

# *Georgia* and the DRAGON



*By* Harry Oulton

*Illustrations by* Janet Cheeseman

*Georgia*  
*and the*  
DRAGON

All proceeds from the sale of this book go directly to St John's School, Highbury Vale, to develop and buy books for the Library.



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All characters in this publication are entirely fictitious and any resemblance to real persons, living or dead, is only because they were inspirational.

To the staff and children of St John's School,  
Highbury Vale, academic year 2011-2012.

– *HO*



*Georgia*  
*and the*  
DRAGON

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When Arthur hid himself away,  
the house was in despair,  
How on earth could Georgia sleep,  
without her favourite bear?

She looked behind the cupboard,  
she looked under the stair,  
She looked inside the washing machine,  
she hunted everywhere.

Night was drawing closer,  
but though she called he didn't come,  
So tucked up in her bed she glumly, lonely,  
sucked her thumb.

The door clicked shut, the darkness came,  
and wrapped her all around.  
The shapes and shadows menacing,  
the silence full of sound.



See this is why she needs her bear,  
her fluffy, threadbare armour,  
When Arthur's with her, nothing dark  
can come inside and harm her.

Georgia lay as still as ice,  
her eyes tight like a tomb,  
When gently, soft, *a little voice*  
came floating through the room.

“Are you ok?” it seemed to say,  
and then it came again,  
soft and gentle, calm and kind,  
like warm, refreshing rain.

It came from over by the door.  
A cupboard covered with a throw.  
What was inside? How could it speak?  
Georgia didn't know.

She had to though, and so she quietly  
clambered out of bed.

And tiptoed to the cupboard,  
bent down her red-curved head.

“Are you ok?” It came again,  
the voice she’d heard before.  
Georgia listened, yearned and then...  
she reached towards the door.

She opened slowly, peered inside,  
intrigued what she might find.  
But nothing’s there, the cupboard’s bare,  
the whole thing’s in her mind.

But something makes her reach inside,  
and blindly grope within,  
Fingers fumbling hopefully,  
like in the biscuit tin.



And as she strains, a jolt of hope,  
her hand on something hidden,  
She clutches, pulls, and out it comes,  
a green and purple Wyvern.

Farringdon, the long forgotten  
dragon, cuddly toy.  
An heirloom Georgia used to grump  
belonged more to a boy.

Who wants a dragon? Who could love  
these creatures clad in scales?  
With staring eyes, and fiery breath,  
with claws and hooks for tails.

So disappointed now she looks,  
at Farringdon the Wyvern,  
Her father's and grandfather's once,  
on loan to her, not given.

She goes to put the dragon back,  
but something stays her hand,  
The memory of that voice perhaps,  
like honey, mixed with sand.

She shivers, not with fear, but  
out of being out of bed.  
“Put on your dressing gown” she hears,  
again inside her head.



She looks in wonder, and she does  
exactly what he said.

How can this be? He's just a toy,  
no brain, no heart, quite dead.

And yet she hears his voice, inside  
her head, like wind in wheat,  
"I've been asleep a long, long time,  
any chance of a bite to eat?"

“Some hot salami? Chicken tikka?  
Or a peppery pear?  
The fridge is high and you are short,  
so you may need a chair.”

Stunned she sets the dragon down,  
his wings drag on the floor,  
She asks him how it is that he  
did never speak before?

“You never needed me” he says,  
“but now you clearly do,  
I’m like a genie in a lamp,  
so what is bothering you?”

And Georgia says how scared she is,  
“my stomach’s in a knot,  
Without my bear the night is dark,  
I will not sleep one jot.”

“It’s clear to me” the Wyvern says,  
“to get you off to sleep,  
we’re going to need a little more  
than milk and counting sheep.

I suppose my snack will have to wait”  
he sighed and tapped his belly,  
“although I’m starving, ravenous,  
I’d love some chilli jelly.

So tell me then what makes you scared,  
what makes your eyes go wider?  
*The Araneus Diadamatus?*  
(That’s a fancy name for spider).”

