

The Dragon's Egg

8. I shuffled the squares: from A to D, to B, to F, to E, to C, to G. There was a grinding noise, and bolts slid free from either side of the portcullis.

"Wind it up!" barked the fox, pointing at a big handle set into the floor. "Wind it up!"

I turned the handle and the portcullis clanked open. We walked forward into the cavern. The walls were piled high with mounds of gold and jewels. In the centre was a tall silver pillar, with a golden nest perched on top.

"Put the egg in the nest!" barked the fox. "Come on!"

I took the egg out of my pocket. The egg was extremely warm, and vibrating. As I made my way round piles of treasure, the egg grew bigger and bigger. When I reached the pillar, I stretched up and popped the egg into the nest.

As I moved back from the nest, I could see cracks appearing in the surface of the egg.

"It's going to hatch!" barked the fox. "It's going to hatch!"

The egg bust apart, and a bright green dragon, about the size of our cat, lazily stretched its wings.

Suddenly, I heard chattering from high above. The two magpies who had stolen the egg were perched on a ledge in front of an open skylight. The dragon turned towards them and snorted a stream of fire from its nostrils. The magpies fled through the skylight. The dragon took off and pursued the magpies out of the cavern.

"That's torn it!" I said. "We'll never catch it. Now we're really in the soup!"

"That would be lentil soup," barked the fox, "to go with the yellow of your Wellington boots.

"That's not funny!" I said. "And, besides, I'm not wearing Wellington boots."

"Well, I thought it was funny," barked the fox. "Don't worry! Don't worry! The dragon can look after itself."

"So, can I go home now?" I asked. "I'm really hungry."

"Of course," barked the fox. "Of course. This way."

As the fox led me back to the lift, the portcullis clanked shut behind us.

"Number 1!" barked the fox. "Number 1!"

"Isn't there a puzzle?" I asked, selecting the button.

"Only to go down," barked the fox.

The lift ground its way back up to the cliff face beside the loch.

"Things to do! Things to do!" barked the fox "Thanks for all your help! I'll be seeing you!"

The fox bounded off across the grass. Making my way down the hill, I trudged home across town. When I reached our flat, I went straight through to the kitchen.

"That's you at last!" said Nancy. "Come and eat."

"Something smells good!" I said to Nancy. "What are we having?"

“Soup,” said Nancy. “And you’ve got a visitor.”

Sitting at the head of the table, was the green dragon.