

Effel

A McDragon Tale – Book 2 By Pam G Howard

Chapter One

The rope tightened and the dragon roared in frustration, snorting angrily out of his nostrils - he couldn't move - he was trapped. He knew he was going to need the help of the young boy Petersmith again, because he was the honey in the trap and if the other dragons tried to rescue him they would be caught too.

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The rain pattering on the tent was a soothing sound and, what's more, for a short time Peter had the space to himself. A school camping trip to Scotland was not his idea of fun at all, there were seven of them sleeping in the tent and it felt overcrowded.

Now where on earth was Spit's dragon scale? He needed to use it to talk to the little dragon before anyone came back. The last message he'd had from Spit was that there was something badly wrong - McDragon was missing. He had not been for his usual visit for a few days. Peter desperately wanted to know if there was any news at all but he needed his dragon friend's scale to do that. On his recent visit to the Isle of Harris, the young dragon Spit, had given him a scale from his chest so that they could use it to talk to one another. He had another dragon scale, which the adult dragon, Seraphina, had given him for the same purpose, but it was hidden at home for safe keeping while he was away.

He was positive that he'd secreted the scale in his soap box and that had been inside his washing kit but it wasn't there! He tipped the whole bag out carefully on top of his camp bed and went through each item individually. Nothing. The only reason he'd put it there was that he'd had to go out for the rafting trip on the loch and he didn't want to take any chances of losing it in the water.

He was beginning to panic!

Was McDragon alright? He really needed to know!

Now where on earth was that scale!

After searching thoroughly yet again he realised it was definitely missing, which was a disaster.

A head poked through the tent flap, "Peter, you need to come out for supper now!"

"I'll be right with you," he replied starting to carefully put everything back into the wash bag and checking it all over yet again as he did. He took another look over the sleeping bag and then inside it, in case it had fallen out unnoticed. Finally, he woefully had to admit defeat and give up before someone else came along to insist he came out for dinner.

Dinner today was cottage pie and baked beans which was quite filling and tasty and then there was a pudding. Each tent had to take turns at cooking and fortunately his tent's team had done their shift yesterday so they had tonight off.

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The next day's role call was bright and early and the sun was beginning to shine through some misty light rain so a beautiful rainbow lit up some of the sky.

Peter thought to himself, "There is often a crock of gold at the end of a rainbow so where does that one end?" and he pinpointed where he thought it should be. Strangely the end of it seemed to move over to the left a tad as he stared at it.

"I'll go there when we have our break and investigate," he thought.

Then he remembered the lost dragon scale. There really wasn't much he could do about it as he could hardly ask anyone if they'd seen it - they would have mocked him for the rest of the trip. They weren't to know of his adventures with the dragons in Scotland during the summer holidays where he had met his best friend, Spit the dragon when they rescued Seraphina's Pearl, the dragons' name for a dragon egg, which had led to him now being counted as dragon kin. The dragons called him Petersmith.

As he looked up he saw Biffy staring oddly at something in his hand, glancing over at Peter with a very strange look on his face. As soon as he saw Peter watching him he turned away quickly and walked off.

"That was weird!" Peter muttered to himself. "Could he have...? Ridiculous! Of course not!" He answered his unfinished question. But as he pondered further over this he realised that Biffy had been one of the few people who'd been let off the rafting trip.

Biffy and his cronies used to torment him and call him the Crip because his left hand only had a thumb and two fingers on it. Spit had put an end to their bullying by magically blasting them when Peter was holding on to his dragon scale and the boys had all fallen down looking dazed and smelling rather singed. Biffy's only name for him now was "Dragon boy" and that was because one silly day he'd been day dreaming in class and answered the teacher's question by saying something about dragons. He had never heard the end of that one!

Chapter Two

It was so nice to have some time to himself after lunch. He was quite comfortable about being on his own so he set off to search for where the rainbow had ended. He glanced behind him to make sure no-one was following because just recently he'd felt as if he was being watched. It was a strange feeling and he assumed his newly found dragon senses had something to do with his awareness of it.

Listening out carefully as he walked he thought he heard the scuffle of a footstep behind him, so trying to look very casual he edged towards some rocks on his left and ducked down out of sight. He stayed there for a while and just listened. There was no movement that he could hear but he decided to crouch down and move over behind some other rocks. He did this a few times until he was absolutely positive no-one was following him and then set off in the direction he had originally intended, thinking to himself that it wasn't as if he was going anywhere exciting or secretive, it was just that he wanted peace.

He finally reached the spot he had earmarked as the end of the rainbow, puffing a little as he did because it had been an uphill walk.

There were some huge rocks to one side and he walked the whole length of them until they petered out. One end of the rocks was in the shape of a big head as if it was resting on the edge of a narrow burn which eventually dropped down to a loch filled to the brim with dirty brown water. He guessed the peat underneath it made it that way because the water in the burn was beautifully clear. The burn and loch must be fed by a loch higher up in the mountain behind him.