“Yes yes!” Said Georgia white with fear,  
“you’re absolutely right,  
Spiders, wolves, and fishes too,  
but most of all, *the night*.

It flows around me like a cloak,  
a creeping slick of black,  
It seeps through any wall or door,  
and nothing holds it back.

At morning time it disappears,  
but still it spoils the day,  
The sunlight just reminds me  
night is only hours away.”

The Wyvern raised his mighty head,  
he seemed to grow in size,  
But when he spoke, (inside her head),  
the words were calm and wise.

“The night is but a darker day,  
the day a brighter night,  
without the other neither lives,  
like blindness without sight.



For moon and sun live side by side,  
a sister and a brother,  
It's earth and how it turns that makes  
us go from one to t'other.

Night is full of hopes and dreams,  
far richer than the day,  
Night's the mystery Santa needs,  
the cover for his sleigh.

Because of night the morning sun  
explodes out of the east,  
And owls at night can leave their nests,  
and blind men feel at peace.

For in the dark you take away  
the stresses caused by light,  
The battering clamour of the world,  
the crashing blight of sight.

Asleep your mind's a cinema,  
films play behind your eyes,  
You dream, and in your dreams you find  
your own small paradise.

And there's that magic, fleeting moment,  
just before you wake,  
When thoughts flit in and out your mind,  
like mayflies on a lake.

So close your eyes, and feel your other  
senses grow and grow,  
Your nose, your ears, your fingertips,  
your tongue begin to glow.”

The dragon paused, and Georgia, good girl,  
does what she's been told,  
And sure enough her senses do  
get sharper, make her bold.

She strokes the night with fingertips,  
she smells it, tastes and hears,  
Her faculties protect her,  
her own troop of musketeers.

And then the voice is there again,  
inside her head once more,  
And when she looks, he's sitting, thinking,  
on her bedroom floor.

“It's funny how wolves come across  
as nature's own bad guy,  
for despite their reputation,  
they are really rather shy.

When wolves are born they're deaf and dumb,  
and so they move in packs,  
It's stressful for the mums and dads,  
so in a group they can relax.

For all they hunt, and chase and kill,  
they do it to survive,  
They're just like any living thing  
that wants its child to thrive.

They're always warm, and this is what  
is really quite amazing,  
It's because they have two layers of fur,  
like natural double glazing.

But here's the thing, the chance of being  
attacked by a wolf at night?  
Is slightly less than that of being  
hit by a meteorite."

Georgia laughed and Farrington  
reacted to the sound,  
He shook himself and swished his wings,  
like brooms along the ground.

“I had a friend a bit like you,  
a funny dragon lass,  
She could never get her flaming right, was  
always burping gas,

One time she really made me laugh  
by guzzling down ice cream,  
Then breathing fire so fast she burned  
her nose from all the steam.

Her name was Donna, purple nostrils,  
silver scaly tail,  
She disappeared one day in March,  
I think to a jumble sale.”

He shook his head and Georgia could  
have sworn he shed a tear,  
He cleared his throat and then the voice  
was solid in her ear.



“Scared of fishes eh? Climb on  
my back and hold on tight,  
And tie your dressing gown on well,  
we’re going on a flight.”

With that the Wyvern spread his wings,  
and grew to massive size,  
And out the window both they flew,  
up into darkened skies.

Up, up they went and up some more,  
the prehistoric brute,  
With Georgia on his back, a sort  
of dressing-gowned mahout.

“So tell me this,” she asked the beast,  
while clinging to his withers,  
“What kept my father up at night, what gave  
my dad the shivers?”

“Your father lived afraid of bombs, of death  
hurled from the sky.  
He feared the men who ran the world  
would blow it heavens-high.”

Georgia nodded, that seemed right,  
the thoughts her dad would think,  
Would all be cataclysmic things,  
his life gone in a blink.

“So did you talk to him as well?  
Did you sit on his bed?  
Or did you fly him round the world?  
It’s weird he never said.”

And nor will you, the dragon thought,  
for strange as it may seem,  
When morning comes, and you wake up,  
all this will be a dream,

But what he said was, “yes I did.  
I think I helped your father,  
The memory of it makes me weak,  
it taxed my powers rather.



