



CHAPTER ONE

Ulf watched the radar screen. A green line swept around it like the speeding hand of a clock. The radar beeped 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 Faraway 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 Faraway 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 Faraway?' he asked her.

'Professor Faraway died long ago. He was the world's first cryptozoologist, an expert on endangered beasts. Faraway 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.