



sadi's Dragons

B E V E R L E Y B R E A

PREVIEW



Saskatchewan 



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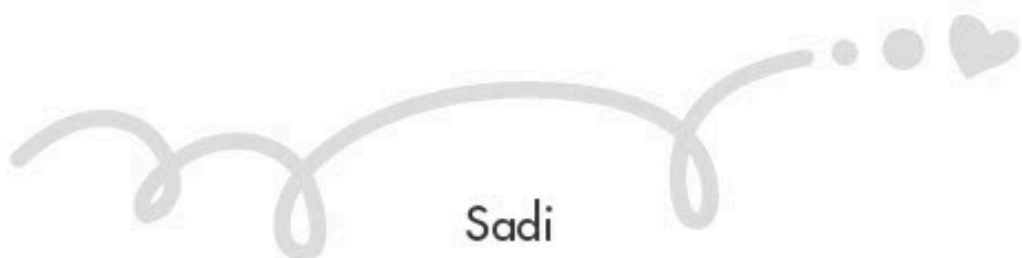
B E V E R L E Y B R E N N A

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PREVIEW

chapter 1



Sadi

It was a dark, rainy Thursday evening when Sadi trudged the last few steps along the riverbank to finally reach their tent. She'd been sleeping here alone since her mother left, promising to be back soon. But her mother hadn't returned. Sadi had finished eating all there was in the calico bag, and then she'd gone out to forage on her own, driven by an angry kind of hunger, wide and deep. She'd gone all the way to the garbage cans at the edge of the big parking lot, where she didn't like to go, digging for discarded treasures.

She hadn't found much. Half a blueberry muffin and a piece of toast, which she ate right away. A can of Coke, almost full, that tipped over when she tried to fish it out. A candy wrapper that still smelled like raspberries. And a mandarin orange—that was the best of it. She'd brought the orange back in the calico bag. She planned to peel it carefully, so she could savour every moment of smell and taste.

could reach more things. So if she had her way, she'd be the tallest person in the town. Or in the city where she used to live. Maybe even in the world.

And if she owned a perfume factory, she'd definitely be the richest person in the world too. She'd call the factory *L'Orangerie*, and she'd go to work every morning at nine o'clock sharp and come home at exactly five. And home would be the same place every night, for always.

"And what would you like, Mistress Orange?" the waiter would say, in that fancy restaurant on Main Street where she'd go to dinner.

"I'll have the stuffed mushrooms for the appetizer, *s'il vous plaît*," Sadi would answer. She'd never eaten stuffed mushrooms, but she'd seen them in pictures on an old menu, and the image had stuck in her mind. They looked a little bit like boats.

She popped one of the orange segments into her mouth and waited for the sparkle as it opened on her tongue.

"And after that, bring me a roast chicken, and then ... " she'd say to the waiter "... chocolate cake for dessert."

She chewed the orange carefully and swallowed, and her mouth watered for more. But she took a few deep breaths instead. You had to make things last, especially if they were oranges and that was all you had for supper.

"And if I'm still hungry," she whispered, "I'll also have the ice cream sundae. With extra chocolate sauce, please."

Sadi knew how to order things properly, even if she'd never been to a fancy restaurant in real life. Her mother

Sadi shivered as she pulled the zipper shut on the tent flap, then crawled into her sleeping bag and dragged the other one on top. When her mother was here, on nights like this, they'd put the sleeping bags together and cuddle down inside, her mother's warmth wrapping around her like a good story. A dragon story, Sadi's favourite kind. But without her mother, the cloth inside Sadi's sleeping bag was cool and slightly damp. Sadi shivered again and clicked on the flashlight.

First she shone it on Papa's watch. She kept it under her pillow because it was too big for her to wear, but it was comforting to hold it—kind of like holding her father's hand, when she was younger. Then she turned her attention to the orange.

She wondered what was in the peel that made it smell so good. She tore into it, and the fine spray misted out, like the very best of perfumes. If it were up to her, she'd invent a perfume just like this, and wear it every day.

Soon everyone would want to smell like that, and she'd have her own company and sell the scent in pretty little bottles with words on the side in flowery handwriting, telling all about the factory and its owner—the tall, mysterious woman that Sadi would become. Very tall, because as an eleven-year-old, she was conscious of being quite short, shorter than most girls her age. She knew this from before, when she'd gone to school. And from her mother, who often called her Little Shorty or sometimes The Shortster. Sadi knew that when you were tall, y

often clowned around at mealtimes, pretending to be a server, or making Sadi the server while she played customer.

“I’ll have the Dried Crust of the Day,” Mama would say, if they were dining on old bread. “And also the French Fry Platter, *s’il vous plaît*.” That was French for “if you please.” Mama had been born in France, in Brittany, and liked to speak French now and then, even though she’d moved to Canada a long time ago. Sadi always answered back in English because that’s what everybody else spoke wherever they’d lived, but she liked the way her mother talked.

Mama had gone back to the city before, but she’d never been away this long. Sadi knew she was in the city because that’s where she always went. Back to their bank, and to meet with the insurance people. And her lawyer. She wondered what her mother was doing right now. And if she was speaking French or English.

The wind rustled the tent flaps, and the sound of the river rose around her, washed against the shore by the wind. There weren’t any people noises down here—the riverbank was full of trees, with only a few animal paths, and nobody ever bothered them. Not like the last place they’d camped, back in the city. There, people bothered them all the time.

Sadi shivered, and then she ate another orange segment, and another.

She really should slow down because she was almost halfway done. And after the orange, there wasn’t anything else. She reached into her big plastic carry bag—she



Credit: Dave Stobbe