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Drachen Detektiv Schuppe - Chaos im Zauberwald

Dragon Detective Scaly - Chaos in the Magic Forest

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Chapter 1

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## A Unicorn in Need

Scaly the dragon loved his dragon's lair and detective agency headquarters very much. Some dwarfs had dug out the cave in the huge rock at the edge of Wurmstedt a long time ago, but no one could remember why. Dwarfs were always doing that kind of thing and then disappearing again.

The dragon had set up the detective agency the minute he moved in to the cave. His favourite room was the living room where a real-life mini volcano stood in the middle, keeping the cave nice and warm. There was so much hot water that Scaly could have as many splash-tastic bubble baths as he liked. The volcano erupted about twice a day, so Scaly could even do all his cooking over the seething lava pool.

He also threw all his rubbish into the volcano, although that was a bit smelly at times. The smoke went up the chimney, of course, but the volcano also spat out rocks and ashes occasionally. That meant Scaly had to sweep the floor a lot.

Living in the cave did have one or two disadvantages. For example, the window was just a hole in the cave wall. As it was always open, uninvited guests could get in if Scaly didn't watch out.

"Slugs and slime balls!" Scaly grumbled. He had just noticed that another goblin had managed to sneak in. The hairy little monster was leaping all over the detective agency HQ! It took a gulp of lava lemonade and started burping little clouds of smoke, looking very surprised. Scaly was glad he had eaten his pumpkin and cheese crisps already. He waddled after the goblin, trying to catch it before it did any damage. No chance! It bared its pointy little teeth, climbed onto the shelves and grabbed Scaly's sleuth magnifying glass.

"Not my magnifying glass!" Scaly groaned.

Fascinated, the goblin stared through the magnifying glass at its toes. Then it tried to bite off a chunk of the lens.

Scaly had never been very good at creeping up on anyone. He tried to hide behind a large stone table. But the goblin spotted him before he had time to pounce. Giggling away to itself, it dropped the magnifying glass into Scaly's freshly-made warty pumpkin soup with a resounding *splash!*

When Scaly finally charged out of his hiding place, the goblin sprang into the air at the same instant. It caught hold of the lampshade and started to swing back and forth as fast as it could.

"Get your butt outta here!" Scaly roared, but he might as well have been a cloud of hot air as far as the goblin was concerned. It was swinging so wildly that the lampshade suddenly crashed to the ground. The little monster didn't seem to mind though. It jumped back up on the shelves and started throwing books everywhere. Luckily, help was on its way.

"Do you need a hand, boss?" Scaly's friend and colleague Greywacke asked, popping his head round the wooden door. His cat face was all crumpled and he looked as if he

had had a hard night. He'd also forgotten to groom his grey and black stripy coat of fur. Oh well, you can't have everything.

"Thank goodness you're here!" Scaly shouted. "We've got to catch that rascal *quick!!!*"

"Right-oh!" With one daring leap, Greywacke landed on the shelves next to the goblin and started chasing it at once. Evidence bags and pots of invisible ink sailed through the air. A jar of pickled purple snails smashed to pieces, leaving a slimy puddle of broken purple shells.

Scaly's award certificate from the *3rd Wurmstedt Quiz Marathon* fell off a shelf and glided towards to the mini volcano!

"Nooooo!" Scaly yelled. Puffs of smoke and a flurry of sparks shot out of his nostrils. That always happened if he got flustered.

The award certificate was about to drop into the mouth of the volcano, but luckily, Greywacke was faster. He shot out his paw and dug a sharp claw into the piece of bark parchment just in time.

"Got it!" he called to Scaly, sounding very pleased with himself, when *whoosh* the certificate burst into flames after all. Greywacke hissed and leapt back, landing right top of the intruder.

For a moment all Scaly could see was a howling bundle of cat, goblin and his award certificate. Then the goblin, whose hair was on fire, fled into the garden through the window. The certificate had burnt to cinders. Ah well, never mind. The next quiz marathon was due in the summer. Scaly patted out a few sparks on his slightly singed friend. Then he huffed and said, "We'd better go and get a goblin trap immediately!"

