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Having just returned from the magical Ghost Forest, Anne, who everyone calls Firecurl, is forced to go back again. The evil beaver Heino has turned the Forest into a huge amusement park where all the events of the first book are presented in a twisted, malevolent way. What's more, the entire Forest is now under Henio's sway, and Anne's old friends are in grave danger.

With the help of the ever-faithful Backpack and some new, unexpected allies, the red-haired girl begins an uneven and very dangerous fight against Heino and his army of spiders. Before our eyes unfolds a thrilling picture of complex and tangled adventures that end with a surprising, magical resolution.

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*in the* FIRECURL *in the* GHOST PARK

Zlatko Enev



FIRECURL  
*in the*  
GHOST PARK

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Illustrated by Diana Naneva

DINOPARK

ALTAR

CitADEL

GHOST MANSION

WATERMILL

MEADOW OF THE MAGPIES

CIRCUS

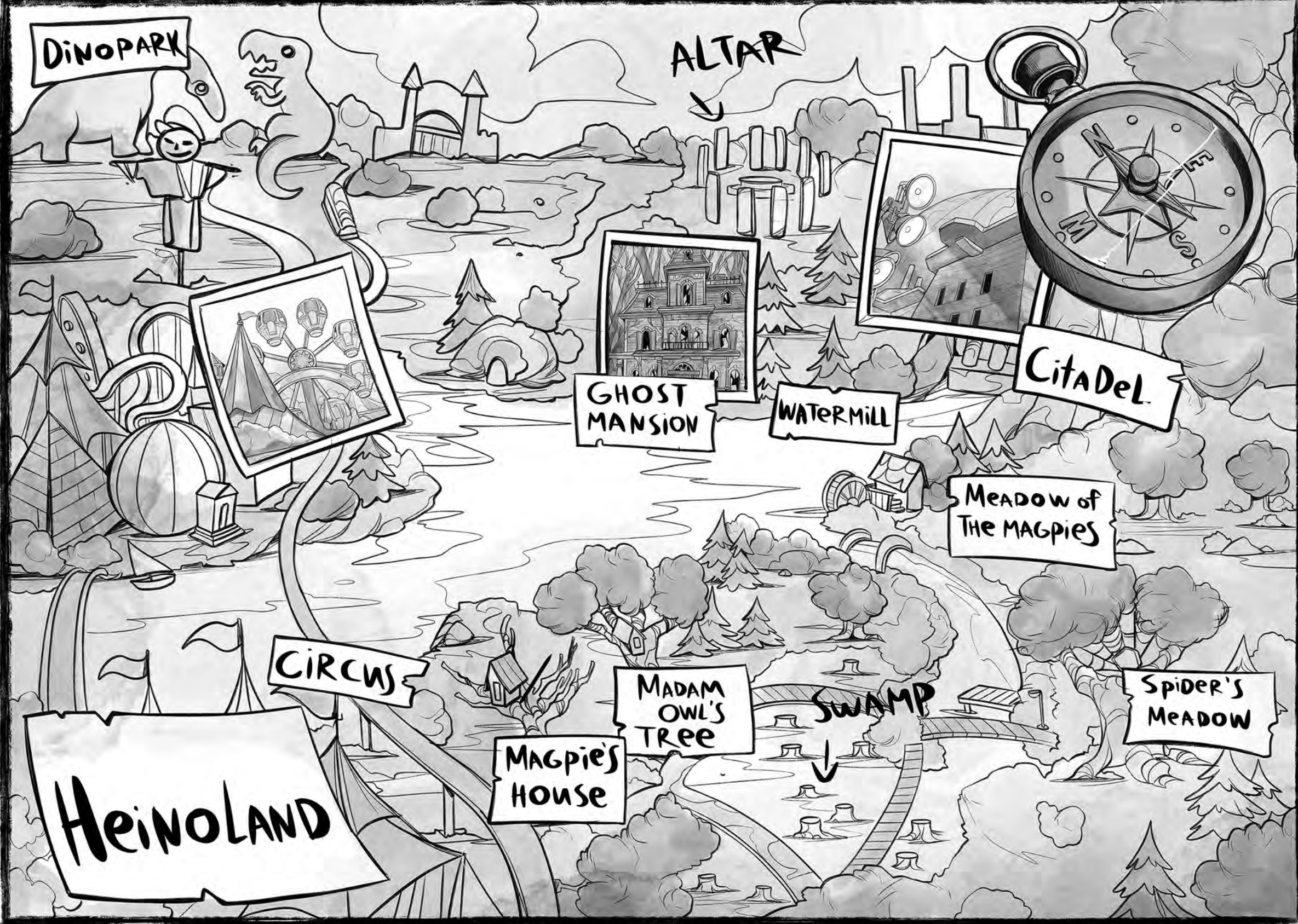
MADAM OWL'S TREE

SWAMP

SPIDER'S MEADOW

HEINOLAND

MAGPIE'S HOUSE



Zlatko Enev

# FIRECURL in the GHOST PARK

Illustrated by Diana Naneva



Extaz  
2023

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Zlatko Enev

# FIRECURL in the GHOST PARK



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Illustrated by Diana Naneva

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## Chapter One: The Voice from Nowhere

Oh dear! One minute the sun was shining brightly, the next it was thick dark clouds coming out of nowhere and the sky turned black and gloomy. The gusts of wind grew stronger and stronger. The trees and bushes in the garden groaned under their force; clouds of dust, old newspapers and plastic cups flew up and down the streets. With a furrowed brow and pursed lips, as was her way, the red-haired Anne, whom everybody called Firecurl, tried to continue work on her tepee, but finally had to resign herself to the fact that it was no use.

‘This shack won’t be ready before I retire!’ she muttered angrily, then hastily gathered up the tools scattered on the grass and hurried home, chased by the first raindrops.

And just in time. One second later and the rain, which the wind was already blowing into the room through the open window, would have soaked all her drawings. Outside a real summer storm was forming, fierce and noisy. The bright sunny day had disappeared in a matter of minutes, only a grey veil of rain now visible through the window, cut by the jagged swords of lightning. Anne switched on the small lamp on the workbench and began to paint.

Almost a month had passed since she had returned from the Ghost Forest, that enchanted land into which she had fallen when she had tried to break the game that the mysterious Mr Nerod Laptsev had lent her. The memories of the incredible adventures she had had there would not let her rest for a moment. She would love to tell what had happened to her there, but she doubted that anyone would believe her. There would

probably only be problems, so she left it alone and preferred to paint. In front of her on the desk were heaps of drawings, each one more colourful and fantastic than the next: the spider's meadow, Grandpa Hedgehog's little water mill, Madam Owl's tree house, the anthill, the Ghost Mansion... Mum, who was completely amazed that her daughter was suddenly so creative, had immediately suggested private painting lessons. But Firecurl had only snorted disdainfully. Painting lessons? What nonsense! She only wanted one thing — and she dreamed of it day and night — to go back to the Ghost Forest and see her beloved friends again. What were Mr. Quirk, the flying wall clock and his friend Boo doing right now? And the elves? Was Buzz the Fly still so crazy about honey? Oh, if only she could see them for a moment...

