She’s right... and you already know I will do everything I can to keep her safe,” Kevin promised.

“I still object!” Striker declared as he flew into Emalyn’s arms for comfort.

“Kevin is not just my friend, and my protector, he’s also a Dragon Wizard!” Splinter revealed.

“Splinter! You know I don’t like to be called that,” Kevin replied.

“Is that true? Are you a Dragon Wizard?” Striker demanded. Kevin looked away without responding.

“Does he have the gift of healing?” Striker asked as he shifted his gaze to Splinter.

“He does, and I know for a fact that he has healed me twice,” she replied.

“I saw it too,” Emalyn added. “When he picked up Splinter from under the tree, she couldn’t even move her head. By the time we got back to the camp, she had almost completely recovered and Kevin was holding her the whole time.”

“Perhaps this is the time to act,” Striker said in a reluctant tone.

“I don’t know if I had anything to do with Splinter’s recovery at the lake or the mine, but I can promise to do everything in my power to keep her from being harmed,” Kevin insisted.

“I hope that’s enough,” Striker remarked.

“I can help Kevin research the law inside and out so we know exactly what’s needed to get dragons on the protected list,” David offered.

“I will help in any way that I can,” Emalyn said as she looked down at Striker to see if he approved.

“If my sister is crazy enough to do this, then I’m not going try and to stop her, but I still think it’s a bad idea,” Striker stated in a disapproving tone.

“I want to do this,” Splinter remarked.

“Fine, you have made up your mind, and I have made up mine,” Striker snorted.

Chapter 6

Kevin and David spent the next few days researching the requirements of the Endangered Species Act. Once they felt confident in being able to meet the requirements of the law, they formulated a plan to minimize the risks to Splinter. Then they asked Kevin's dad for his help.

"I think you boys have done a great job looking into this," Brian acknowledged. "My only concern is if things don't go as planned, then David's Fire Dragons might be at risk. Think about the first place that the Animal Control Officer is going to go if he finds out David is involved in this?"

"I don't have to be there when you take Splinter to the authorities," David offered. "I would actually prefer it if I wasn't."

"Alright, I just didn't want you to be left out of the plan you helped design," Brian remarked.

"It's fine, you guys go without me," David insisted.

"Are you sure?" Kevin asked one last time.

"Yeah, I'll head back home and you can call me if I need to take the Fire Dragons somewhere else."

"Okay, I'll let you know what happens as soon as we get to Denver," Kevin said as he climbed into the front seat of his dad's truck.

"Good luck," David said as they drove off.

"Are you sure you want to go through with this?" Kevin asked Splinter as he patted her on the head.

"I am," Splinter replied with a brave face.

"Okay," Kevin said as he held her in his lap.

Once they reached the address on the GPS, Brian parked the truck in the large lot that stood in the shadow of a tall imposing brick building. As they walked towards the entrance, Kevin looked up at the large bronze plaque mounted above the doorway.

"This is it," Brian said as he paused at the entrance. Then he looked over at Splinter who was tucked inside Kevin's coat. "We're at the U.S. Department of Fish and Game, last chance to turn back."

"Keep going," Splinter replied with a gulp.

“Okay, then cross your fingers and let’s hope this works,” Brian remarked as they headed into the reception area.

“How may I help you?” a tall slender dark haired man asked.

“Hi, my son has discovered a new species of reptile and he would like to submit an application for its protection under the Endangered Species Act,” Brian replied.

“Did you bring in a picture of the species in question?” the man asked in a mundane voice.

“No, but we did bring a live specimen for you to examine,” Brian offered.

“Okay, show me the lizard, snake, or whatever it is that you believe to be unique,” the man said as though no one had ever brought in a previously undiscovered animal.

“Go ahead and show him,” Brian said as he looked over at his son.

“Alright,” Kevin replied. Then he opened his coat, and Splinter flew up onto the counter and landed a few feet away from the man. The moment their eyes locked, he screamed, “oh my god, it’s a dragon!” in a high pitched voice, and then fainted behind the counter.

“Well, that was unexpected,” Brian said as he rang the bell to call out another employee to assist them. After waiting several minutes without seeing anyone else, he rang the bell again.

“What should we do?” Kevin asked after waiting a few more minutes.

