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For my wife, Elaine

D.K.

For Miki

M.B.


GROT CASTLE
SWAMPLANDS
NEWT CASTLE
CROW CASTLE
GRAN'S CASTLE
LAKE EERIE
HAUNTED HOUSE
BOOK WIZARDS
GREEN WITCH VILLAGE
GREEN WITCH BROOM PORT
N
MIRACULA


KING LUCIUS
QUEEN FENELLA
TOM WEREWOLF
BINKY
GRAN
SKY
OINK
IVY
TROUBLE IVY
SCURRY
BAD DRAGON
TOM





CHAPTER ONE

Gran

Fiery-red morning sunlight flickered on the bay near Newt Castle, where a young Sand Witch called Ivy Newt lived with Tom Wolf, her familiar, and her royal parents, King Lucius and Queen Fenella.

Inside the castle, a playful King Lucius was balancing boxes of Witchy



Weetabix and Cauldron Krispies on his head, carrying them over to the kitchen table.

"Ahhh, breakfast, my snap, crackle and pop queen – the most important meal of the day," he said, with a twinkle in his eye.

"I couldn't agree more, dear," the queen replied, fetching a stack of colourful cereal bowls from the shelf. "A hearty breakfast sets you up for

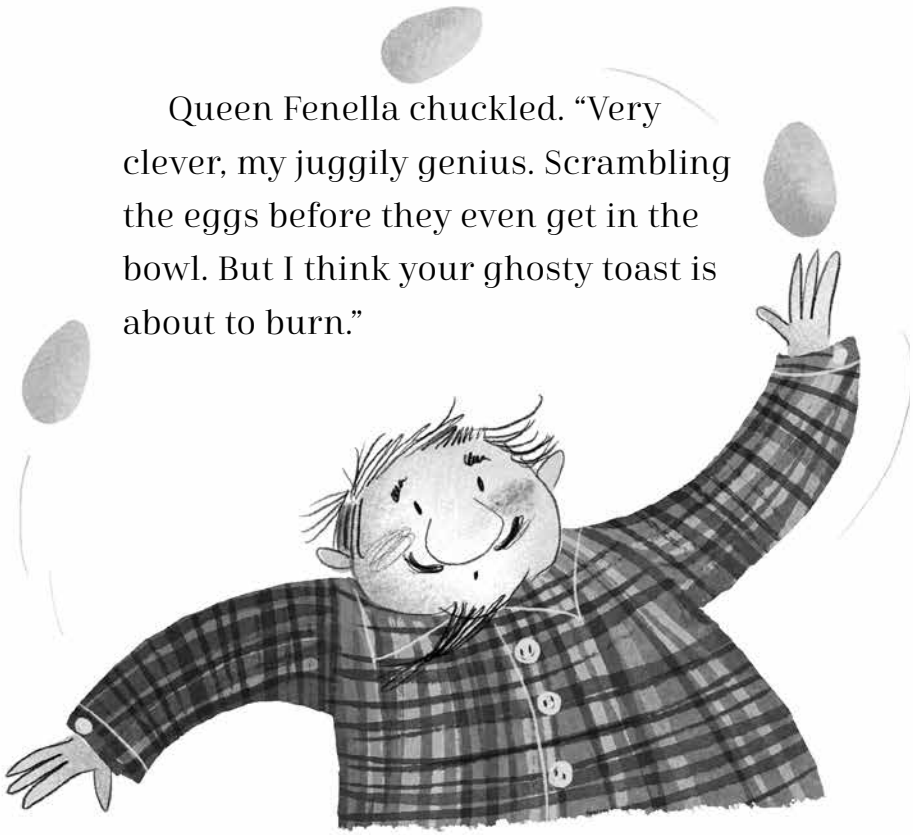


the challenges of the day, which in our case is ruling our wonderful kingdom in the magical land of Miracula. Now, where are those two sleepy-heads?"

Opening the kitchen door, she called up the spiral staircase. "Ivy and Tom, breakfast's ready!"

Humming to himself, the king took three eggs from a basket and began juggling them precariously.

