Task for Ubby’s Underdogs

Plot outline

Prologue: Explains up to the point where we meet Sai Fong (still in China), the dragon summoner. She is there with her uncle, Yupman Poe, who is looking after her. He is worried about her mysterious health problem and takes the boat to a faraway land to see if he can find a cure for her. Why Australia? – Work? This is the place where the Sandpaper Dragon comes from. Was it seen then as the rich west and a place where someone could get work and good health care?

Setting the scene: The late 1940s in Broome which is recovering from WW2 (bombed by the Japanese and 88 people killed, plus, the pearling industry is winding down – plastic being used). Still some pearling going on and as a result, the town is a very multicultural and multiracial society.

Here we meet Ubby’s Underdogs Gang: Ubby – Aboriginal, Fin – Irish, Gabe – Maori, Sel – Malaysian. They are searching for the Lizard, Gunada – who has stolen Gabe’s front teeth. But this is just a distraction while they undertake the serious business of searching for Medinga. Meanwhile Yupman Poe and Sai Fong have landed on the wharf and are heading towards Hai’s House of Refuge where they meet Clancy Bankler and his sidekicks: Bruno and Casper (all servants to Donappleton, who is a wealthy British pearling magnate). Sai Fong also meets Ling, who is most unfriendly.

Ubby’s Underdogs (still chasing Gunada) burst in on the scene and immediately take Sai Fong’s side against Ling and they also try to recruit Sai Fong into their gang.

We then hear about all the other gangs: Nihongo, Thracian, Balisong (which has Sel’s big brother, Quick, in it), Numunburrs, Dragonflies, plus the Africans brought over by the British. We also learn about Back Camp, where they hold the Secret Council of Magic.

Meanwhile, back at Hai’s, Poe learns that his sick niece has gone missing. He’s worried.

Back to UU gang, and we meet Safa (Caribbean) and find out that his friend, Medinga the baboon, is still missing.

Funny spitting incident.

Then Scotty (leader of Pearl Junior Gang) enters the scene and challenges UU to a game of Gruff.
There is simultaneous action between the game, which begins badly for UU – and Hai’s Refuge where SF is still missing, and Sargent Macintyre has been brought in.

Ubby makes Sai Fong the Bungy (see rules at back) and SF uses her special powers to dispatch the other team and make Pegleg kick an ‘own goal’, which means UU win the game. At some point, a search party from Hai’s come across game but don’t investigate because no sick little Chinese girl would be there.

Great jubilation for UU and funny humiliation for the Pearl Juniors.

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Sai Fong is reunited with her worried uncle. Another funny spitting incident – cultural misunderstanding – with Sargent Macintyre.

Sai Fong explains to UU about her illness. And is confirmed as a definite member of the UU gang.

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Meanwhile, at Donnappleton Estate, shady stuff is going on! Dinner party... Yupman Poe returns from the dinner party, thanks Qon Ginn for looking after his niece and then goes off to the Council of Magic Meeting – looks as if Hai is the leader of this!

Sai Fong has her strange dream about Medinga. Then she is sweeping the yard when Scotty arrives and SF is ambushed by the Pearl Juniors. She repels them all with her magical powers. Then she suddenly gets sick again. UU arrive and the gangs brawl until SF uses her extra special power and loosens an inferno onto the Pearl Juniors.

We learn about the recent riots in Broome where Ubby’s father, Delomarr, was killed, and his brother, Mulli went first against him, then vowed to continue his legacy.

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Dolby’s Dance plan.

Donnappleton’s office where Medinga features in conversation, as does the Sandpaper Dragon. Donnappleton’s father spent his life hunting this dragon, to no avail. Now the discovered scroll tells him that Sai Fong is a dragon summoner who is already acquainted with the Phoenix and the Sandpaper Dragons. Donnappleton decides to see if hunters from Derby can track down the Sandpaper Dragon.

In the meantime, Poe is invited to the movies so Casper and Bruno can – what? Search more thoroughly?

SF gets extra tickets for UU gang and they all go off to movies, meeting Safa and chatting about Medinga on the way. The kids sit on roof to watch (why?) and send Sel to get popcorn, where he has an unfortunate racist incident. Medinga appears and steals Gabe’s popcorn. Then Gabe and Sel appear to fall off roof.
In the meantime the Derby hunters discover the Sandpaper Dragon under water!

Back at Hai’s, Yupman Poe discovers his niece is missing because she is now an UU gang member.

Dolby’s Dance: Things are proceeding roughly when Scotty throws a black sock with a snake in it at Sel, who freaks. The snake bites Sai Fong who panics and begins to firecast. The snake next bites Ubby. Sai Fong however, is fine and Scotty sees that she is a ‘freak’. He threatens to tell his dad. Fin races off to stop Scotty telling his dad, while yelling at someone to fetch Quick and Butcherbird (apprentices in Aboriginal magic brews) to assist Ubby. Gabe pushes Fin out of way, saying the mangrove path that Scotty has taken is full of booby traps but that he, Gabe, knows them all. They chase along through mangroves until Gunada appears again and distracts Gabe. But Appleton’s workers see Scotty and trip him up, allowing Fin to catch up and engage Scotty in a fight. But suddenly workers pull Fin off Scotty, dust him down and send him on his way.