“I guess there’s no one else in this office today,” Brian said after peering over the counter at the still unconscious receptionist.

“Is it a holiday?” Kevin asked.

“I don’t think so, the door was open and they had a receptionist working here,” Brian replied.

“Should we try and wake him up?”

“No, you can get in big trouble if you touch someone without their permission.”

“Can we go somewhere else?” Kevin asked.

“It’s too late to reach the District office up in Cheyenne before they close, but we could go there tomorrow. Maybe they won’t be such a bunch of lilies,” his dad remarked before heading out.

When they got back home, Kevin went to the kitchen and got Splinter something to eat. He knew that food always made her feel better, and it had been a stressful day.

“Thanks,” Splinter said after she finished the bacon-flavored treat. “Can I have another?”

“Sure, Kevin replied, but before he had time to get it, there was a loud knocking at the front door.

“Dad, someone’s at the door,” Kevin called out.

“See who it is,” his dad replied.

“Okay.” When Kevin looked through the peephole his heart jumped in his chest.

“It’s an Animal Control Officer,” Kevin said nervously.

“I’ll be right there,” his dad said as he quickly ran downstairs. “Uh-oh, I think that’s the same guy from last year’s dragon switch-a-roo.”

“What’s he doing at our house?” Kevin asked in an increasingly panicked tone.

“I don’t know, let me see what he wants,” Brian said as he cracked the door open just enough to say, “Can I help you?” in an unaccommodating tone.

“Sir, I have a warrant to search your house for exotic endangered animals,” the officer said in a snide voice.

“On what grounds?” Brian demanded.

“I don’t have to disclose that information to you, but since you and your son think you’re so clever, I’m going to tell you what the warrant is for,” the man remarked.

“Is it for stuffed animals or costume wearing dogs?” Brian interrupted.

“Oh good, you do remember me, because I surely remember you, and how you fooled that Sheriff. Well, this time you’re not getting off so easy... I have in my possession a picture of your truck entering the Fish and Game parking lot in Denver less than two hours ago. I also have an affidavit from an eye witness claiming you are in possession of an unidentified reptile species,” the Animal Control Officer insisted.

“I’m not going to give you permission to search my house,” Brian replied.

“I don’t need your permission! I have a court ordered search warrant! If you don’t immediately comply, I will have you arrested and charged with obstruction of justice!” the officer insisted.

“Sorry, you’re not coming in!” Brian said as he slammed the door in the officer’s face and then locked it.

“We both know you’re harboring an endangered species in there,” the man yelled through the door. “...but not for long... the Sheriff is on his way!”

“Threaten all you like, I’m not giving up without a fight... and when the Sheriff gets here, tell him not to bother with the tear gas. I have enough gas masks for my whole family!” Brian announced.

“You’re not as clever as you think!” the Animal Control Officer remarked.

“Neither are you!” Brian replied. Then he watched through the peephole as the officer turned and angrily walked back to his van and kicked the tire several times in frustration.

“What’s going to happen now?” Kevin asked timidly.

“I don’t know, but Splinter is part of our family, and I’m not letting that jerk just come in and take her. He’s not a nice guy and I don’t think she would be safe with him,” Brian insisted.

A few moments later, the wailing of sirens echoed down the street as an armada of patrol cars stopped in front of their house. Brian cautiously lifted the window shade and then shook his head after looking out.

“How bad is it?” Kevin asked as he held Splinter in his trembling arms.

“They’re blocking off our street so no one can get in,” he replied in a disparaging tone.

“Is there anyone we can call for help?” Kevin asked.

“Call your mom and see if she has any ideas,” Brian suggested.

Kevin dialed the number several times, but the call didn’t go through. “I think my phone is broken,” Kevin exclaimed after a couple more attempts.

“Let me try mine,” Brian said as he went into the office. Then after a few moments he returned shaking his head. “I think they’re blocking our phone service.”

“Why would they do that?” Kevin asked.

“Whenever there’s a standoff, they try and isolate the people involved. That way they can control the situation, and force them to give up,” Brian remarked with an unhappy look on his face.

“So, what are we going to do?” Kevin asked in a frightened voice.

“I don’t know son, sometimes even adults don’t have all the answers. For now, I think we should just remain calm and see what they do. There might be a positive way out of this yet,” he said optimistically.