You see his fears were very strong,  
he was a worried lad,  
He never would have grown to love,  
and wed, and be a dad.

For he was certain all was lost,  
and nothing that I said,  
Could make him see that death's a trick,  
played out inside his head.”

Georgia now was all agog,  
her fingers gripping tight,  
“So how'd you do it? How'd you make  
him see he'd be all right?”

“When everything I tried had failed  
and I was near despair,  
I took him to the future, showed him  
his daughter's flaming hair.”



“You showed him me?” the little girl  
excited, “what d’you do?  
A time machine? A Tardis? You know,  
like in *Doctor Who*?”

The dragon roared inside her head,  
and Georgia felt his rage,  
She wished she hadn’t asked him that,  
could just turn back the page.

“I showed him that which was to be,  
what joy was yet to come,  
It nearly killed me, took my powers,  
that’s why I am struck dumb.”

“But I can hear you” says the girl,  
“I shouldn’t but I can,  
you fly, you talk, you never age,  
you’re just like Peter Pan.”

The dragon raised an eyebrow and  
he sadly shook his head,  
“The words you hear are just my thoughts,  
I know it’s strange,” he said.

“Back in the day my voice could make  
the birds fall from the sky,  
And mountains crumble, oceans rise,  
and rocks and deserts cry.

My voice had so much power and strength,  
so elegant and strong,  
I thought I was all-powerful;  
so vain, so blind, so wrong.

Your father asked too much of me,  
I had to make a choice,  
I chose to help him, cured his fears,  
and sacrificed my voice.

So now I live in silence,  
with just the beating of my wings,  
So do forgive me if I say  
some harsh or hurtful things.”

“I’m sorry,” said the little girl,  
ashamed at being rude,  
“I didn’t mean that you were... um...  
do you still want some food?”

She fished a sweetie from her pocket,  
blew off the bits of fluff,  
The dragon’s eyes lit up, although  
his “Thanks” was still quite gruff.

And as he sucked, she heard his thoughts  
“now trust me, hold on tight,”  
and as they flew, like falling dew,  
they sparkled in the night.

When Georgia dared to look again,  
her breath came even shorter,  
Farringdon was plunging down,  
directly for the water!

She panicked, closed her eyes again,  
let out a high pitched scream,  
As into spray and waves they dived,  
a dragon submarine.

But underwater wasn't wet,  
the girl felt warm and light,  
Her taxi told her "look around,  
I think you'll like the sight."

And Georgia found, by floating round  
and clinging to his wing,  
That she could breathe, and smell and taste,  
and look at everything.



Her dragon-boat was drifting through  
an underwater frieze,  
A glorious, painted world of coral,  
fish, and seaweed trees.

And everywhere she looked was colour,  
clashing, bright as day,  
Seahorses, squid, anemones,  
schools of fish at play.

“You see?” the dragon said, “such beauty  
shouldn’t make you wary.

They’re probably just as scared of you,  
all green-eyed and red-hairy.”

“But they stare, they’ve got no eyelids,  
and those horrid, skinny lips,  
They’re slimy and they’re slithery,  
although they do taste good with chips”

The dragon sighed, and looked at her;  
“there is an ancient story,  
About a lonely fisherman,  
whose name was Salvatore.

Out on his boat one day he heard  
the most amazing sound,  
A song, so beautifully sung,  
he ran his boat aground.



On land he found a seal-skin,  
and when he eased the trees apart,  
He saw a *selkie* singing there,  
her beauty stopped his heart.

Selkies are half girl, half seal,  
with voices made of gold,  
They come ashore and shed their skins,  
a wonder to behold.

He hid the skin and married her,  
he took her for his wife,  
And they had many children,  
and he loved her more than life.

But though she also loved him,  
even more she loved the sea,  
And Salvatore, seeing this, knew  
he had to set her free.

He gave her back her skin,  
she was a fish forever more,  
He watched her swim away, his sad  
heart breaking on the shore.

He knew the sea should have her back,  
he knew he had no choice,  
She missed it like you miss your bear,  
and I my missing voice.