He fished his magnifying glass out of the soup and ate the rest apart from what had sprayed all over the floor. Greywacke lapped that up. He lived in the cave as well after all, and the last thing he wanted was sticky paws. It was a shame he didn't like purple snails as well. Scaly would have to clean up that mess by himself.

Scaly put on the mouse-hide belt Greywacke had given him when they started working together. Then the two of them set off to the best junk shop in all of Wurmstedt. Okay, you could argue about it being the best junk shop, but it was the only one and you could buy almost anything there: dragon scale polish, black comfort blankets for vampires, bottles of bat spit said to cure diarrhea, rust remover for dwarfs' armour and all sorts of other things.

They were early and there was already a long queue of customers waiting for the witch Gunilla to open up her shop any minute. These included a bad-tempered dwarf, only as high as Scaly's belly, a wizard ... and two unicorns, a white female with a pale blue foal. Scaly had seen the mare before. She was a teacher as far as he could remember, but what was her name? It was some flower or plant. Nettles? No, that wasn't it. Tulip? That sounded more like it, didn't it? "Excuse me," Scaly said, pointing to a sign above the shop door. It had a picture of a unicorn with a line through it. "I'm sorry, but I'm afraid you aren't allowed in."

Gunilla had put up the sign after a unicorn had accidentally knocked the contents of a whole shelf to the floor with its horn. All the lovely souvenir mugs with the town's coat of arms – a dragon clutching a golden worm between its claws – had been broken.

"Oh dear!" The unicorn sighed. Scaly noticed the faint smell of peppermint in the air. "I was hoping Gunilla might make an exception. My little one needs a bit of cheering up."

"Cheering up? Why?" Greywacke asked. Sometimes he had a kind heart but you could never really tell what he was thinking.

"Another of those rubbish heaps has turned up out of nowhere in the Enchanted Forest today. It's terrible, isn't it Sky?"

The pale blue foal nodded, looking unhappy again. Scaly could see that he could do with a treat to make him feel better.

“Wait a minute,” he said as Gunilla opened the shop. He greeted the shopkeeper with “A magic morning!” and bought a packet of clover biscuits for two silver pennies.

It was worth it. The foal whinnied with joy when Scaly handed him the biscuits.

“How kind,” the white mare said. “You’re that famous detective aren’t you,” she added, while the foal tried to open the biscuits using his short horn. “I’m Crocus. I was wondering, are you for hire?”

“Tell me more about the heaps of rubbish.” Scaly answered. He only took on cases he was interested in, and he wasn’t sure about this one yet.

“It’s all very odd,” Crocus said, shaking her mane. Her silver bells tinkled gently. “They pop up in the Enchanted Forest overnight. We spend all day clearing away the mess. But next morning – there’s another one, although we never see anyone actually dumping any rubbish!”

Scaly and Greywacke exchanged excited glances. This was very mysterious. It sounded like just the right job for the pair of them. “Of course I’ll help you,” Scaly said to the unicorn.

“Oh thank you, thank you so much! You’ll find the rubbish heap on the west side of the Enchanted Forest, third silver tree on the right, next to the lake. You aren’t afraid of our forest, are you?”

“Oh no, of course not,” Scaly said.

The mare smiled her thanks before turning to little Sky who had eaten most of the crumbling biscuits. “That’s enough sweet stuff for now. Time to get back to our lessons. What’s three plus three?” The foal thought for a moment and then said “Thirty-three”, but he didn’t sound very sure.

“Try again,” his mother said.

“Thirteen?”

“No, dear. Let’s say you’ve got three magic nuts and then you get three more...” Their voices vanished into the distance as they trotted away, leaving a sparkling trail of light where their hooves had touched the ground.

Scaly and Greywacke were nearly back at the cave when Scaly realised they had forgotten to buy the goblin trap.

“Slugs and slime balls!”