Back at the snakebite scene (Town Beach), Sai Fong looks after Ubby and saves her life by cutting herself and giving her blood to Ubby. SF then gets weaker as Ubby’s strength returns. Butcherbird and Quick arrive but can do nothing for SF. Sel picks up Sai Fong to rush her to her uncle’s.

Ubby races to tell Poe and Hai (along with Butcherbird) but on the way, realises that her ‘mob’ (i.e. Sel who is carrying Sai Fong) are in danger because she sees red wolf tracks. They decide to follow the tracks. Butcherbird wants to get Snow because he’s a good tracker.

Sel (carrying Sai Fong) and Quick (his brother), approach the Pearl Shed, but think they’re being followed and duck inside.

The story becomes confusing now...Quick tells Sel to get in the shed because Sai Fong is waking up. Then Quick goes back outside and locks the door where he is confronted by three assailants who demand to know where SF is. He fights them off but is defeated. The three assailants, Crow, Snail and Frog, then try to get into the shed. Sel forces Sai Fong to escape out the back window but her escape is witnessed and the assailants take off after her. Poor Sel.

The assailants chase Sai Fong to Hai’s and catch ‘Sai Fong’ in bed and carry her off.

Back in China Town, Bruno and Casper are harrying a Chinese just off the boat (??) to try and find SF’s whereabouts. With Poe they begin a real search of the town but the assailants are camouflaged and don’t get caught.
Meanwhile, outside the Pearl Shed, Quick wakes up and is confronted by Ubby and Butcherbird. He thinks Sel and SF are still inside, then they realise there is a huge hole in the shed. Sel is inside along with more Red Wolf tracks – so criss-crossed, they confuse Ubby and Butcherbird and Snow.

The assailants (Snail, Frog and Crow) with their captive head out of town and encounter Butcherbird and Snow blocking their path. The assailants use enchanted firecrackers but they don’t work. Butcherbird uses his Aboriginal magic and they break into the wagon to find a cocoon with a cookpot on its back. Snow uncovers a scroll and as he reads, he realises that it says he shouldn’t have removed the scroll – or else!! At that moment, a leg of the cocoon shoots out and catapults Butcherbird through the air. Snow rushes to his rescue and also gets whacked. They then realise they are dealing with a War Crown Spider. The creature unfolds and emits green slime, terrifies Butcherbird, and heads into town, leaving the men behind who profess they have no idea about the spider but were just doing what they were paid to do – kidnap Sai Fong. They said they were about to break into the Pearl Shed when they heard something bad coming? (Red wolves?) So they headed into town, stole the wagon, took the money and ran.

The assailants can’t or won’t speak so they get left behind while Snow and Butcherbird head for town in the wagon, to try and waylay the War Crown Spider who will destroy whatever target is written on its head.

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In the Pearl Hut, workers are gambling. Not far away, Ubby is tracking the wolves – when suddenly the spider appears. Ubby, quick on the scene (because the Wolves’ tracks went the same way), charges to divert the spider from its prey. Meanwhile Snow and Butcherbird arrive in the wagon. Butcherbird and Snow leap from the wagon to jump on the spider, but this plan doesn’t work and the spider charges for the wagon, pinning Butcherbird underneath. The spider peers down at Butcherbird and releases his green slime, but Butcherbird defends himself with a wok. Snow is still hanging on the spider.

The Numunburrs emerge because of the racket and they spear the spider. Apparently they don’t damage him because everyone else is still terrified and they are trying to take him down.

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Meantime – tourists are travelling around Broome complaining that nothing ever happens in the town. Ubby flies into their car through the back window, followed by the spider. The tourists get a big fright – then Ubby jumps into the marsh to lure the spider from them. The spider circles Ubby who gets her foot stuck in the mangroves. Snow comes bursting through and just as the spider spits, Ubby’s eyes are filled with fire and she (like SF) shoots flames and engulfs the spider. The spider is frozen but the crown is screaming. Snow pulls the crown up and there is the (predicted) gremlin – Master Warrior and Strategist.

The Numunburrs offer assistance to Ubby. Snow appears with the Gremlin who speaks Nanren and is abusive. He says he’s angry because someone stole his egg and put the cookpot in its
place. He also says there’s a Chinese girl in the cookpot. Everyone thinks SF has been found, but instead it’s Ling, who was sleeping in Sai Fong’s bed.

Snow doesn’t know what to do about the spider but the Nuninburrs say leave it to them – they will get the gremlin back in the spider and move them on. Ubby tells the gremlin she will look for its egg while she hunts for her friend, Sai Fong.

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After much searching, Snail, Crow and Frog are reunited. Unbeknownst to them, the red wolves are watching them. Back at camp, Ling is returned and Butcherbird says that this magic spider thing is Chinese magic, not ‘his magic’. Butcherbird accuses Snow’s master, Hai, of being behind it all. But Snow protests. Ubby hopes Hai is behind it because if not – it will be much more dangerous.

Later that evening, Ubby meets Snow and Butcherbird. She feels uneasy – Sai Fong is still missing and it feels like a new war is brewing...

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To be continued!!! (In the next volume in the series.)