

# **Nina Blazon – The Dragon Out of the Blue Egg**

## *An Easter Egg in the Snow*

“I live in an insane asylum!” mom yelled. Things were often as crazy as they were this morning in the Lukas household. Anja could understand why her mother was annoyed. Her two brothers really did behave like idiots. Alexander was almost eleven already and thought he was super intelligent. Leon was three and a half. Dad called him Haribo because his favorite thing in the world was to eat gummy bears. But for Anja and Alexander he was simply Baby Bo.

“Hurry up, go, go, go!” mom screamed, putting an orange bike helmet on Baby Bo’s head. With that on he looked like a pumpkin on the move when he was sitting in his kid’s seat behind Mom on her bike. All the nursery school kids had a helmet like his.

“Hey look, it’s pumpkin heads on wheels!” said Alexander when the little kids’ parents picked them up from preschool.

“Hey Tomato Face!” Alexander yelled now. “Are you finally ready?”

Alexander never called his sister Anja, but constantly thought up new names for her instead. She was Tomato Face because she had made a mess with the tomato sauce yesterday and had sauce all over her face. It was still an improvement from last week’s nickname. Then Alexander had only called her Burpie.

Anja grabbed her winter coat and set out. It was the first school day after the winter break, and it was still dark outside. Anja marched off.

“Bye, my darlings!” mom called after them.

“Bye, you dumb-dumbs!” screamed Baby Bo. With mom he felt incredibly safe.

The way to school took them through the town park. There was still snow on the ground, and they saw the burnt remains of leftover New Year’s Eve fireworks everywhere.

“Hey Tomato Face!” Alexander taunted, and scooped together sticky, wet snow into a lumpy ball. “Here comes the white rocket!” Already the slush bomb was flying in Anja's direction.

The cold and going back to school were already bad enough. But slushy, sticky snowballs? Yuck! “Just wait!” screamed Anja. She aimed pretty well and even hit Alexander on the neck. The icy water melted and ran down under his sweater. It looked funny as Alexander danced around in the snow. He yelled the whole time and sounded pretty angry.

Anja ducked between two bushes for cover. She almost stepped on something blue, but managed to jump aside just in time. She was amazed by what she saw. In the middle of the snow lay... an egg! The shell glowed like the sky on a summer's day. Anja took off her gloves and picked up the egg. And in her hand, it was suddenly toasty warm.

“What's that?” Alexander had appeared out of nowhere next to her. “Give it here!” He had already grabbed the egg! “Want to bet I hit the branch over there with it?” he said as he drew his arm back to throw.

“No!” Anja shrieked. “Give it back!” But Alexander only laughed his nasty older-brother laugh, held the egg above his head, and danced in circles around her. “Then come and get it, shrimp! But hurry up, because this is the blue rocket! And it flies in ten seconds! Ten ... nine ... eight...”

So, that was enough! Alexander was still hopping around like an idiot. Anja took a leap and threw herself at him. She grabbed onto his backpack with all her might. Like a baby monkey she hung on his back. Alexander bucked and tried to shake off his sister.

“Give up!”, Anja panted.

Suddenly Alexander slipped on the snow. They fell down. Oh no, the egg! It flew out of his hand and through the air. Anja landed head over heels next to Alexander in the snow. She instantly rolled over, just in time to see the egg make an arch and start to come down. She got back up on her legs, pushed off and threw herself after it like a soccer goalie. Just in time! As she caught the egg, she lost her balance. She landed heavily on her stomach, and her backpack pressed her into the ground. Because her hands weren't free, she couldn't stop herself, so she slid further. She slid with her chin along the frozen grass and got muddy snow in her mouth.

“Beh!” she gasped and spit out the snow. But at least the egg was safe now. Before Alexander could take it from her again, she stood up and ran away.

“Hey, stop running!” Alexander called after her.

But Anja made sure that she got away. “Hah, I won!” she cried over her shoulder. “The egg is mine.”

### *It Giggles*

Anja arrived at school completely out of breath. The egg lay safe and warm in her wool hat, which she carried in both hands. She could hardly wait to show her friend Jasmine what she had found. The two girls were in the same third grade class. Because Anja had run so fast, she had arrived early. Most of the other kids weren't even there yet, but as she burst into the classroom, she spotted Jasmine's wild black curls. Anja thought she had the prettiest hair in the world. Sadly, she only had straight, caramel brown wisps just like her dad, and green eyes and freckles like her mom.

It was great to see Jasmine again after the winter break. But Anja was much too excited for long greetings. “Look!” she cried and held her hat out toward her friend. “I just found it in the park!” Jasmine grinned. “That looks just like an Easter egg. Do you think someone forgot it at the Easter egg hunt in the park last spring?”

Anja shook her head. “Then snow would have fallen on it and I would have never found it. But the egg was on top of the snow, as if someone had just thrown it away in the park.”

“Hmmm,” Jasmine murmured as she bent over the hat. “And that doesn't look like paint, either. The shell seems to actually be blue!” Carefully she touched the egg and immediately pulled her finger back. “It's hot!”

“Really? It was cold just now!” Anja replied, bewildered. She carefully tapped the egg and got even more curious. Was Jasmine mistaken? Now the egg was as cold as an ice cube again.

“Now that's weird,” she said. “It goes back and forth between cold and warm all by itself. Maybe there's something in there that's alive ...”

“Give it here!” said Jasmine. Gingerly, she weighed the egg in her hand, then shook her head. “No, chicks don't ever hatch in January. And if there was a chick in there the egg would have to be really light.”