So next time that you see a seal,  
or fish who's swimming free,  
Remember they've got feelings too,  
the same as you and me.

And now it's time for one last trip,  
we're nearly at the end,  
We're going to face your final fear,  
our hairy, eight-legged friend.”

Then suddenly the sea is gone,  
and now they're in a wood,  
It's dark and scary, cold and bleak,  
a horrid neighbourhood.

And then the Wyvern tensed,  
and in the blinking of an eye,  
Became a massive eight-legged spider,  
seven storeys high.

He towered over Georgia's head,  
his legs like circling trees,  
And Georgia, terrified and small,  
dropped frantic to her knees.

“Now fear me!” hissed the beast  
and Georgia does, ice in her veins,  
and then the spider's gone,  
and just her Wyvern friend remains.



Her heart is pumping, racing, thumping,  
beating fit to burst,  
As Farrington apologises, tells her  
now she's seen the worst.

“That’s how the spider feels”, he says,  
“now you too can relate,  
To him you’re massive, different, deadly,  
huge and full of hate.

And every time he sees you he just  
prays you’ll leave him be,  
Not scream and cry out “Daddy!  
Get this thing away from me!”

I will not take your fears away, because  
with some reflection,  
You’ll understand the dread he causes  
works as his protection.

He should be ugly, creepy, nasty,  
should make you alarmed,  
It’s the only way to save himself  
from being killed or harmed,

So be afraid of spiders,  
and remember, Nature's wise,  
If we killed all the spiders,  
who'd be there to eat the flies?

But now, small girl, it's time for bed  
and time I went away,  
You've been awake for far too long,  
what would your mother say?

And Georgia yawns, he's right, she's tired,  
"but just before you go,  
What was my grandpa like?" she asks,  
"I'd really love to know."

"Your Grandpa was a firework,  
full of life and joy and vigour,  
he chatted, joked with everyone,  
your grandma called him Tigger.

But strange though it may seem,  
what made him happiest of all  
Was planting tulips in his garden,  
or training roses up the wall.

He'd talk for hours to all his flowers,  
he said it was his duty,  
And sure enough the things he grew  
would wow you with their beauty.

But then the world went mad,  
and duty called him off to war,  
And four years later back he came,  
a firework no more.

He never was the same again,  
all silent and subdued,  
Haunted by the war and people  
crying out for food.



He vowed his wife and kids  
would always have enough to eat,  
So he tore up all his flowers,  
sowed potatoes, beets and wheat.



When you were born he loved your sparkling  
eyes and stubby nose,  
Before he died he grew for you,  
one Rosamunda rose.

So go to sleep now, rest your head  
and dream of happy things,  
I'm going inside the cupboard,  
to have a snooze beneath my wings.”

With that the Wyvern waved a claw,  
and Georgia was in bed.  
And there was Arthur, on her chair,  
“Where were you?” she said.

And Georgia slept, and to this day,  
with or without her bear,  
She calmly sleeps the whole night through,  
relaxed and debonair.

For what she learned, that busy night,  
is not that fears are wrong,  
It's how you deal with them that counts,  
that's how you get along.

We all fear something, all get worried,  
all have mares at night,  
But we've also all got dragons,  
in our heads, to see us right.

So never fear if you can't sleep,  
don't fret or sweat or brood,  
Farringdon will sort you out,  
just make sure you've got some food...

*THE END*



This book is the result of a combination of things:

Our daughter Edith demanding a story one night, Janet Cheeseman (janetcheeseman.co.uk) being a great artist and making me think I'd love to write something for her to illustrate, my wife Caroline urging me to actually do something positive to support the library, and most of all, our wanting to do something to thank the school for all it has done for both Edith and her elder brother Joseph.

I'm hugely grateful to my very talented graphic designer friend Ned Campbell for making the whole thing happen and for gently steering me through the process, Troy Sharpe for his support of it, Janet for her illustrations, Caroline for her patience, Emily and Joseph for being a very supportive audience throughout the process and for suggesting exactly what dragons might like to eat, but most of all, to Edith, for losing her bear. – *Harry Oulton*