She puffed angrily and glanced at the coat hook, on which hung her old teddy bear-shaped Backpack made of fuzzy fabric. No, she gave no sign of life... Backpack, her best friend and faithful companion in the enchanted land. More than once she had rescued Anne from a dicey situation, but since they were back home, she was just a normal Backpack again. Anne still could not come to terms with the tremendous loss. Without Backpack's friendship and advice, life had become so boring. It still made her cry — provided no one was around to watch. Ah, what she wouldn't give to be able to talk to her friend just once again!

Damn it! She shooed away the gloomy thoughts and bent over the drawing again. This time she had decided to draw Nerod Laptsev the way she remembered him from that last night when she'd had to fight off Heino the Beaver and his hideous spiders. She had already sketched the old sorcerer's gaunt but strong figure, now she wanted to set about drawing the altar and the fire of eternal change. Mum would probably look at her again with that uncomprehending look that so annoyed her, and ask her how she came up with the incredible pictures. Firecurl would always help herself out of a jam by claiming that they were scenes from 'Harry Potter' or 'The Lord of the Rings', because her mother didn't like to read children's books.

The thunderstorm was now unleashing a mighty downpour and it thundered so hard that the windows rattled. Mum, a real scaredy-cat, would surely come at any moment to see if everything was all right.

As if she had read Anne's thoughts, she promptly appeared at the door. 'You're not scared, are you, dear? It's just a summer storm. It'll thunder for a bit, then it'll be over. You're not worried, are you?'

Anne snorted contemptuously. To be afraid of a thunderstorm? That was as far as it got. If Mum had seen her that night, alone in the dark facing a whole gang, she wouldn't be asking such questions.

'Don't worry, Mum,' she replied over her shoulder. 'I'm just painting, can't you see?'

'Okay, okay. Shall I make you a salad for dinner or would you rather have a sandwich?'

'I'm not hungry yet. I'll call you when I'm hungry.'

'All right, then, I'll keep working. Call me if you need me.'

Phew... finally Firecurl could continue painting. With precise strokes, she first drew the outlines of the altar built of roughly hewn stone blocks, then the fire, which illuminated everything eerily with its blue-green light. All that remained were the spiders blocking all the exits from the site and, of course, Heino the beaver, whose huge shadow bent menacingly over the little red-haired girl...

'Anne, help!' came a wheezing voice just beside her ear, piercing with tension and pain. 'I can't get out of here! Help me, Anne!'

Firecurl got a huge fright. She jumped up so impetuously that she smeared the almost finished picture. She pushed the chair back violently, grabbed the large scissors from the desk and looked wildly around her, determined to defend herself. The freckles stood out strikingly on her pale face.

But there was no one in the room but her. She waited until her heart was beating normally again, then took a few lurking steps up and down the room. She was sure that she had not misheard. After all, it was not the first time she had heard voices coming from nowhere. Until now, however, she had believed that such things only happened in the Ghost Forest. That she could also be haunted by inexplicable apparitions here in the normal world was something she had never thought possible.

Boom! Thunder shook the whole house and in the next room Mum cried out in fright. At the same moment, the lights went out everywhere. Anne forgot everything and ran headlong into the hallway. In the dim





light, she collided with Mum, who had run towards her. Scared to death, they clung to each other and whispered mutual encouragements. A while passed before they calmed down and dared to look at the electrical panel. Everything was in order there, thank God, and as soon as Mum switched on the main fuse, the light came back on. The thunderstorm also gradually subsided and the fear left them, slowly.

Nevertheless, Mum stubbornly insisted that Anne slept with her that night. Firecurl agreed with silent gratitude, for she was feeling rather unsettled by the strange events herself. Of course, she wouldn't dream of telling Mum about the mysterious voice, but the thought of sleeping alone after such a scary day made her more than uncomfortable. She quickly took a few bites and flipped through a comic book, just to show that she wasn't scared anymore. Then she snuggled gratefully next to Mum and in-

stantly dozed off. Strange dreams haunted her all night, huge furry figures on thin legs just brushing past her and disappearing before she could get a good look at them. Finally, after much tossing and turning, she managed to fall into a deep sleep, but woke in the morning with the strange feeling that something had changed here, and not for the better. Mum, who was already drinking coffee, greeted her absent-mindedly and became engrossed in her newspaper again. Firecurl wearily dragged her feet to the bathroom, hastily washed up, and was about to go back into the kitchen when suddenly a bad feeling grabbed her and she ran upstairs to her room.

At first glance, nothing seemed to have changed. Although slightly less untidy than a month ago, Anne's room was still a 'kingdom of creative chaos' as Mum called it, and this meant only Anne was able to find anything there. Of course, Firecurl was not bothered by this, at least in normal circumstances, but today everything seemed so strangely different that she grumpily began to tidy up the toys lying everywhere.

Her eyes fell on the top shelf and she froze... The shelf was empty. For a second or two she stood as if petrified, then rushed headlong down the staircase, roaring at the top of her lungs:

'Mum, Mum!'

'What's wrong?' Mum came rushing towards her from the kitchen, pale as a sheet.

'My toys are gone! All the ones I... fixed.'

She was so upset that she almost slipped out: whom I saved in the Ghost Forest. Terrible scenes flitted through her mind, but fortunately it passed quickly. All that was in the past and over, even if only after many trials...

'Child, you nearly scared me to death! I thought the house was on fire. When will you finally learn what is important and what is not? You'll soon be ten and you're still acting like a little girl!'

'Tell me, are you quite sure you didn't move them somewhere?' said Anne, ignoring her mother's biting tone. 'It's really very important. Please try to remember well.'

'Of course I'm sure. We agreed long ago that you would take care of your room. If I need something from it, I'll ask you before I take it... unlike you.'

‘Now this has gone too far,’ Mum continued as she saw Anne’s eyes fill with tears and she sat down on the stairs, completely distraught. ‘It’s not the first time some of your things have gone missing, is it? Surely you’ve got them stashed away somewhere and in a few days they’ll come out of hiding again. Or maybe you left them in the tepee?’

Anne just squatted there and stared at Mum with unseeing eyes. Her toys were gone! That’s why she had been tormented all morning by the suspicion that something quite terrible had happened. She had no clue how they had disappeared, but she was sure it was no coincidence. What should she do? Who to turn to, who to ask for help? If she tried to explain the whole story to her mother, she would surely think she was crazy... Anne swallowed the tears and tried to chase away the despair that threatened to suffocate her.

Mum looked at her scrutinisingly.

‘Now come on, let’s look together,’ she suggested anxiously. Obviously she had realised that there was more to Anne’s disappointment than a childish whim. ‘They can’t have just disappeared into thin air, they must be somewhere.’