“How do you know that?”

“My grandmother In Turkey knows a lot about birds,” Jasmine explained.

“Hmm,” Anja murmured. To be honest, she was a little disappointed. Of course she knew that winter wasn't the time for birds to lay eggs. But secretly she had hoped that this was a very special egg.

Suddenly Anja stopped short. “What was that?”

Jasmine furrowed her brow. “What was what?”

“There was a sound! It came from the egg!”

“Really?” Jasmine smiled. “Or is this another one of your stories?”

Anja shook her head firmly. “There really was something!”

“Rrrriiiiiing!” The school bell scared her so much that she jumped backward with a yelp. Jasmine flinched.

“Wow, you scared me!” she said. “What did you hear?”

“I don't know exactly,” answered Anja. “Something like a cheep. There really is something inside. Listen!”

Anja held the egg to her friend's ear, but Jasmine shook her head. “I don't hear anything. Maybe you only imagined it. Come on, we need to get to class!”

In the hallway, kids jostled and made their way to their classrooms. Anja quickly stuck the egg in the hat and jumped up. She had to hurry to get to her first class on time. It was art, Anja's favorite class, but Anja couldn't concentrate on painting today. Again and again she stealthily put her hand into the hat to stroke the egg. It was incredible: each time it felt

different, switching between frosty and luke warm, chilly and burning hot, bathwater warm and shivering, goose-bump cold. Suddenly Anja heard the sound again, and this time she recognized it: a quiet, impudent giggle!

### ***Bo to the Rescue***

The egg didn't make a sound during lunch break, and after school it was quiet, too. And besides, Anja was convinced she hadn't been mistaken. There was something alive in this egg!

But first she had to find a safe place for it. At home, she wanted to sneak her treasure past her brothers. Unfortunately, Alexander was already home from school and lazing about on the couch. Baby Bo was building a Lego house for his stuffed turtle in the living room. The two boys hadn't noticed their sister yet. Anja took off her boots quietly and snuck toward the stairs on her tiptoes. This wasn't easy, because there were Lego pieces all over the floor. She had barely made it to the steps with some hopping and contortions when mom stuck her head out of the kitchen and said, "Hi, sneaky one!"

Alexander and Baby Bo immediately raised their heads. Alexander smirked meanly.

"You three can set the table in just a minute," mom said cheerfully. "In half an hour we'll have spaghetti!" With these words, she disappeared back into the kitchen.

Now every second counted. Anja sprinted up the stairs. "Stop right where you are, Egghead!" Alexander called out. Out of the corner of her eyes she saw him get up from the couch.

"Egghead! Egghead!" repeated Baby Bo excitedly. Oh, great, another nickname! Of course, Baby Bo also dropped his Legos immediately and followed after Alexander and her. All three of them thundered up the steps.

"Hey, what is going on with you kids?" Anja heard mom's voice from downstairs. But by then she was already near her room at the end of the hall. She slipped in and threw herself with full force against the door. Stupidly, Alexander had the same idea. They both groaned with the effort as they pressed themselves against the door from opposite sides. Eventually Anja managed to push the door a little further closed.

“Give up!” Alexander yelled.

“No! You will not touch the egg again!” Anja screamed and held the door closed with all her might.

“I want to see the blue rocket, too!” Bo whined in the hallway.

“Come on Bo, help me!” cried Anja. “Then I’ll show it to you!”

Now, that worked! Her little brother squeezed through the crack in the door into her room and helped her push the door shut from the inside.

“You miserable traitor!” Alexander scolded from the hall. But now he didn’t stand a chance. With a bang, the door closed and Anja quickly locked it. “You’ll both regret this!” came Alexander’s muffled voice from the other side. Bo grinned under his bike helmet.

Well, a promise is a promise. Anja took off her backpack and got out the hat, where the egg lay safely cushioned. “It isn’t a rocket, it’s an egg,” she whispered to her little brother. “It was lying in the snow.” Bo’s eyes grew wide and he stretched his hand out toward it. “Just look!” Anja warned.

“But I want to touch it!” he whined, and for emphasis quivered his lower lip. This was Bo’s special way of threatening to howl. When he really started to cry, mom would immediately investigate. Bo knew how to get what he wanted!

Anja snorted and held the egg out to him. “Okay, then. But only touch it, and very gently!” she warned him. She had a strange feeling in her stomach when she saw his pudgy little fingers patting all over the beautiful egg. And then, of course, he had to lick it.

“Eew!” Anja cried. “You slob!”

She pulled the egg away from him and dried it against her sweatshirt. But then she heard it again, the giggling. Very quietly, as if the egg were ticklish.

“Look!” Bo squealed, pointing at it excitedly.

“What are you two doing in there?” Alexander yelled. He pounded against the door angrily.

Anja held the egg up to the light. “It’s turning a different color!” she said with amazement. And in fact, the longer she held it in her hand, the more the blue color changed. The egg first turned purple and finally fire red. And as if that wasn’t strange enough, all at once golden yellow speckles shone on the bright red egg.

Bo was already opening his mouth. He probably wanted to yell, “Mom, come look!” and run for the door. But Anja held him back. “Listen, Bo, this is a secret,” she whispered, looked her brother earnestly in the eyes. “We can’t let Alexander touch the egg or he will break it. There might be a blue chick inside. We have to take good care of it. Do you understand?”

Bo opened his eyes even wider and then nodded solemnly.

“Hey, what are you two whispering about in there?” