



Gefangen in der Welt der Würfel.

Bd. 1: Der Kampf gegen die Creeper

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Trapped in the World of Cubes

Vol. 1, The Fight Against the Creepers

Chapter 1

The dark palace towered into the sky. It was a giant made of stone: shaped like a pyramid and ruling the city, gray, hostile and frightening. The pyramid was surrounded by a wall of towers, gates, embrasures, pinnacles and battlements -- everything had been created by an expert's hand from cuboids. This also applied to the other buildings of the big city, the trees and everything else. It was a world of pixelated Minecraft cubes over which the sky was just turning a deep shade of purple.

Presently lights came on behind the windows of two especially large towers in the wall surrounding the pyramid and bathed the fortress in a cold white shimmer.

Between these towers stood a portal of ten meters. It was as black as death and had two wings; in the middle of each pounded a blood-red heart.

Armed guards ran up and down in front of the gate: zombies with lumpish green skulls and black, rectangular eye slits. They were wearing helmets to protect them from the light, simple suits of armor and carrying long swords. Their faces were blank, expressionless masks.

A boulevard could be reached via a drawbridge that led from the pyramid to the city. Torches threw their flickering lights onto the path. Hundreds of ragged figures crouched to the right and left of it. The crowd was guarded by gray skeletons armed with bows and arrows. Nothing escaped them, they had their eyes on everyone.

Now there was a roll of drums that swelled like an approaching thunder. Fanfares sounded. The time had come! The poor figures became restless, with the crowd swaying back and forth. Raising their arches, the skeletons took aim at anyone who dared to put a toe on the boulevard. An arrow whirred and got stuck right at a man's feet. It reminded him of who he was: a nobody, a nothing, a slave.

Suddenly the drums and fanfares fell silent. There was an almost solemn hush for a moment.

"Attention!" One of the warriors called, and everyone assumed position.

The drawbridge was lowered, then the gate with the blood-red hearts swung open - and a couple appeared: King Yorick and Queen Kayla. These were the rulers of Pyra, a vast landscape they had conquered and subjugated with their army and where their word was law. Yorick and Kayla ruled the country from their pyramid-shaped palace with an iron fist.

The ruling couple resembled the typical Minecraft figures but their faces had very human features.

The king -- a dark type with a stubble, a scar over his right cheek, eyes set close together and an angular, energetic chin -- wore an emerald-gemmed crown and a black coat made of the finest fabric over his equally black uniform.

The queen's face was adorned with a haughty smile. The tall blonde woman was wearing a robe that enclosed her body like liquid gold. Escorted by skeletons, they strode past their subordinates who bowed deeply. Nobody cheered, though, nobody clapped - there was an eerie silence.

Yorick looked indignant all of a sudden and beckoned to one of the skeletons.

The monster aimed its gun at the people, and now timid cheers rose.

A satisfied smile crossed Yorick's face.

"There you go," he said to Kayla.

"You should teach these peasant clods and slaves manners," she replied frostily.

Yorick nodded. "Don't be offended. They don't know any better and are ungrateful. You should never forget: they don't have to love us. The main thing is that they fear us. Well, now I am curious about the games."

Accompanied by further homages, the royal couple strode down the boulevard. The common folk started to throw flowers. There were isolated cheers.

After two hundred meters the rulers of Pyra reached a huge arena. It was an oval black lacquer monster made of the typical Minecraft cubes, fitting up to a thousand spectators and already filled to the last seat. The royal couple entered the box. Yorick let a few seconds pass then raised his fist, signalling the start of the games. There was hesitant applause, which swelled as a grille was pulled up on one side of the arena and two powerful gladiators armed with swords trudged into the open space.

Another gate was opened and two creepers came in. When the dangerous creatures advanced towards the gladiators, they started to hiss like burning fuses.

The audience held their breath.

One of the fighters ran away but the creeper chased him. The other gladiator attacked the green monsters from behind and knocked down one of them with several massive sword blows. It dissolved into a cloud of pixels.

The audience in the ranks cheered. It was clearly on the side of the gladiators, who came from their ranks and were not here voluntarily, fighting for their lives.

But Yorick didn't like that at all. He got up angrily, tore the bow away from one of the skeletons and shot an arrow right at the feet of the gladiator who was still running away from the creeper. The warrior slowed down and the monster caught up with him. When the creeper got close enough to the warrior, the aggressive monster's body inflated - then it exploded. The ground shook, flashes of light appeared, pixelated blocks of all sizes rained, and the gladiators went down.

The audience was horrified. Some had tears in their eyes. Only Yorick and Kayla laughed. Their mood even improved when fresh gladiators clashed with new monsters.

The brutal spectacle ended after two hours only.

When the rulers were back in the palace, Kayla said to the king: "That was an amusing way to pass the time. We should have this gladiator fight more often, maybe once a day. It distracts people. They can relax. «

Yorick frowned. "But then we would need more gladiators."

Kayla waved it off. "So what? We always need supplies anyway.

Not only gladiators, but also workers for the mines, mining emeralds and redstone for us. Speaking of supplies ... «

She went to a wall that consisted of numerous monitors that provided real-world images. Yorick and Kayla were brilliant hackers who had taken control of countless surveillance cameras around the world or were at least able to recall their camera material - like a live stream. They also had access to millions of computers when needed.

The queen tapped a screen that showed a white-painted family home.

"This is where the two boys live who love playing Minecraft and do it so well," she said with a sweet smile. "They would be something for us ..."

"Oh yes, we've had them covered for a while," said Yorick, and came over to her. "Where are the two of them?"

He leaned over a keyboard and switched from one camera to the next. These were built into the screens of a total of five computers that stood in the house of the unsuspecting family.

»Kid's room one: no one. Kid's room two neither, "Yorick grumbled.

But then he found them. His monitor now showed the pictures that a switched-on laptop in the family living room was delivering into the palace of the rulers of Pyra.

"There they are," Kayla said cheerfully. "Not for long, though. Soon they'll be ours ... «

Chapter 2

The Run of the House

Summer break, at last!

Ten-year-old Josh was lolling on the couch of the living room with a bag of gummy bears and watching a video on the laptop screen. A YouTuber was revealing a few tricks for minecrafters. Josh already knew most of them. After all, he was a highly creative player himself.

And now he would have time for it again! Six wonderful weeks of no school, no essays and, above all, no math problems that Josh, who was otherwise a good student, couldn't handle. Nobody needed that kind of stuff, he was convinced of that.

His brother Finnegan, two years ahead of him, suddenly burst in.

"Hey, who took my candy?" he shouted angrily.

At the last moment Josh let the bag disappear under a sofa cushion with a floral design.

"No idea, Finn," the freckled blond boy answered. He would never have thought of addressing his brother by his full name Finnegan. Totally batshit crazy and much too long. Nobody called him Joshua, either. Except maybe his parents. Everybody else called him Josh.

Finn raised himself to his full height in front of him. He was a lanky guy with a strand of black hair falling all over his face. Finn thought it was cool, Josh mostly daft.

Anyway Finn was a very good minecraft player, too. Not quite as imaginative as his younger brother but more experienced.

"Where are my gummy bears?" Finn repeated. "I'm absolutely sure that you little shit have got them!"

"Me?" Josh asked with his mouth full, looking innocently at his brother. "Can these eyes lie?"

"You bet," said Finn. "I know you after all!"

Zack, Finn tore the pillow away.

"I thought so!" He hissed.

"No shit," Josh said, pretending to be surprised. "I really have no idea how they got here. But if the gummy bears are there, maybe I can..." He reached into the bag.

"Paws off!" Finn snapped at him and grabbed the candy.

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