"These are a bit like McDragon's rocks!" announced Peter in a loud voice which echoed around him. Something bright pink was peeping out of the greyness near the cliff top and he wandered over to have a closer look.

"Wow! A frillio!" and with that he plunged his hand into the gentle fronds which were waving about in the breeze and felt that same wonderful feeling that he had done when he had last touched a frillio, of softness and comfort. His hand was pink when he pulled it out. Last time he had seen a frillio had been in the enchanted dome where he had met Spit.

"Watchya, Dragon boy! What are you doing up here!"

Peter blew out a big sigh. Now he knew who'd been shadowing him. Someone he really didn't like at all.

"Oh Biffy, you made me jump. For that matter what are you doing up here? I came for some peace and quiet." Since Spit's little surprise for Biffy and his other thugs, Peter was not scared of him anymore and Biffy had been keeping his distance which must mean that he was totally flummoxed by the blast that had knocked them all down.

“Just keeping an eye on you, old boy! That’s all.”

“Well, I don’t need keeping an eye on thank you. I just want some space to be on my own occasionally!”

“Shame, because I had something to show you. Never mind, I’ll mosey on back to the camp.” As he turned to go he suddenly twisted back again, “But what’s that pink thing you were looking at?”

Peter was astounded because the frillio was something magical and Biffy shouldn’t have been able to see it at all.

“Wh..what do you mean? What pink thing?!”

“That pink thing that you were just touching.”

“Oh... I’ve heard it’s called a frillio.” Out of the blue Peter just couldn’t think of anything else to say about it.

“Really. Let me touch it too.” Biffy said as he walked slowly towards the frillio.

He tentatively put his hand out to touch it, then put his fingers further into it.

“Doesn’t seem to do anything at all,” he announced and sauntered off in the direction of the camp.

Peter sat down with a thump.

“How can that be? He touched it but his hand didn’t turn pink! But he could see it and it’s magical!”

Then he realised he really did want to speak to Biffy and he jumped up to race after the other boy, calling his name as he did. He really should ask if he’d found the dragon scale although he wouldn’t call it that, of course.

Biffy totally ignored him and just carried on walking steadily back down towards the camp and in the end Peter stopped chasing after him and walked disconsolately back to where the rainbow had ended.

When he got to the small clearing he sat down to rest his back on a big rock. He could smell the peaty water of the loch nearby.

“Petersmith! I am very glad you have come back to see me,” boomed a voice in his ear. He looked around him but there was no-one to see.

“I moved the end of the rainbow and hoped you would notice it and be interested enough to come here.”

“Where...where are you?”

He felt the large rock behind him shift and he quickly moved away from it. The grey rocks gradually took on a humungous shape. Huge feet with long talons emerged at the end of strong big legs and then a very long tail which flicked down onto the ground raising dust around them both.

“Another dragon!!”

A big head, the length of Peter’s leg, was lowered down so that Peter could see the reflection of his face in amethyst eyes. The dragon blinked. Peter blinked too, astounded as the sound of humming reverberated around them. It was a dragon’s greeting. Peter joined in with it. He enjoyed dragon song.

“I am Effel. I am a dragon seer and you are Petersmith, dragon kin and friend of McDragon, Seraphina, Haribald d’Ness and Spit.”

“Don’t forget Popple!”

“Just so – Popple as well.”

Effel looked as if she was a very ancient dragon. She was quite battered and battle scarred and her eyes had a slightly watery, filmy look to them.

Peter nodded. He was feeling rather overwhelmed.

He broke the small silence, “So do you make the pictures in the dragon seers’ cave on the Isle of Harris?”

“I contribute to them, yes. There is more than one dragon seer.”

“Oh. In that case do you know what has happened to McDragon please? I am very worried about him!” and he rushed into his tale of how he had misplaced or someone had stolen Spit’s scale and how he needed to get in touch with Spit to see what was happening.

Effel looked at him solemnly. “Petersmith, I am unable to see specific happenings when I want to, pictures come to me in my head from time to time and I am only then able to relay them to the dragon seers’ cave. What I can tell you is that I believe something has happened to your friend McDragon... something that involves wizardry and I believe that as dragon kin you will have to help him... but not yet. Firstly, we need to know far more before you can go rushing to the rescue.”

“But what can I do if I cannot contact Spit? I’m unable to speak to Seraphina either as I have left her scale hidden in my room at home so it would be safe.”

“Petersmith, listen to me carefully. I have had a vision where I felt great danger. You would imperil both Spit and Seraphina if you were to contact them at all through their scales because I believe you will be using what I would describe as “loose” magic. Do you understand? It is very important that you do, particularly until we can make some sense of McDragon’s disappearance.”

“Oh! Yes, I understand completely, Effel.”

“So you can see that for the time being it does not really matter that you have had Spit’s scale stolen.”