“I could give myself up?” Splinter offered.

“No!” Kevin objected. “You heard what my dad said about the Animal Control Officer, he is not a nice guy. He just wants to get even with us for fooling him.”

“I could camouflage myself and then you could let the officer in... he might not find me, and then he would leave us alone.” Splinter suggested.

“That’s too risky,” Kevin insisted as he looked over at his dad.

“I agree. The guy is trained to find and capture wild animals. He might even have a search dog at his disposal. Can you elude a trained dog?” Brian asked.

“Not inside a house. If a dog caught my scent back at Wellington Lake, I would take to the trees to lose it,” Splinter replied.

“Then let’s not chance it. I’m not sure the Sheriff is going to be very eager to help the Animal Control Officer after last year’s fiasco, so let’s just sit tight and see what their next move is. If you want to turn on the TV to help pass the time, that might help,” Brian suggested.

“Okay,” Kevin replied, as he and Splinter headed into the living room.

After a few minutes of flipping through the channels, Kevin noticed the local station had a breaking news bulletin that read: ‘Standoff in St. Vrain’ in bright red lettering. Kevin immediately turned up the volume so he could hear what they were saying.

“The Sheriff Department has informed us that a routine animal control investigation has turned into a standoff with the homeowner. We’ll be right back with more on that breaking story after these messages,” the reporter announced.

“Hey dad, we’re on the news!” Kevin called out.

“I’ll be there in a minute, I think they cut off our internet access,” his dad replied sounding perturbed.

“Dad, it’s back on...” Kevin remarked as the reporter started talking again.

“This just in, a concerned viewer has uploaded a remarkable video to our website that defies belief. Stay tuned for this unbelievable twist to the Standoff in St. Vrain.”

“What’s going on?” his dad asked as he sat down on the couch next to him.

“I’m not sure, but the news said someone uploaded a video about the standoff, and then they cut to another commercial break without showing it,” Kevin replied in a frustrated tone.

“Sorry about that folks, we just finished having our experts review the video to make sure it wasn’t a fake before we broadcasted it. So, without further delay here it is,” the reporter said as though he was almost as excited to watch it as the audience would be.

“Hello, my name is Emalyn, and I wanted to make sure that the truth about the stand-off gets told. First off, the animal in question is a dragon, and yes they do exist. How do I know, because

my friend Kevin and I have been taking care of two Pygmy Dragons,” Emalyn exclaimed. Then she pulled the blanket off her lap to reveal Striker. “This is my dragon Striker, and he would like to tell you more about his species.”

“I know that if you are watching this video you are probably shocked to find out that dragons are real and that we can even speak your language. If you can suspend your disbelief for a few moments, I would like to ask for your help. Dragons have been around for as long as humans have been. Unfortunately, during the medieval period one race of dragons, called Fire Dragons, came into conflict with the humans of that time. The result was that that race of dragon was killed off. Because of that tragedy, the two remaining species of dragons went into hiding to protect themselves. Over time, the tales about dragons transformed from legends to myths, and humans eventually forgot we ever existed. In the meantime, we have been living peacefully along side your kind for a thousand years, while we watched your species advance and grow. Now that humans have learned to revere other living creatures, the day has come for our two great species to live together. I know that dragons were once feared by humans, but I believe we can coexist. Even the species of dragon that once caused the great conflict, have been living peacefully in a remote area of the southwest. Those large fire breathing dragons pose no greater threat to your kind than any other animal that might defend itself when threatened. In fact, the only Fire Dragons in existence have been raised by humans, and they love and respect them. Dragons are sentient creatures that form deep and lasting relationships with one another just like humans, but there are no laws protecting us from being captured, killed, or experimented on. As I speak, my sister who lives with her loving human family is in grave danger. The authorities have surrounded the house that she lives in and they want to take her away. Please contact the U.S. Department of Fish and Game and ask them to add dragons to the list of endangered species before it’s too late. It’s the only way to save my sister and protect our rare and unique species from the few bad people that might want to harm us,” Striker said as he lowered his head in sadness.

“There you have it folks, the first ever genuine footage of a real dragon, brought to you exclusively by this station,” the reporter exclaimed. Kevin muted the volume so he could see what his dad’s reaction was to the video.

“Do you think people will actually call in and demand that dragons be protected?” he asked in a hopeful tone.