They turned the whole nursery upside down, looked in every corner and didn’t miss a single drawer, but it didn’t help. The toys were indeed gone, apparently there was nothing they could do. Mum found it hard to take all this seriously at first, she was sure that Anne would find them again after a few days, but after they had searched everything thoroughly, she too was quite confused and annoyed. Now she suddenly came to the conclusion that thieves must have broken into the house during the night and wanted to call the police. Firecurl did manage to persuade her that it was pointless, but only after she asked her how to explain the fact that the old toys, of all things, should have aroused the thieves’ interest. Now Mum felt no little embarrassed and, trying to cover her confusion, threw herself back into her work. Anne, who just wanted to be alone at the moment, was not a bit angry with her. Even though she didn’t understand anything herself, she couldn’t shake the feeling that what had happened here had something to do with the Ghost Forest. And, should that really be the case, Mum wouldn’t be able to help anyway, that much was clear.

She sat down on the edge of the bed, took her head in her hands and thought hard. If her fears did not turn out to be an empty fantasy, she absolutely had to get in touch with Mr Nerod Laptsev. He was the only one who could help her in this tricky situation. But how? The last time they had met, the old wizard had stated in no uncertain terms that he had no intention of staying in touch with her. He had even said that he hoped never to meet her again! Not because he was angry with her, not at all. On the contrary, he was extremely grateful to her, for it was her intervention that had turned the Ghost Forest into a bright and peaceful place once again. But he had left no doubt that the magical world of the forest only needed visitors when something was wrong there, and those times were thankfully over...

And yet! Too many things had happened since yesterday that needed explanation. Without the wizard’s help, it was hardly possible for her to find clarity. So she had to disregard his instructions and find out how to get in touch with him. She looked around helplessly. Where should she start? If only Backpack could be called back to life, she would certainly have an idea... Anne gave her friend a feverish look, as if expecting a miracle to happen...

But Backpack remained lifeless on the hook, so the red-haired girl soon found herself forced to avert her gaze and look for another, less magical solution. Ghost Forest, Ghost Forest... What, apart from the toys, was left to her of the enchanted world?

She slapped herself on the forehead. But of course! On his last visit, Mr Laptsev had given her a small toy as a reminder of the forest and its inhabitants. Where had she put it? She feverishly searched the shelves and — hello! — finally found it, thank God.

It was a miniature of the forest, sealed in a glass sphere. Anne grabbed it and shook it impatiently. Yes, everything was fine. The sphere filled with a cloud of snowflakes that slowly trickled down, gradually covering the hilly miniature landscape with a white sheet. But wait a minute, something was wrong here! This wasn’t the Ghost Forest at all. At least not as she knew it... Now she could see everything better. Yes, it was the same forest, but strangely changed, neat and divided into large squares like a well-kept park. At least it was good that she still recognised the

places she knew, otherwise she would have thought this was a completely different place.

Strange, what could that mean? Had something unusual happened? Or was the sphere perhaps damaged? Anne tried to look more closely at the miniature landscape, but everything was so tiny that even her eagle eyes couldn't spot anything really significant. She reached into the drawer, dug out a large magnifying glass and began to carefully examine the inside of the sphere.

What she discovered there shook her to the core. Not only had the forest been reshaped and rearranged, but there were now a lot of new buildings she had never seen before. In many places there were strange buildings in many different shapes: dull shimmering spheres, shining pyramids, spiral towers, like gigantic corkscrews; even a strange castle that stood in the middle of an island in the river... Wide, convenient paths criss-crossed the whole landscape, little boats sailed on the river and not far from the waterfall there was now a power station that obviously served to generate electricity. But all these wonders probably wouldn't have startled Anne quite so much if it hadn't been for the huge display she found not far from the river. On it she could clearly recognize the fat visage of Heino, and above it, in big shining letters, it said:

### **Welcome to Heinoland™**

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Firecurl paced back and forth in her room, feverishly wondering what to do. The Ghost Forest was now called Heinoland? That couldn't be true, what was this nonsense about? If all the forest inhabitants had suddenly lost their minds, then at least Nerod Laptsev would have taken action against this nonsense. Heinoland! Never ever!

'I've got to do something, I've got to do something!' she said repeatedly as she paced restlessly back and forth. 'This stinks to high heaven!'

But what? She looked around helplessly. Out of old habit, her eyes first fell on Backpack, who was still hanging lifeless and tattered on the coat hook. Oh, if only she could... No, Backpack couldn't help her, she had to manage on her own. She grabbed the glass ball and shook it helplessly.

'You darn thing. I'll teach you to play ball, you bet I will.'

She held the ball close to her eyes and looked at it carefully. Yes, there was Grandpa Hedgehog's little mill, a little further on was the swamp and the orchid meadow... And what was moving there the corner was...

Firecurl almost dropped the ball. Right in front of her eyes, Backpack waved wildly and stared at her. She could clearly see her lips moving. Her friend was obviously struggling to call out to her, but no sound came through the glass. Was she dreaming? Out of the corner of one eye she could clearly see the motionless Backpack hanging on the rack, while the other eye — the one looking through the sphere — showed her a completely different Backpack, alive, even frantic with the effort to say something that Anne couldn't understand.

She lowered the ball and risked another glance at the coat hook. No question, Backpack was lifeless. Then she looked through the ball again and, look at that, Backpack was jumping, fidgeting and trying to tell her something.

'Backpack,' Anne said, her voice hoarse with excitement. 'Can you hear me?'

The figure in the sphere, distorted by the glass, nodded violently. Anne's ears began to ring and her knees trembled.

'Don't tell me you were alive the whole time.'

A new series of frantic movements. 'Yes, yes, yes,' cried Backpack silently, fidgeting wildly back and forth.

Anne threw the ball on the bed, ran to the coat hook and hugged her friend. It was a strange feeling. Although she now knew that her Backpack was a living being here too, it still felt as if she was hugging a tattered bag, which is what Backpack looked like. Until that changed, she didn't feel like trusting the magic. They had to be able to talk to each other normally again, otherwise the whole thing was nothing more than a silly Punch and Judy show...

'Wait, first we have to be able to talk to each other again. I have so many questions.'

She took the glass ball in her hand again, held it close to her eyes and said:

'So, I ask you a question and you answer yes or no, all right?'



Backpack nodded hastily.  
'All right. Firstly, do you know who stole my toys?'

The answer was, 'Yes.'

'Was it Heino?'

Backpack hesitated briefly, then shook her head indecisively.

'I didn't quite understand that. If not Heino, then who? Wait a minute. Was it maybe the spiders?'

Backpack was jumping up and down with excitement. 'Yes, yes, yes.'

'Take it easy, or you'll tear something. So, at least now we know who we're dealing with. I don't understand how he managed to bring the spiders here, but that's not so important right now. Do you have any idea what happened to the forest?'

Backpack looked at her in surprise and shrugged. 'What do you

mean?'

