

HOW TO CATCH A DRAGON



by
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DRAGON-CATCHER – By Royal Appointment



o... you want to catch a dragon? Well, you've come to the right place! Settle down somewhere nice and comfy and I'll begin...

The first rule of a dragon-catcher is to not be afraid. It's important to have a voice of your own. To be independent and strong. Because if you're not, then things could get pretty hot around you!

A dragon will pick up on your energy, so it's important to be kind and feel relaxed around them. I always think how I would feel if I were in their shoes. Not that dragons wear shoes of course. And in the past maybe people even made shoes out of dragons! Urgh!

Being kind and friendly does not mean you let others, especially dragons, walk all over you. Dear me, no. A dragon-catcher who doesn't stand her ground would not last long. Believe me, I know.

Even as a baby and small child I had to know how to fight. Not in the bish, bash, bosh sort of way, but more the struggle to get through, to survive sort of way.

Dragons like to see you in a hat. I have lots of dragon hats. One for every occasion. And every dragon. Because, like humans, although they share much in common – their dragonness, they are also all individuals. Some are fierce and want to breathe fire all over the place. You soon have to put a stop to that – or at least calm things down a bit. I'm good at that. Some, need to learn what their special talent is. There are dragons who just want to look after everyone, and others who think only of themselves. So, you need to work out what you're dealing with.

Dragons are a lot like people, when it comes down to it. Oh, they may all look pretty similar, but underneath those scales is a beating heart and a brain AND a personality.

It is not always possible to know what sort of upbringing a dragon has had. And of course, that will have a bearing on the sort of creature he or she is. Now please do not

get me into how you tell the difference. It can be quite tricky. Let's just say that when you know, you know. And if you would like to know more, then you'll have to track me down and I'll do my best to teach you. But it's not for the fainthearted. Don't think anyone would accuse me of being that. It's what got me through the difficulties I've faced in my life.

My favourite colour is red. What's yours? You see, it can have a bearing on the type of dragons you'd be best suited to. As I said, red is my colour. (So Christmas is an especially happy time for me!) Consequently, I am particularly drawn to what is generally called, the Welsh dragon. For hundreds, if not thousands of years, people have worshipped this particular dragon. And although I'm not Welsh, it is, well... (don't let the other dragons know!) my favourite. Maybe now would be the time to tell you a little of my story... still sitting comfy?

I guess it's pretty unusual for a Dragon-catcher to live in Fremington. And I certainly am not aware of any others of us living nearby. But I didn't always live here. We moved down from Heathrow in 1990. And I would say it was a good move. Dragons have a difficult time with all those planes taking off and landing nearby, so you don't get much chance to observe them in the wild – let alone catch them!

But now, down here, in North Devon? Hmm... I think it's probably the best place I've ever been to!

Well, you're not going to spot many dragons when you're hurrying about catching tube trains, or buses. Especially with other people and cars rushing here and there. Far too busy. But in Devon? Here, I get to walk everywhere. Everything - doctors, hairdressers, the shops, I just walk to them. And everyone is so friendly. Which I think brings in many of the little dragons I rescue. They can have had a hard time up-country, so for them too it's good to live somewhere where the sea and the moors are not too far away.

Even in town, there are lots of green spaces. I go to the bowling club with my mum. I don't play. My dad used to. He's gone now... But I do like to watch. I suppose that again is why I'm good at catching dragons. Because, one of the important things you have to learn is to *be observant*. To watch and listen. And to *focus*. (I'm still working on that one. Far too many interesting things to do and places to go!!)

A dragon isn't going to wander up and tap you on the shoulder now, is it? Although one did once. It was one of those times when I wasn't perhaps so observant or focussed. It is a lifelong practice after all! But you'll have to read my other book about that!

When I'm not catching dragons, I love to write. And Silver Hill is a good place for that.

The staff are all wonderful and encourage me. Because although I'm pretty confident with the dragons (well, you have to be), I'm like everyone else, in that I need to feel good about myself. And I certainly do not like being told off! Thankfully it doesn't happen much. And never for anything major.

Easy-going? Yes. Slowly, slowly, catchee-dragon! You can't rush it!

Are you a collector of anything? Well, if you're not, then, if you're serious about being a Dragon-catcher (when you grow a bit bigger) then perhaps think about what you *do* like and what you might like to collect.

Me? I collect comic books. (And hats, and dragons...) Thankfully there's a special comic shop in Barnstaple, in the Pannier market and they even get me ones over from America. The latest one I got from them was one about Godzilla. I know a lot about Godzilla and King Kong. Because the people in the shop know me, they kept it aside and I was able to put a deposit on and go back later for it. That's *trust* you see. Another great quality of a dragon-catcher. If you can't earn their trust, then you'll never get anywhere near them. As I keep saying... much like humans. Hmm...

I also collect hats. Dragon hats. Well, as I said before, it all helps them to feel happy and secure. And whatever you do, you do not want a stressed out dragon on your hands. Oh dear me, no. That would never do. So, I choose my hat carefully, depending on the dragon I'm after. You don't always know if a dragon is going to be friendly or not. A bit like people. You have to learn how to 'read' them. Fortunately, they're all pretty friendly around here. The people not the dragons! The dragons are a mixed bunch. Being that they come from all over - for their holidays I think. But it means they have very different personalities and experiences. Luckily, they all just want to chill out and relax. Again a bit like the people. So it's not quite so dangerous or difficult as when I lived in Heathrow.

However, I was pleased to have been there when I was born. The Middlesex Hospital. (I hear that all the very best dragon-catchers are born there. Oh, yes.) Anyway, it wasn't all plain-sailing as they say. I was so ill. Spent years in and out of hospital until they found out exactly what I had.

I went to a number of special schools in London. Martindale, Margery Kinnon and there was another school I went to with my brother, called The Rosary. I remember them all. And enjoyed school. Well, it's where you learn. And there's a lot to learn if you want to catch dragons, don't you know!

I've had a few sad things happen in my life. I don't dwell on them. It's all part of life and

you have to learn from your sadnesses and get on with it, I always say. A good cuddle with a Welsh dragon usually helps. As long as it's one you've known a long time. And they can be surprisingly funny too once you get used to their quirky sense of humour.

It always helps to laugh, I find.

Seeing all my friends makes *me* happy. What about you? I don't know if I'd say you HAD to be a people-person to get on with dragons, but certainly, for me it helps. And it means that even if very important people (and I mean VERY IMPORTANT PEOPLE) cross your path, you are able to speak with them without any trouble. I suppose, if you're not afraid of dragons, then you're not going to be afraid of the next King of England!

Oh dear! Now I've let the dragon out of the bag!!

Yes. I met him. And his wife. In the Pannier market of all places. But again, that is a whole other tale. For now, let me just say that if I hadn't been *where* I was, *when* I was, then I might not have the title *Dragon-catcher – by Royal Appointment!!* It means, that if they get any trouble with dragons (especially the red ones) up at the palace, then they call for me. It's funny, because The-Next-King-of-England (the one who crossed my path... oh do keep up!) he's also the Prince of *Wales*, which is where the red dragons live. Remember? Strange how it works out, eh?

Now where was I? Ah yes...

How to catch a dragon!

Well, once you've established that...

1. *There is indeed a dragon which needs catching*, and
2. *You have chosen the particular hat to wear*, according to which dragon it is (colour, size, sense of humour (or not) *etc*), well... It's then that the *fun* begins!

To be continued...

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