

The Dreadful Dragons of Oxwich Bay

By Helen Taylor

The True story of Shrivvenham School's Residential Trip 1999

Nearly all the incidents in the story are true, only the names of the dragons have been changed to protect them from angry parents.

Once upon a time, not so very long ago, in a far country by the sea, there lived five dragons. Their names were Chief (in charge), Assistant, Noisy (he had the loudest roar - and you should hear his singing!!), Food and Money because sometimes they gave it out. They were only happy when they had a group of miserable children to frighten by roaring at them. One day while out looking for children, they happened to pass through Shrivvenham just as some parents were waving goodbye to their children who were going on an outing. The Dragons could hardly believe their luck as they bundled the children into a carriage and headed off down the Dragon way back to their lair. They made sure the parents couldn't follow them by going over a big bridge which was guarded by very fierce Dragons.



After travelling some distance, the dragons decided the children were far too happy. They would have to start training them, so the carriage stopped at a big place with a fence all round. Ideal, thought the dragons. We will make them look at houses, then to make them really miserable, we will show them a school. Everyone got out of the carriage then the dragons shared the children out between them. The groups went off in different directions. Every time someone tried to escape the dragons roared until they came back. The children thought some of it was quite interesting but were a bit worried by the roaring. It wasn't quite what they had expected on their day out.

Later in the afternoon the dragons put the children back in the carriage and set off on twisting narrow roads until they eventually arrived at the dragon's lair. It was in a beautiful spot at one end of a lovely sandy bay. The sun was shining and the children started to cheer up a little. This did not last long, however, as Chief dragon loaded all the children with very heavy weights and made them walk up flights of stairs. As if this wasn't enough, when they had got up the stairs, they were put in little boxes in threes or fives and told that this was where they were to sleep. What's more there was only one shower per room, and even worse - NO TELEVISION !!! No time to think now. Assistant Dragon was there roaring "Come downstairs everyone!" Once downstairs it was food time. The Dragons kept roaring at them all through the meal which gave some of the children a headache. This gave Noisy a chance to feed them with pills and medicine(which the children managed to pretend to swallow). After the meal everyone went on to the beach with buckets and spades. Again the children thought things might be getting better, but then they were roared at when they went near the sea, or the cliffs. The only thing they were allowed to do was to find things in rock pools. Not bad you might think, in fact quite fun... But no!! After a while with a lot more roaring they had to put all the things they had collected back in the pools and go inside again. No excuses were accepted as Assistant dragon made the children sit down at tables and write in red Dragon diaries, without talking to each other, for an hour. Every time one of the children spoke - yes you've guessed it - the Chief Dragon roared at them!! To their dismay, after the writing, the children, (accompanied by lots

more roaring of course) were put into their boxes and forbidden to get out until daybreak, which came very early by the seaside.

This was the chance to have a council of war and decide a plan of action. Some of the children were all for escaping at the earliest opportunity - which they tried to do at various times throughout the five days. The rest decided that they would do everything the Dragons wanted them to and particularly KEEP SMILING and hopefully the Dragons would get tired of trying to make them miserable and they would be able to escape together.

The second day dawned bright and sunny. Money Dragon wouldn't give out any money but Food Dragon made them take sandwiches and crisps, then Noisy Dragon made some children take pills and medicine. More training was to come when the Dragons roared "Single file", and walked everyone up and down a road while chariots rushed past them. Next the children were made to walk for miles and miles over sand dunes and marshes until they were lost. Some had hoped to keep the sandwiches for the escape but were so hungry after the walk that they sat down and ate all the food. It was a very pretty place, but the Dragons sent them into a little stream to find treasure and stopped one or two who were trying to escape by sea. Next, when everyone was soaked to the skin and covered with sand, the Dragons made them walk the length of the beach without shoes and socks on!!! The Dragon Diaries had to be written when they arrived back, then later that day the children were again allowed on the beach. This time Noisy and Money Dragon made some of them play games while Assistant and Food Dragons made the rest build castles. This wouldn't have been so bad, but in the night the Dragons knocked all the castles down so really it was all a waste of time.