'Aha, so you haven't seen what's going on inside the sphere yet. Here, take a look inside. But be careful you don't fall off the hook. I warn you, you won't like the sight.'

Anne held the ball in front of Backpack's nose.

'Well, what do you say?'

Backpack's expression said it all: she was horrified, words were superfluous.

'To be honest, I also get weak in the knees when I think about what might have happened. Heinoland... Bad name, huh?... By the way, do you have any idea whose voice I heard yesterday?'

Backpack shook her head.

'All right, we'll worry about that later. I, for one, don't like the way the forest has changed at all. If only we knew what exactly has been going on there...'

Backpack rowed her arms and legs as if she was about to take off and jump into the void. Anne gave her friend an astonished look.

'What, you think we should go back there?... Are you serious?... Hm, actually not a bad idea. I've wanted to for a long time. But how? Do you have any idea?'

Backpack pointed at the ball and waved her little arms around as if she wanted to smash the glass with a hammer.

'I'm so stupid,' Anne exclaimed. 'Such a simple idea, and I can't think of it myself! Oh my, how good it is that we can talk to each other again! How did I ever get along without you?'

She hung her Backpack over her shoulder and searched for the big hammer. Her heart was beating hurriedly, now with joy, now with fear. New adventures were waiting for her.





## Chapter Two: Money Kill Magic

‘This can’t be true! It can’t be true!’ Anne repeated dejectedly, hitting the seemingly fragile glass sphere with the hammer for the hundredth time.

In vain again...

She had expected all sorts of things — storms, thunder and lightning, some almighty magic that would take her to the enchanted world, just like the first time. Everything but this. With each blow, the hammer bounced high, as if thrown off by a powerful spring, but the sphere remained intact and unharmed. No trace of a spell, no whirlwind to suck her into its funnel, which Anne felt was almost like an insult. No matter how intently and thoroughly she looked at the inside of the sphere, she could not detect the slightest change in the miniature landscape. Nothing that helped her understand what she was doing wrong or could do differently to make the spell work. Absolutely nothing. No clue, no help.

What was she supposed to do? Helplessly, she shook the ball. The snowflakes swirled happily before slowly falling and covering the forest with their glittering cloth. In the sunlight, it sparkled in all colours, like a colourful carpet...

Wait a minute! A colourful carpet? Since when was snow colourful? Something was wrong. Firecurl grabbed the magnifying glass again and took a closer look at the tiny shiny grains that made up the snow cover.

What she discovered there totally amazed her. Each snowflake was actually a tiny, shiny coin made of some material that reflected light in all the colours of the rainbow. So the snow was nothing but money — lots

and lots and lots of it, infinite amounts of money covering the entire forest with an impenetrable, dense coating.

Anne had to sit down. Well, well, the Ghost Forest is covered in money. And the spell doesn’t work. Was there supposed to be a connection? Stuttering with excitement, she told Backpack about her unexpected discovery. Their conversation was again laborious and protracted, but eventually they agreed that Firecurl should investigate the sphere further and tell Backpack immediately of any new discovery.

Encouraged, Anne set to shaking and examining the orb with redoubled energy. The results were not long in coming. And the results were not delayed. The first thing she found was that the ‘snow’, i.e. the money flurries, always swirled over the forest in the same shape each time the glass orb was shaken. It took her quite a while to realise this, as this shape could only be seen after long and tiring shaking, but in the end she was completely sure. Yes, the money whirlpool was spinning above the forest in the shape of a tall funnel with its opening pointing downwards, so exactly like the magical whirlpool Anne had been looking for all this time. However, this money whirlwind was anything but magical. As soon as you didn’t shake the ball, it sank down and settled on the forest like a smooth glittering blanket.

When Backpack heard this, she was beside herself with excitement. She flapped her paws long and desperately, trying to explain something that Anne could never understand. They tried for a whole hour, sweating with excitement, but it was no use. In the end they had to stop, because Mum lost patience and didn’t want to hear Anne’s excuse that she had no appetite. The girl knew from experience that she would never win this discussion, so she gave in, gulped down the soup so hastily that she didn’t even notice what it was made of, and rushed back upstairs to her room, where the two friends continued the interrupted conversation without losing a second.

‘Take a breath,’ Anne grumbled sullenly, scratching her head, ‘and try again.’

Backpack raised her fingers to her lips as if she wanted to lick them, and then began to count imaginary slips of paper.



‘Cards? Playing cards? No? Hm... stamps? Not even. Yes, what are you counting?’

Backpack pointed impatiently at the glass ball.

‘Oh, you mean money?’

Whew! Backpack nodded and pretended to wipe sweat from her forehead.

‘Good. So the first word is ‘money’. Now go on.’

It took even longer for Anne to come up with the second word. Backpack brandished a sabre, fired a pistol, and finally even started raining bombs over the room until Anne finally figured out the word was ‘kill’. By the third word, they were both pretty exhausted, but finally, after painstaking efforts, they managed to get along. The word was ‘magic’.

‘Money, kill, magic. Well, I seem to be particularly stupid today. I still don’t understand what you mean. Wait, let me have a sip, maybe I’ll clear my head. Ah, I feel better now. Ha! Listen, I’m beginning to understand some things. ‘Money kills magic’. Is that what you’re saying?’

Although she was dead tired, Backpack shook with joy. At last Anne had understood her.

‘Aha, I’m beginning to get it... Hey, you, now I’ve got another idea. I’ll hit the ball a few more times with the hammer, only this time we have to be careful and look closely. I have a feeling we might discover something important.’

With the ball close to her eyes, Anne struck again with the hammer. The result exceeded all her expectations. Within a few seconds, a real drama unfolded before her eyes. A small cloud rose up from the middle of the forest, which quickly became denser and denser and began to spin until it gradually transformed into the magical whirlwind Anne knew so well. But before it could unfold to its full size, it was grabbed and engulfed by the much larger money whirlwind. It had absolutely no chance of escaping the glass ball. Firecurl turned pale with rage.

‘Aha, so that’s how it is!’ she hissed, clenching her fists. ‘That’s why the magic doesn’t work. And here we are shaking and hammering like crazy. But just wait, soon we’ll see who’s the crazier one here. Don’t get any ideas, we’ve taken on a lot worse.’

Well, threatening cost nothing, but it didn’t help either. No matter how hard she tried — and she tried for the rest of the day — she could not find a solution, no matter how much she clenched her fists. It was only the next day that she took a calmer approach. And as she methodically examined the sphere, she began to suspect something.

At first glance, it looked as if the tiny glittering coins were spread out completely at random, but on closer inspection they seemed to follow certain rules. They only trickled down to certain places in the miniature forest, but one area they avoided as if repelled by an invisible force. Soon Anne was firmly convinced that it was the area around the Ghost Mansion, the swamp and the orchid meadow, i. e., exactly the places she already knew. Why this was so, however, remained completely unclear.