Queen Fenella chuckled. “Very clever, my juggily genius. Scrambling the eggs before they even get in the bowl. But I think your ghosty toast is about to burn.”



“Oops!” The king set down the eggs, rescued his smoking toast from the toaster, then cracked the eggs into a mixing bowl beside a sizzling pan of bacon.



The next moment, Ivy appeared at the kitchen door, dressed in her pyjamas and with her fair hair all tousled and unruly. She was closely followed by a skinny grey wolf. Like all the witches and wizards in Miracula, Ivy had a magical animal companion, otherwise known as a familiar. Ivy and Tom Wolf were practically inseparable.

“The smell of that bacon has been driving us bonkers.” Ivy grinned. “It wafted all the way up to our room.”

Ivy and Tom’s bedroom was in one of the tallest castle turrets, so that was quite a distance for the appetising aroma to travel.

“Good morning, Ivy. Good morning, Tom Wolf. Food’s on the table!” chorused the king and queen.

Tom raised his bushy eyebrows. “Yummy. I’m as hungry as a wooooooolf!” he howled.



“You are a wolf, silly!” Ivy chuckled. “Hey, I’ve just remembered it’s the weekend, so we don’t have to rush off anywhere. Plenty of time to tuck into all this scrumptious grub!”



At that, Tom Wolf did something special that only he could do. In the blink of an eye, he transformed into a boy about the same age as Ivy, with a hairy tunic and an untidy mop of dark hair. With a wolfish grin, he grabbed a box of cereal.



In a flash of fur, a squirrel scampered under the kitchen table, followed by a badger. No one batted an eye, because the cheeky creatures were Binky and Scurry, the king and queen's familiars. As usual, they were on the hunt for scraps. Binky the badger had already found some and tried to juggle with them, like the king, but without success. When he dropped his snacks, Scurry snatched them and they began chasing each other round the kitchen, ending up under the table.

"Coooooeeeeeeee!"

Just then a loud cry followed by a mischievous cackle came through the open kitchen window.

"Who on earth. . .?" Queen Fenella's voice trailed off as she guessed the answer.

The king strode over to peer out of the window, munching a half-burnt slice of ghosty toast.



"I'd recognise that abracadaberous laugh anywhere." He smiled. "Looks like someone else has smelled our sizzling bacon. I think we've got a visitor from the other side of Miracula – your mother, my bizzy wizziness!"

With a noisy whoop, a cheery old witch dressed in a black shawl flew through the window on her broomstick, her long grey hair billowing behind a tall hat.

Ivy clapped her hands in delight. "Hi, Gran!" she cried.

Gran landed expertly in the middle of the castle kitchen. "They're here! They're here!" she blurted out. "Needletooths! Spiky Necks! Snout Smoulderers! Not to mention some



species I've never even seen before, let alone painted!"

The king looked perplexed. "Hang on a moment, my most mystical mum-in-law. What on magical Miracula are you talking about – who's here?"

"The swamp dragons!" Gran replied excitedly. "I've been waiting for ages and ages and they're finally here. It's brilliant!"

The queen gave a half grin. "Good morning, Fenella. Nice to see you, Fenella. How are you, my dearest daughter?" she muttered as she set an extra place at the breakfast table.

"Sorry, love, but it's always nice to see you, you know that," Gran said. "But it's also great to see the swamp dragons again," she added, winking

at Ivy. "And that's why I'm here now. Every year, the dragons stop at different places on their migration route, so they don't always come to Miracula. The last time they came to the Swamplands, Ivy was only three years old, and much too young to go and see them."

Ivy and Tom rushed over to give Gran a big hug. "I'm almost eight now!" Ivy said.



"Hello, my little dragon cubs," she said, looking over their heads at Queen Fenella. "Don't you remember, my dear? I promised Ivy and Tom I'd take them to see the dragons the next time they returned to Miracula."

The queen raised her eyebrows. "That all sounds very exciting, Mum, but they haven't even had breakfast yet."

"Oh, but there's no time for breakfast," Gran shot back.