The next day was Wednesday. Money Dragon finally handed some out then they were also given more food. Everyone was then made to carry heavy day bags and get into the chariot. The Dragons were trying another way of frightening them!! After a long journey along Dragon tracks they stopped in what would have been a very beautiful

place but a terrible Monster was crouched right in front of them and roars even more dreadful they had heard before were echoing all round. Again the children were shared out among the Dragons who led them into an enormous cave where water was dripping from the roof and strange coloured shapes were lit up. There were also voices of two men speaking to each other. Outside more monsters surrounded them on the way to other caves. In one there was an enormous lake, and more horrible still, in the other were lots of bones. It was really hard for some of the children to keep smiling. Somehow they managed it but once again hunger meant no food left and even worse :- there was treasure cave and they couldn't resist spending their money. Chief Dragon then fed them cone shaped biscuits full of different flavoured ice. It was rather pleasant but the children weren't fooled and headed off down the road. Unfortunately this was where the Dragons were headed next. It was a farm full of strange wild woolly creatures. Some were brown with long legs and some black ones even chased anyone brave enough to go near them, as did some very odd chickens. It seemed safer to go back in the carriage than to take their chances there!!

The children were still smiling, as they had found the Dragons roared less when they stuck together in their groups so it seemed a good idea to do this. After a short carriage ride the next day, they were taken to another bay, told nightmarish stories of shipwrecks then made to walk along narrow planks out over the sea and get on a boat. They breathed a sigh of relief when the Dragons took them away. That was until the carriage reached Dragonsea, a large town full of lots of rushing chariots. More roaring from the Dragons as again the children had to eat their food and were then set free to spend their money in a large dome shaped building. Not satisfied with this they were next taken past more chariots to another large building full of paintings and made to copy them. When the carriage finally took everyone back to the Dragon's lair things definitely took a turn for the worst. The dining room was empty. They're going to starve us thought the children, but no, much worse than that, everyone had to go outside and eat Dragonrolls using their fingers instead of knives and forks while sitting on hard wooden benches. Then they had to go inside while Assistant Dragon tried to deafen them with strange music. When they were worn out Chief Dragon took

them outside on to the beach again and made them run about and play games. Everyone was exhausted by bed time, and willingly went to their boxes to sleep

The Dragons had saved the worst things of all to the Friday. First the children had to put all their things into their suitcases, then carry the heavy weights back down the stairs. Next Noisy fed them pills again (they were getting good at hiding these), Money gave out money and Food handed out Coalwiches instead of sandwiches. They then had to get in a line with Food at one end and Money at the other and walk up and down a field. What a waste of time thought the children, but they still kept smiling and the dragons began to wonder if they would ever train this collection of children. The carriage arrived once more and everyone piled in. The Dragons were making one last attempt.

After a long drive the carriage stopped, the children got out, had their watches and cameras taken away from them, then made to put on helmets, lights and two heavy packs round their waists. Whatever next, they thought. Well, next Coal Dragons put them in groups in cages and took them down, down deep under the earth to the place where the Dragons had come from. It was dark, damp and had a very low roof. Some of the taller children had to bend over in places They chuckled (silently) when Noisy Dragon hit his head on the roof and even more when Food lost her light and got told off by Coal Dragon. Still they walked on, slipping on the floor and dodging the drips while Coal Dragon told them horrible stories of little children, gas and horses underground. Worst of all he made them all turn their lights out! Yet still the children kept smiling although it was a bit of an effort at times. Dragons have very little patience and when it became obvious that this plan was going to fail, they decided that it would be better to take the children back than to keep on with a scheme that was bound to fail. Accordingly Coal Dragon took the groups back to the surface, and after yet again making everyone eat their coalwiches and spend their money, the Dragons put the children back in the carriage and headed back along the Dragonway to Shrivenham. However they had one last trick up their scales. The Children were made to watch a scary video all about children being taken away from their families. Even worse, Driver Dragon turned it off just at the most exciting bit. The children did

not mind however as they had just spotted their families waiting outside the school for them. By this time the Dragons had got so used to the children, and liked their happy smiling faces so much, that they decided to turn over a new leaf, settle down in Shrevenham and never ever roar at anyone again.

Time alone will tell if they can manage to mend their wicked ways!!