Again, the magnifying glass helped her. Through persistent and prolonged observation, she finally managed to find the cause of this strange phenomenon: when the money flakes fell onto these places, they melted — like real snow.

‘Oho,’ Anne muttered. ‘I got you this time. Backpack, listen to what I’ve discovered.’

Terribly excited, she told what she had discovered. At last it looked like she had found the solution to the problem.

‘It’s really baby simple, you know?’ whispered Firecurl excitedly. ‘When I shake the ball vigorously, some of the money flakes fall into these places and melt. That means we just have to keep shaking the ball until there are fewer and fewer of them. So few that they can no longer paralyse the magic.’

Backpack scratched her head thoughtfully. Apparently she couldn’t quite follow her friend’s thoughts. Still, she agreed, and Firecurl diligently set about shaking the glass ball. Hours passed before she noticed whether her efforts were having any effect, but in the end it did indeed seem that they were on the right track. The magical whirlwind began to visibly gather strength and grow larger while its money counterpart was steadily losing power. Finally, the moment came when Anne wiped the sweat from her brow, put Backpack on her shoulder and growled, still completely out of breath:

‘It won’t be long now. Hold on tight, we’ll be flying soon.’

In fact, there were only so few glittering grains of money left in the sphere that its power had almost completely disappeared. The magical whirlwind would soon unleash its full power, that was becoming increasingly clear.

And so it happened. The next time Anne hit the sphere with the hammer, the little magical whirlwind grew to its full size at breakneck speed. It happened so fast that they didn’t even have time to be startled as the funnel of the whirlwind bent over them and slowly engulfed them — just as it had done the first time.

‘At last!’ cheered Firecurl. She couldn’t say more, because her eyes went black, her stomach queasy — and the next moment she fell headlong into the void...



### Chapter Three: The Park

Anne lay on the ground and slowly regained consciousness. Her fall had not ended as happily as the first time and now fiery yellow stars flickered in front of her eyes. Backpack, who had got off lightly, was jumping up and down with joy: obviously she was overjoyed to finally be able to move and speak freely again. Finally, Anne took a deep breath, sat up and looked around inquiringly with a still painfully befogged gaze. What she saw quickly made her forget her pain. Although it had already been clear to her that the enchanted world had changed thoroughly, it was only now that she began to understand the extent of the changes. Almost nothing was left of the old Ghost Forest...

They were on an island in the middle of the river, which was as wide as a lake at this point. Around them was a well-kept huge park with short-cropped green meadows, wide avenues and all kinds of wondrous buildings. It was teeming with souvenir shops, shooting galleries, cute gazebos, merry-go-rounds with wooden horses and carriages, machines for measuring strength, and what not... Moreover — and this was the biggest difference — the forest, which used to be so gloomy and barren, was now teeming with visitors. People, animals, plants strolled around and no one seemed to mind that they were practically stepping on each other’s toes. Puffing with heat, large families of wild boars strolled around, the sweating parents constantly on guard lest they lose some of their piglets in their pretty little striped suits. Huge potted palms, snooty and swanky, snapped away with their expensive cameras, never missing a chance to show everyone how much they despised the boobies buzzing around

their feet. Flocks of geese, loud as newsboys and tirelessly curious, fluttered about, craning their long necks so as not to miss a thing. Squirrels, hopping as if on springs, laughed their heads off and stuck their tongues out at the arrogant palms whenever they had the chance. Oops! Already one of the little hoppers tripped over Anne, who was still sitting on the ground, and rolled across the lawn like a ball.

‘I’m sorry, I’m sorry,’ it stammered and made an awkward bow. ‘I hadn’t noticed you, excuse me, I’m very sorry.’

Only then did the little squirrel look Anne in the face and couldn’t close her mouth in amazement. Her face went rigid with horror and she ran away, screaming at the top of her lungs:

‘Help me, Mummy! The wicked witch! Helpeeee!’

Anne looked after her, stunned. What did that mean? She hadn’t even touched her, what had she done to frighten her so? Just as astonished as confused, she was about to get up when the tomboy reappeared, this time accompanied by his parents.

‘There she is! As she lives and breathes, I told you so. I saw her with my own eyes, I’m not making this up!’

‘Silly, you’re driving me crazy!’ scolded Mother Squirrel. ‘That’s just an actress who works here in the park. Have you forgotten that just now we saw Mr Quirk, the flying clock? And that his wings were made of plastic? That’s just Heinoland, kiddo, you can see all the villains in history here, but they’re not real, it’s just for fun for the kids. If we keep walking, I’m sure we’ll meet other members of the gang — Boo the Flying Ears, Wuzz the Fly...’

‘Buzz the fly,’ improved the father, who had been watching in silence until now.

‘Amazing resemblance, Miss, truly amazing,’ he turned to Anne, anxious and fascinated at the same time. ‘This is not the first time I have come to Heinoland and I have met many of your colleagues, but I confess I have never seen such a resemblance. If we weren’t in this place, I would have been scared too, ha, ha... I hope you don’t mind us taking a photo with you? I want to show it to the neighbours when we get home, otherwise no one will believe me. Striking resemblance, word of honour.’

‘But yes, of course,’ Anne murmured in confusion. ‘If you insist, here you go...’

The squirrels hastily built up around her, then another squirrel began snapping away with his shiny camera. Soon a large crowd of curious gazers had gathered around them. People shouted ‘Oh’ and ‘Oh’ and pointed their fingers at Anne. As if that wasn’t enough, more and more came, a whole queue of people wanting to have their picture taken with her. Notebooks were handed to her from all sides asking for her autograph. Firecurl was completely confused. She could not understand all the furore around her. In the end, she managed to slip away, thanks to the white lie that she had something very urgent to do. Pursued by curious glances, she took the first path that lay a little away from the hustle and bustle and ran away as fast as she could.

‘What was that? Did you get that, Backpack? They were really stuck on me. How do they know me?’

‘Hm, I think they believe you are someone else. Didn’t you hear the little one shouting something about some wicked witch? And her father, about some great likeness? Apparently you look like someone they’re scared to death of.’





‘Yes, all well and good. But this strange talk... haven’t you heard it? ‘Bad guys’, ‘members of a gang’? Could it be that our friends have got themselves involved in something criminal?’

‘Ha, Mr. Quirk and criminal... I would rather believe that an elephant is dancing on a rope,’ laughed Backpack. ‘No, I don’t believe that. There’s something else behind it, only I don’t know what.’

‘We really need to find out more about this park. But how can we question someone without giving ourselves away? Do you have any ideas?’

‘We don’t have to ask anyone questions, I saw an information stand on the way here. I’m sure we’ll find out the most important things there.’

‘Excellent. Come on, let’s get to work, I don’t want to be caught unprepared again.’

The stand in question looked something like a tall one-legged table, only instead of a plate, there was a large flat screen on top and a purple telephone receiver next to it.

