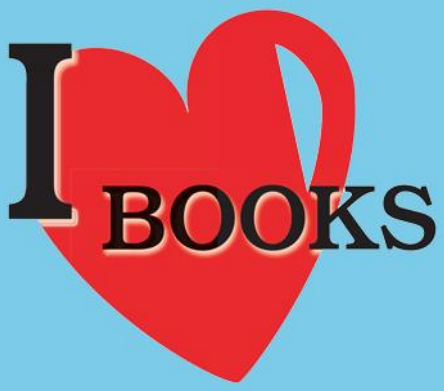


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Opening extract from

The Goblin Princess: Smoky the Dragon Baby

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To every child who has ever wanted
a pet of their very own.

Chapter 1

The Missing Dragon

In the very top bedroom of the Goblin Castle, Matty, the Goblin Princess, was worried. Posters were spread all around her. Underneath a picture of a large, fat dragon, Matty had written: *Lost! Have you seen this dragon?*



The picture was of Sparks, the adorable but greedy castle dragon, who hadn't been seen since yesterday.

'Sparks has never missed breakfast

before. *Someone* must have seen her,' thought Matty, biting her bottom lip. Had the hobgoblins kidnapped her? They had been seen near the castle lately and were known to steal dragons to heat their draughty caves.

'Matty!' screeched the Goblin Queen. Matty's mum came into Matty's bedroom, holding baby Princess Plop. 'Look at the state of this room. It's spotless! It's almost …' she shuddered, '… clean! Untidy it immediately!'

'Plop,' agreed Princess Plop.

‘Yes, Mum,’ Matty sighed.

Matty knew that she’d let her room get too tidy. She was always getting in trouble for this. Most goblins like their rooms messy, they eat disgusting food and are scared of pretty things like kittens and butterflies. The goblin world is a very upside-down place, and the Goblin Princess never quite felt like she belonged.

‘Now, Matty,’ said the Queen, ‘Mrs Dollop is making some tasty beetle muffins. I’ll get her to bring you some up as a special treat.’



‘Oh no!’ thought Matty. ‘I hate beetle muffins more than untidying my room. If only Sparks were here – she’d eat them for me. She loves Mrs Dollop’s cooking.’

In the castle kitchen, mice scurried over the kitchen shelves. There were sticky jars of snail slime, dusty packets of spiders’ legs, and jars of dead flies, a goblin favourite. Mrs Dollop, the castle cook, was showing Stinkwort, Matty’s younger brother, how she made her famous beetle muffins.



‘The trick, Stinky, is to add the snail pulp *before* the toadstool flour, then toss in the beetle bits. Delicious!’



Prince Stinkwort slyly dipped a finger into the cauldron, licking his lips.



'Oh, Stinkwort! If only Matty was a normal goblin like you and Plop,' fretted the Queen as she joined them.

'Plop!' agreed Princess Plop.

The Queen sat down and rocked her baby. 'I'm so worried about Matty.

Her room is always tidy and her clothes are spotless. Last week I even caught her combing her hair!'

'It's just an awkward stage. She'll grow out of it, Your Gobness,' comforted Mrs Dollop, as she poured the beetles into her cake mixture.

'Hey, Stinky! Stop eating my beetles!' She swatted away his hand.

Stinkwort picked a flea out his hair, ate that instead, and went back to reading a scary book he had found in the castle library.

'Stinkwort, you shouldn't read



those fairy tales. You'll give yourself nightmares,' scolded his mother.

Stinkwort giggled. 'Fairies are totally gross, Mum! With their pretty dresses and shiny wings. Eurgh!'

'Well, don't you worry your horrible little head about them.' The Queen shuddered. 'Fairies don't really exist. It's just a story to teach youngsters like you to be naughty.'

When Mrs Dollop had taken the cakes out of the oven, she took a little plate of them up to Matty's bedroom. 'Here you are, my little rabbit dropping,' she said. 'I've made you some tasty beetle muffins and a slime shake.'

'Er, thanks, Mrs Dollop,' said Matty.