King Lucius stood up. "But breakfast is the most important—" He was about to launch into his favourite breakfast speech for the second time that morning when Gran interrupted him mid-flow.

"We'll take it with us, like a sort of doggy bag," she said. "Or maybe a wolfy bag for Tom," she added with a grin.

"It's a long broomstick flight to the Swamplands and we don't want to miss the dragons, so we can eat our brekkie on the way."



Queen Fenella's brow furrowed in a frown. "Wait a minute, Mum. I'm not so sure – this sounds dangerous. I mean, some of those dragons are as big as castles and breathe jets of fire that could boil a cauldron."



Gran sighed. “Fenella, dear, don’t you know anything about dragonology?” She tutted. “Swamp dragons are as tame as lambs. When they were last here, I saw a Titchy Witch called Bony Aggy ride on the back of an enormous Greentail. She loved it so much, she told me flying her broomstick was always boring after that. She wanted to keep that

dragon as her familiar, but couldn’t, cos swamp dragons only stop here for a few days to eat, drink and rest up before flying on to their winter home in the Dragon Isles. Bony Aggy didn’t want to up sticks and live there, so she gave up on the whole idea.”

Queen Fenella did not look convinced.

“I’d still be terribly worried for Ivy and Tom,” she said.

“Nonsense. There’s nothing to fret about. And, besides, they’ll be with their gran.”

The queen rolled her eyes. “That’s what I’m afraid of.”

“Oh, don’t be such a spoilsport.” Gran sniffed. “It’ll be lovely to have them stay for the weekend, and it’s

long overdue. Besides, I took you to see the dragons when you were little, and you're still here."

Ivy gasped. "You saw the swamp dragons, Mum? You never told us that!"

"Yes, with good reason," the queen admitted. "I was worried this day might come."

Gran wasn't for giving up. "They say there might come a time when the swamp dragons no longer stop in Miracula, so this could be our last chance," she said. "The Swamplands are beginning to dry up because of all the hot weather we've been having in the last few years. . . So all the more reason to let me take Ivy and Tom now."



Ivy jumped up and down with excitement. "Oh, please, Mum, can we go?" she begged. "Just this once, in case they never come back."

"It isn't the dragons not coming back I'm worried about, it's you!" the queen replied.

Gran puffed. “They’ll be fine.”

Queen Fenella sighed. “Oh, very well, but just make sure you all keep a safe distance. I know those creatures are tame, but they’re still dragons, and they might spook easily.”

“You needn’t worry, daughter dearie, I’ll look after them,” Gran said with a triumphant grin.

Ivy and Tom raced upstairs to get ready and fetch Ivy’s broomstick. When they came down again, King Lucius had packed them all a brekkie-to-go, and a big bottle of water.

“Thanks, Dad!” said Ivy. “What will you and Mum do today, d’you think?”

“We might go to the Book Wizards’ library later. Do you want us to get out the new Isabella Star book for you?”



Ivy was a big fan of this series. She grinned. “Yes, please!”

“Mind you, lately I think you’ve had way more adventures than Isabella Star,” he said. “We’ve only just got over all that Halloween business.” He was thinking of the scrapes Ivy and Tom had got into when helping their neighbour Magpie Meg escape from her haunted house.

Queen Fenella gulped. “Don’t remind me, hubby dearest!” she said, opening her arms to give Ivy a hug. “Have a lovely weekend, you two.”

“Yes, have a fab fire-breathing time,” the king said, and Fenella shot him a frown. “Er, from a safe distance, of course,” he added. “Like maybe a mile or two. . .”

“Thanks, Mum and Dad.” Ivy smiled. “See you when we get back.”

And, mounting Ivy’s broomstick, the pair flew out of the window after Gran.



CHAPTER TWO

The Swamplands

Ivy and Tom followed Gran as they flew west over Miracula. The sun had transformed from a glowing red to a dazzling yellow and shone brightly in the blue sky. It was the perfect morning for a broomstick flight. Gran sure wasn’t hanging about, and Ivy had to use all her skills to keep up with her. King Lucius always said Gran was