“I don’t know Kevin. If enough people push for it, maybe it will happen,” Brian replied.

“Did you see my brother?” Splinter remarked. “I’m so proud of him.”

“I know, Striker and Emalyn really came through for us,” Kevin acknowledged.

“Well, I think it’s going to be a long night, why don’t you and Splinter head upstairs, and I’ll keep an eye on the activities outside,” Brian suggested.

“You’ll let us know if anything happens, right?” Kevin asked.

“I will, but now that the video is out, they’ll probably leave us alone until someone higher up decides what to do about it,” Brian remarked.

“Okay dad, I’ll see you in the morning,” Kevin replied.

Chapter 7

As the night wore on, Brian got up every few hours and peeked out the window to see what was happening outside. At one point he thought the crisis might be over when the Animal Control Officer got into his van and drove off. Unfortunately, his hopes faded when the officer returned in a truck with several cages strapped to it.

“What’s going on?” Kevin asked in a sleepy voice as he wandered downstairs to see what was happening.

“You’re up early,” his dad replied.

“What time is it?” Kevin muttered.

“5:00 am. The Animal Control guy left for a few hours and then returned with a bunch of cages,” his dad said as he pulled the blinds partially open so Kevin could see what he was talking about.

“He must think we have a bunch of dragons in here,” Kevin frowned.

“Yeah, he’s really holding a grudge,” Brian replied.

“He’s not going to give up, is he?” Kevin asked.

“Unfortunately not,” Brian acknowledged.

“What’s he doing now?” Kevin asked, as they watched the man get out of the truck and walk over to a group of Sheriffs dressed in tactical gear.

“I don’t know... but I think it would be best if you go up to your room and stay with Splinter,” Brian said in a nervous tone.

“Alright,” Kevin replied, sensing the danger in his dad’s voice.

After Kevin was gone, Brian unlocked the window and slid it open just enough so he could hear what the men were talking about.

“There is at least one dangerous animal in there that attacked a government employee! Now do your job and arrest that man and his boy so I can capture it!” the Animal Control Officer said in a demanding voice.

“You don’t have the authority to order my deputies around!” the Sheriff replied sharply.

“Oh yes I do,” the Animal Control Officer shouted. “I have a court order to search that house. The homeowner has refused to comply with my request and threatened me... so secure

the premises or I'll report your obstinance to the district attorney!" the Animal Control Officer shouted back.

Brian slowly closed the window when he saw one of the Sheriff Deputies retrieve a battering ram from the trunk of his patrol car. "Here they come..." he muttered under his breath as the officers started walking towards the house. A split second later a blinding flash of white light lit up the street, and Brian instinctively ducked below the window.

"What was that?" Kevin yelled from his room.

"I don't know..." his dad replied as he slowly lifted his head to peak out the window. "There's a wall of fire stretching up and down our street!"

"Fire?" Splinter exclaimed in disbelief as she flew downstairs as fast as her wings would carry her. Kevin ran after her, and when he reached the window, they both gasped as a large red dragon landed on their front porch.

"It's Draig!" Kevin shouted out in amazement. When Brian saw the Deputies retreating, he unlocked the front door and let Kevin poke his head out so he could talk to Draig.

"What are you doing here?" Kevin asked with a look of disbelief.

"David saw Emalyn and Striker on the news, and he called a friend of his that was vacationing at Lake Powell. It took some persuading, but he convinced his friend to come find us and ask for our help," Draig remarked.

"Where are the other dragons?"

"Ironstone is over at David's house, and Esmeralda is at Emalyn's. We wanted to make sure that all of you were safe," Draig replied.

"I can't thank you enough for coming," Kevin said as he reached through the opening to pat Draig on the tail.

"We had to come, you're our friends," Draig insisted. Then he turned towards the street to make sure the authorities were keeping their distance.

"Well, I don't think people are going to be able to deny the existence of dragons now," Kevin declared, as the morning sun reflected off Draig's dark red scales.

"That's for sure," Splinter said as she poked her head out of the door to see Draig.

Further down the street, Brian noticed that one of the news crews had knocked over part of the barricade while filming Draig's epic arrival, and the Sheriff was pushing them back.

“Hey Kevin, you might want to roll the TV over here and turn it on, there’s a news crew outside filming this,” Brian suggested.

“Alright,” Kevin replied.

The news channel was still covering the stand off with even more breaking news banners flashing across the screen in red and white lettering.

“Well folks we just arrived at the scene and, if there was any question about the validity of the video we aired yesterday, the proof is sitting on that porch in front of us!” the reporter said as his cameraman zoomed in for a close up of Draig. “Let’s see what some of the bystanders have to say about this unprecedented event... Sir, what’s your reaction? ‘I can’t believe it, I wish I had a pet dragon.’ How about you ma’am, what’s your impression of the dragons’ plea for help? ‘I think we should protect these magnificent creatures.’ How about you sir, ‘All I can say is, wow!’ Wow indeed!” the reporter added with emphasis. “We’ll be right back with more dragon coverage in just a few minutes.”

“Well, I think we have everyone’s attention,” Brian joked as he peeked out the window at the ever-growing crowd of spectators.

“Dad, it looks like some government official is about to talk on the TV,” Kevin said, not wanting his dad to miss it.

“Good morning, my name is Mark Freeman and I am the Director of the United States Department of Fish and Wildlife. Our agency is responsible for the management of plants and animals that inhabit the nations 150 million acres of protected land. Each year, thousands of new species are discovered without any fanfare. Every once in a while the media runs an article about a particularly interesting new plant or animal that comes along. However, this is the first time in my career that a discovery has warranted a national press conference and required our immediate action. So, without further ado, I am pleased to announce the addition of three previously unknown species of reptiles to the Endangered Species List. Effective immediately, Pigmy Dragons, Fire Dragons, and Water Dragons are all protected by law. Due to the uniqueness of these creatures, and the special relationships some of them have formed with their human counterparts, we have added a special provision to the law allowing them to stay with their human families. We ask that all other dragons remain on protected lands and waters until we have an opportunity to establish more inclusive guidelines in the coming months. Now, I will be

happy to take a few questions about this historic event,” the director said as he looked out over the crowd of journalists.

“You mentioned that there will be some new guidelines established in the near future, can you explain what that means?” a reporter asked.

“Yes. It means we are granting them immediate protection under the law, but we still need to evaluate their range, numbers, and habitat requirements to determine the best way to protect them,” the director replied.

“You said they will be allowed to cohabitate with humans, what was the reasoning for that special provision?” another reporter asked.

“Since dragons have shown they are sentient, caring creatures, they should be allowed to remain with the families that have been caring for them if they choose to,” the director responded.

“A Fire Dragon has threatened several Sheriff Officers who were attempting to serve a search warrant. What risk do they pose to our society, and how are we going respond to that threat?” a reporter asked.

“Alligators, rattle snakes, scorpions, and hundreds of other wild creatures pose a risk to humans everyday. In nearly every case, those creatures are harmless unless they are threatened, or if someone is careless around them. As long as dragons prove to be no more dangerous to us than any of those other animals, they will remain under our protection. I would also like to point out, that just like us, they have the right to defend themselves and the ones they love from harm,” the director emphasized.

“I still think they pose a threat,” the reporter insisted.

“Any wild animal, if provoked, poses a threat. Humans even pose a threat to one another. As long as dragons aren’t the ones doing the provoking, I see no reason to fear them, or to deny them the protections they deserve. On that final note, I would like to thank a special boy named David. He went out of his way to contact me and share with me his comprehensive knowledge of dragons,” the director concluded.

“Can you believe it, dragons are protected by law!” Kevin exclaimed as he picked up Splinter and held her in his arms.

“It’s amazing!” Splinter said as she nudged Kevin affectionately.

“I know, and we owe your brother, Emalyn, and David a huge thank you!” Kevin said as he set Splinter back down.

“The authorities are packing up and leaving,” Brian announced with a sigh of relief. Kevin and Splinter rushed over to the window to see their departure.

“Good riddance,” Splinter remarked. Then as she was about to turn away, she noticed the Animal Control Officer was yelling at one of the Sheriff Deputies and waving the warrant in his face. “What’s he doing?” she asked nervously.

“Get down!” Brian yelled out when the Animal Control Officer grabbed the pistol from the Deputy’s holster. A split second later shots rang out and they heard an unmistakable yelp, followed by a loud thud on the front porch.