‘Hm, I wonder if we’ll manage to get along with this machine?’ said Backpack hesitantly. ‘I still can’t forget our first encounter with the Heinomat. Are we in for a surprise here too?’

Anne scratched involuntarily at a certain spot. The Heinomat — a machine that Heino’s company had set up at the swamp to rake in money — had given her a good beating when she had tried to outsmart it. Only with difficulty did she suppress her discomfort.

‘We have to try, whether we like it or not. At least they don’t charge money here, as far as I can see. Let’s hope this machine is not as vicious as the Heinomat.’

They approached the stand and looked at it cautiously, although there was not much to see. At the top of the screen it said ‘Heinoland™ Information System’, below that was a stylised figure of a small grinning beaver holding a placard over his head with the word ‘Start’ written on it.

‘Don’t worry,’ Anne grumbled and tapped on the screen. Immediately another image came up. Now a fat beaver woman was watching them, grinning greasily at them.

‘Welcome to the magical world of Heinoland, dear children and parents,’ she spoke in a solemn, pompous voice. ‘Here, in this giant park, you have the opportunity to witness some of the most terrifying adventures

and battles that Mr Heino had to fight during the time of the Great Struggle. But fear not! The monsters, their mistress and all their helpers have long since been defeated and put away in a safe place. Authentic, stirring moments await you, but you are completely safe. Heinoland is the safest place in the whole Ghost Forest!’

Anne’s chin dropped in astonishment. What was the meaning of this nonsense? Defeated monsters, their mistress? A terrible suspicion matured in her.

‘Make yourself at home, please,’ the fat beaver woman continued. ‘If you need any help, you can always use this information system or contact the park staff. Heinoland is huge, but superbly organised. Wherever you are, there are numerous hints on how to get to a place you are looking for. And now I wish you a pleasant stay. Goodbye and don’t hesitate to call me again whenever you need me.’

Now a coloured map of the park appeared. Somewhere in the middle there was a red arrow that said ‘You are here’. The fat beaver woman smiled from a small window in the upper right corner.

‘As you can see, finding your way around our park is child’s play,’ she began to explain. ‘The amusement park ‘Heinoland’ is divided into five themed areas, which we call ‘worlds’. At the moment you are in the central part of the park, which belongs to the ‘Ghost Opera’ world. From here, direct paths lead to each of the other four worlds. Not far from you, that is, here (at this point she leaned out of her window and tapped on a point near the red arrow) is the Central Show Theatre in Heinoland. Every day at 3 pm the show ‘The Great Struggle’ is performed here. Don’t miss it! It is the most moving part of our programme. This show lets you experience a part of our history. And you will — of course — be able to see for yourself once again that without the boundless bravery and heroic deeds of Mr Heino, we would all be in the grip of fearsome, cruel monsters today... But back to our plan. At the top left of the map is the first world, called ‘Dino World’. There you can visit the shows depicting the story of the terrible dinosaur, one of the five monsters defeated by Mr Heino. To the right is the second world, the ‘World of the Ghost Circus’. There you will see the show of the fight with the noseless clown...’



Here Anne could not contain herself and slammed her fist on the screen with all her might. Something inside lit up and beeped, the image disappeared.

‘What are you doing? Have you gone mad?’ cried Backpack, startled. ‘What if someone sees us now? Do you want us to be arrested? Come on, let’s get out of here before we’re caught in the act!’

Anne nibbled on her fist, which hurt quite a bit, but didn’t look like she wanted to run away. Her eyes were sparking.

‘Now everything is clear! Do you understand what these impostors have done? They’ve turned the whole story upside down and made everyone believe that we are the monsters and they are the heroes! And Heino beat us in some ‘Great Struggle’. Bloody hell, I would have expected anything else, but not that. Villains, crooks, liars!’

‘All right, all right, we’ll talk about it later. Now let’s get out of here before they catch us!’ said Backpack, pulling Anne along with her. ‘There’s nothing we can do about it right now anyway. Now come on and stop bracing yourself like that! Or do you want Heino to put you in a cage?’

‘Ladies and gentlemen,’ they were startled by a powerful voice echoing from a nearby loudspeaker. ‘We remind you that in ten minutes the programme ‘The Great Struggle’ will begin in the Show Theatre. Don’t miss this great spectacle. Please hurry!’

The two friends looked at each other questioningly. Should they try it? Why not? Maybe they could learn something more about the park there. They didn’t hesitate for long. As usual, Anne hung Backpack over her shoulder and hurried to the theatre.

‘Hey, take a look at that there,’ Backpack volunteered.

‘Where?’

‘That souvenir shop over there. See what they sell?’

Firecurl looked into the display and...got muzzled in amazement. What was staring back at her from a giant poster was her own face — but what a face! A terrifying grimace! The shop window was full of books, pen holders, air mattresses, stuffed animals, bags, T-shirts, plastic cups and plates, toys and all sorts of odds and ends... And on every item, but every one, was emblazoned her face, sometimes more, sometimes less scary. She was so stunned that she completely forgot where they were actually going and would certainly have stared at the display into the night if Backpack hadn’t reminded her. Nevertheless, she puffed sullenly and did not stop sulking. Finally, she pulled herself together, scratched her ear and turned sheepishly to Backpack:

‘Hm, I wanted to ask you something...’

‘What?’

‘First, promise me you won’t laugh at me.’

‘Me laugh at you? When have I ever done that before?’ asked Backpack with an innocent expression.

Anne gave her a suspicious look, gathered her courage and said:

‘Am I... am I really that ugly? Like in these pictures, I mean. That’s not a little girl, but a monster, an abomination.’

‘Ah, so that’s where the shoe pinches,’ Backpack said sympathetically. ‘You don’t look like that at all, not at all.’

Firecurl breathed a sigh of relief.

‘What I’m trying to say,’ Backpack continued as she busily rummaged through her pockets. ‘You don’t look remotely like that monster as long as you’re calm and collected. But when you fly into a rage, that’s another matter.’

‘Now you’re making fun of me again,’ Anne roared in a huff. ‘What are you trying to say?’

‘This!’ replied Backpack, holding a pocket mirror in front of Firecurl’s nose.

All of a sudden Anne became very quiet. Staring back at her was the very ugly, rage-distorted face she had seen in the souvenir shop.



## Chapter Four: The Great Struggle

They arrived just in time. It was only a few minutes until the show started and the huge hall was packed. Nevertheless, they got good seats not far from the stage because the ushers, who couldn’t keep their mouths shut at the sight of Anne, immediately gave her preferential treatment. The two friends sat down and looked around curiously.

The hall resembled a teacup with the stage being its bottom. Curved tiers climbed up the walls. The topmost seats were so high that they had to put their heads far back in their necks to see them. The stage itself was shaped like a giant shell. It was all pink and sparkled in the light of hundreds of spotlights hanging from the walls and ceiling. The stage set showed a large clearing in front, the swamp next to it, and then the orchid meadow, Madam Owl’s tree house and all the other places in the forest where the two friends had had their adventures. At the back right, you could see Grandpa Hedgehog’s neat water mill and behind it the river, made of some kind of smooth, transparent fabric. In the orchestra pit in front of the stage sat the musicians — the largest orchestra Anne had ever seen in her life.

‘Well, let’s see what they’re trying to put us through,’ she said, seemingly crossly, but you could tell from her bright eyes that she quite liked the atmosphere. ‘Honestly, I didn’t expect everything to look so nice on stage. You feel like you’re in the middle of a fairy tale.’

Backpack did not answer. All the spectators around her made her feel uneasy and she wondered if it hadn’t been a mistake to come here. But it was too late to worry about that. The conductor was already appear-

ing on stage — a tall, bespectacled gentleman in a formal tailcoat, handing out air kisses in all directions. The audience virtually exploded with applause. The conductor bowed several times, waited until there was silence, tapped the baton on the podium — and the show began.

Darkness fell in the hall. The sounds of a soft, tingling music could be heard, as if a huge volcano was rumbling from underground. Then the beam of a spotlight cut through the darkness and hit a small figure floating high up under the dome. It gradually descended in slow oscillations until finally its outline could be seen more clearly. Anne could only just suppress a scream, because what was slowly descending onto the stage, riding a broom, was...herself. Or rather a double of herself, in a long, shining cloak. The resemblance, she quickly realised, was deceptive, for this pseudo-Anne looked quite frightening. Dark rims around the eyes gave her face a sinister and eerie expression, her lips were unnaturally blood-red, and the long claws on her fingers sparkled like bright steel in the spotlight. No question: this was the figure of the wicked witch.

As soon as she stood on the stage, she threw off her long cape and revealed herself as a slender person whose skin-tight leotard seemed to be made of the sparkling scaly skin of a snake. Just at that moment, the music exploded. Over the heads of the spellbound audience sounded the notes of a wild, intoxicating dance. The young witch began to dance. And how she danced! Her flexible glittering body wriggled in snake-like movements as if she had no bones. There were furious leaps, hard flips, and elusively fast movements that made her look like a colourful sparkling firework. With bated breath and eyes wide open, Anne watched the spectacle and only managed to whisper wearily from time to time, 'My goodness, oh my goodness.' Backpack, also enchanted by the magic of the dance, seemed to have completely forgotten her concerns.

Gradually, a gruesome, dark story began to unfold before their eyes. Soon one monster followed another on stage: the one-eyed dinosaur, the blind bear, the bald woman, the noseless clown, the one-legged ballerina. With their help, the witch began to sow fear and terror in the forest,



and scenes of senseless, inhuman cruelty followed. The wicked witch's curse mowed down whole squadrons of brave forest dwellers. Anyone who resisted was punished by death. Only the cowards who defected to her were pardoned: the flying clock Mr. Quirk, his friend Boo the Winged Ears, Buzz the Fly, Grandpa Hedgehog, the four winged elves and Madam Owl. And so it went on until finally the hero, the brave beaver, appeared. A poignant scene described how the witch destroyed his home and he barely escaped with his life. Determined to take revenge, he took up the fight and pursued her everywhere until the brave spiders he led defeated the witch's army in the decisive battle near the Ghost Mansion. The show ended in a crowd scene, with a chorus of forest dwellers, hand in hand, singing of the hero's deeds. And then the orchestra played a joyful hymn of thanks, fireworks exploded over the heads of the audience and everyone jumped to their feet and sang along with the ensemble. Anne and Backpack were completely stunned and just blinked their eyes. They were at a loss for words.

Already a pretty young speaker, microphone in hand, came on stage.

'Ladies and gentlemen,' her voice rang out, 'today is a particularly happy day for us. As you all know, Mr Heino will soon be celebrating his anniversary. To mark the occasion, the most famous actors and musicians of the Ghost Forest have been invited here to Heinoland. It is therefore my honour to introduce to you an incomparable, unique star of the art of singing. Ladies and gentlemen, a big round of applause for Justa Diva!'

Frenetic applause made the whole hall tremble. Before the astonished eyes of the two friends, the familiar prima donna, the same great singer who had joined the rock band of the four elves at that time, entered the stage. Outwardly she had not changed at all, she was still a magnificent red potted flower on two short legs. Justa Diva bowed, took the microphone from the young speaker's hand and spoke in a sonorous, trained voice:

'Dear friends, I am infinitely happy to be here with you on this joyous day for the whole forest! I am especially proud to have been invited to take part in the celebrations of Mr Heino's anniversary. And as a singer, I would like to express my gratitude by doing what I do best: singing a beautiful song dedicated to our hero!'

The orchestra sang a beautiful, well-known melody. Justa Diva threw herself into pose and began to sing:

There's nothing you can do 'cos all is done  
Nothing you can sing 'cos all is sung  
Nothing you can say but you'll be taught how to play the  
game,  
It's easy.

There's nothing you can make 'cos all is made,  
No one you can save 'cos all is saved.  
Nothing you can do but you can learn to be useful in time,  
It's easy.

All we need is him,  
All we need is him,  
All we need is him, him.  
Heino's all we need.

At this point, all the spectators stood and sang, a single choir, together with Justa Diva. Everywhere you saw eyes shining with emotion, arms raised in salute and faces filled with unconditional faith and adoration... The song roared up to the dome of the hall, like a giant wave threatening to swallow everything.

All we need is him.  
All we need is him.  
All we need is him, him.  
Heino's all we need.

Anne felt like she was going mad. She was so angry that she forgot all caution. She had expected everything, but not such perfidy. Somehow she could understand that Heino and his henchmen had turned everything upside down, after all Anne and he had hated each other at first sight. But that even Justa Diva had switched to the evil beaver's camp, she couldn't

understand, she didn't even want to try. Without thinking for a moment about the consequences, she jumped up from her seat and rushed towards the stage. Backpack tried to hold her back, but in vain. In such a situation, no one could stop Anne.

A few jumps and Firecurl stood on the stage, snatched the microphone out of the stunned Justa Diva's hand and screamed in a wild, hysterical voice:

'It's a lie, a vile, low-down lie! Everything these crooks tell is a lie, from beginning to end! You fools, don't you see that you are being led around by the nose? Heino is a crook and a swindler! And that fat prima donna... she's just a cowardly traitor! That's what your heroes look like!'

At that moment, a voice shrilled from the hall:

'That's the witch! The real witch! Run away, save yourselves!'

Within a second, total chaos broke out. Some of the spider guards were already rushing towards Anne to grab her, but the horrified crowd blocked their way. Blind and deaf with fear, everyone pushed towards the exits. It was a terrible uproar; under the stomping of the fleeing spectators, the tiers began to shake menacingly.

'Come on, Anne, we have to go,' Backpack called, pulling her friend by the sleeve. 'If the spiders catch us, we're done for.'

But it was too late to escape. The spiders were at all the exits. The situation looked hopeless.