“Oh no!” Kevin cried out when the shooting stopped. Then he rushed to the front door and saw Draig laying there motionless. Kevin immediately ran over to him and said, “I’m so sorry,” over and over as the tears streamed down his face. Draig lifted his head as if to say something reassuring to him, and then collapsed back down before uttering a word. Kevin looked out at the street with rage, and through watery eyes, he could see the Animal Control Officer being taken into custody. But it wasn’t the justice he deserved, and Kevin shook his fists at him in frustration and rage. Then he knelt down next to Draig and closed his eyes.

“You can save him,” Splinter whispered into his ear. Kevin wiped the tears from his face and then placed both his hands around Draig’s lifeless body.

“Please don’t die,” he said in a soft voice. Then he felt a warmth running down his arms, and he pressed his ear against Draig’s chest. A faint flutter slowly turned into a single beat, followed by another, and another. Kevin heard the air rushing into Draig’s chest as he lifted his head up high.

“I feel kind of funny,” Draig said as he burped up a fireball.

“That’s because you almost died,” Kevin said as he hugged him with all his might.

“What?” Draig replied, seeming unaware of the tragic event.

“You big dummy, you were just shot, and Kevin saved your life,” Splinter said as she poked him with her tail.

“How did you do that?” Draig asked as he looked at Kevin in disbelief.

“Because I’m a Dragon Wizard,” Kevin admitted in a soft voice.

“I told you,” Splinter leaned over and whispered in his ear.

“Thanks for believing in me,” Kevin whispered back.



[An Interview with a Dragon](#)

The following are some frequently asked questions about dragons that Splinter has kindly taken the time to answer:

Question #1 “How long do dragons live?”

“It is not uncommon for us to see two centuries before we pass, and as a rule larger dragons live longer than smaller ones.”

Question #2 “What do dragons eat?”

“Like most reptiles, we are carnivores, but like humans, we can eat other things if we have to.”

Question #3 “How do you know how to speak our language?”

“Dragons learn and use whatever language is spoken by the humans living near them to reduce the chance of being detected. Our camouflage might prevent us from being seen, but it does not prevent us from be overheard. When there aren’t any humans around, we use Draken to communicate with each other... it is the root to the language you call Latin.”

Question #6 “Humans and Fire Dragons clashed in the middle ages, is there any chance that the return of Fire Dragons might cause another conflict?”

“Both of our species have matured a lot since the middle-ages, and though some dragons and some humans will always break the law, we should be able to resolve those issues if we work together.”

Question #7 “How do Fire Dragons create fire?”

“Inside a Fire Dragon’s mouth there are two separate glands, one produces a flammable liquid and the other secretes a pyrophoric substance that spontaneously combust when it hits the air. The Bombardier Beetle uses the same defense mechanism to protect itself from predators by spraying a super-heated toxic cloud at the would-be attacker.

Question #8 “The boy you live with is called the Dragon Wizard by other dragons, what’s the meaning of that title, and why was he presented with a sword by an elder dragon?”

“It was prophesized that a descendant of the Great Dragon Wizard would mark the return of Fire Dragons, and since Kevin fulfilled that prophecy, he was given one of our most cherished artifacts, the Sword of Honor. It was a gift given by a soldier named Tegan to a dragon named Draig Goch as a symbol of their friendship in a time when dragons and humans were rarely

friends. Now that our two great species have rejoined as one, the sword shall serve as a reminder of that special friendship, and symbolize the many friendships that are yet to come...”



About the Series

The Dragon Adventure Series was inspired by my son and his room filled with dragon art, books, and posters honoring the beloved creatures. In addition, my family's surname is of Welsh origin, so it seemed fitting to incorporate the Welsh dragon, *Y Ddraig Goch* into the storyline. I changed his name to *Draig Gogh* to make it easier for young readers to pronounce, and then added a host of friends to make the adventure come alive.

The rich mining history and unique geographical locations used in this series are inspired by real events and locations in Colorado, Wales, and Ireland. Some of the location names have been changed to fit the story, but anyone looking at a map should be able to identify their origin.

My hope is that this series will ignite the imaginations of readers young and old, along with anyone else who loves dragons. If you have any comments or questions, please feel free to contact me at the email address below.

Thanks again,
Ben L. Hughes

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