Anne looked around in despair. Where to now? Her eyes fell on a door hidden in the stage set. The actors were running through it in panic. She grabbed Backpack and ran there. It was their only chance.

Behind the door was a wide staircase. It led down to a corridor full of frightened people. At least for the moment, no one was paying any attention to them; most of those fleeing had not even understood what it was all about. But the pursuers could appear at any moment.

Anne looked around frantically, opened the first available door and scurried inside. There was no time to lose.

After the hubbub in the crowded corridor, the small untidy dressing room seemed like a heavenly oasis to them. But they had no time to catch their breath. They looked around frantically, but apart from a wardrobe in the corner, there was nothing to hide in. They were terrified. What to



do? This time there probably was no escape. From the corridor they heard hastily shouted orders and the stomping of boots. The spiders! Without thinking much, they shoved themselves into the wardrobe and held their breath.

They heard the door open and someone enter the dressing room. Judging by the footsteps, it was not spiders, thank God. But their relief was short-lived. Whoever had come in went straight to the wardrobe, stopped briefly, probably to look at themselves in the mirror of the wardrobe door — and opened the door.

The two friends screamed in horror, and an even more horrified scream echoed back at them. Then all three fell silent and looked at each other in bewilderment.

In front of the wardrobe stood Justa Diva.

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The prima donna came to first. She took a step back and hissed:

‘And now, how long shall we stare at each other? Come out of there, you’ll wrinkle all my costumes!’

Anne and Backpack obeyed, albeit reluctantly, and confined themselves to giving the singer nasty looks. Justa Diva didn’t care, she looked into the wardrobe, clicking her tongue in exasperation.

‘Damn brats!’ she growled angrily. ‘You’ve ruined half my wardrobe! Do you have any idea how much these clothes cost? I can throw them all away now!’

‘Ha, I don’t give a damn!’ replied Anne just as caustically. ‘Apparently you’re more interested in clothes than in your...’

She broke off, because she didn’t want to say the word ‘friends’. First there was an awkward silence.

‘And what should I do with you now?’, Justa Diva finally spoke up again. ‘Any minute now, the spiders are going to swoop in here. As if I had no other worries!’

‘Worries? You’ll betray us, of course! It wouldn’t be the first time!’ returned Firecurl angrily. Helpless tears welled up in her eyes and clouded her vision. The hatred filled her so much that she almost couldn’t breathe.

‘You fool!’ roared Diva. ‘It’s easy to talk at your age. I’d love to see what song you’d warble if you were in my place! Do you think at your age I wouldn’t have wanted to turn the world upside down? Of course, green-horns like you can play the fat man all they want. But just wait till you grow up and you’ll see how easy it is to be a hero!’

At that moment, someone banged on the door outside. Anne and Backpack jumped up, startled. Diva, however, kept her nerve and, to the astonishment of the two friends, began to tear off her clothes in a flash. Within a few seconds, there was nothing left of her costume, even the flower-

pot changed colour — previously brown, it was now suddenly white with pink spots.

‘Wait, wait, please,’ she fluted as she pushed the two into the wardrobe. ‘I’m not dressed yet. Be so kind and wait a second.’

‘Crouch in the corner, there!’ she hissed at them. ‘Here, all the way to the back. And not a peep, you hear?’

Without wasting time, she grabbed a bundle of her expensive costumes and threw them over the two cowering figures. Soon all that could be seen was a heap of clothes thrown haphazardly over each other. Then she threw on a silk dressing gown, hastily ruffled her hair and stuck her head through the door.

‘Excuse me, madam,’ a gruff voice let itself be heard. ‘We have orders to search everything. The criminals are probably hiding somewhere here.’

‘But I beg you, gentlemen. I would have found them first if they were in my dressing room, wouldn’t I? There is no one here but me, I assure you. But if you doubt it, go and see for yourself. Orders are orders, I don’t want to stand in your way. You’ll just have to excuse my disorder. I am an artist, I hope you understand?’

She opened the door wide and stepped aside. The huge, hairy spider guard entered the dressing room, looked around carefully and frowned at the disarray in the open wardrobe. But when he saw that there really wasn’t any place to hide in the small room, he shrugged, turned and walked out, mumbling unintelligible excuses.

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There was a tense silence. No one found words until Backpack finally plucked up courage.

‘It seems... we have you to thank. We would have been lost without you. However, I don’t understand at all why you did it.’

‘Neither do I,’ Anne added, her eyes still twinkling.

The prima donna dropped heavily onto the small leather sofa in the corner. With trembling hands, she opened her purse, took out a cigarette, lit it and began to smoke. There was no trace of the self-confident lady any more; in her place sat only a tired and frightened ageing woman.

‘What are you gawking at, sit down somewhere,’ she said in a weak voice after she had calmed down a little. ‘What do you expect me to say? That my conscience has stirred? Or that I am now on your side again?... I don’t know why I did it myself. Don’t think I gave it much thought... And stop staring at me with those huge eyes! What do you want from me? Yes, yes, yes! I gave in, I betrayed you! And now I work for that bastard Heino. Well, are you happy now? Or do I have to spread ashes on my head?’

Backpack coughed.

‘Or maybe...’ She paused and gave Anne a questioning look.

‘Maybe what?’ asked Justa Diva.

‘Perhaps it would be best if you told us about everything that has happened here in our absence. Surely there is much we do not understand, cannot understand. What do you think, Anne?’

‘I don’t care,’ Anne replied, strictly avoiding looking at the prima donna. ‘But if she wants to, let her just tell. Why not?’



## Chapter Five:

### What happened in the forest

‘It all started shortly after you both disappeared from here, so about five years ago,’ Justa Diva began.

The two friends gasped. Five years! A whole five years had passed in the Ghost Forest and at the same time in their world only a single month! They knew that they had to expect surprises in the enchanted world, but it seemed almost improbable, at least at first.

‘Everything was going wonderfully, our band... I mean the elf band... the Forest Beetles, you remember, don’t you?’

‘Of course we remember,’ the two friends shouted. ‘Ivan-John, Pavel-Paul, Goran-George and Rangel-Ringo. How could we forget them, they were our best friends.’

‘Yes,’ sighed the prima donna deeply, ‘mine too. My best friends.’

Again she rummaged nervously for something in her purse, then gave it up, sadly bowed her head and sank into a deep silence. Quite unexpectedly, thick tears began to drip from her eyes, leaving greasy furrows on her made-up face. She didn’t even try to hide them, but just sat there quietly, her face a mask of despair. Finally she regained her composure, took a silk handkerchief out of her little bag, wiped her eyes and went on.

‘Everything was prepared for our first concert, we were just counting the days. It wasn’t supposed to be anything extravagant, just a small concert, without any special publicity, without much money, but for us it didn’t mean anything... or at least we thought so... at the time... Everyone felt... ah, what am I talking about... That... those were the most beautiful moments I had ever experienced in my life! The guys... they were so hap-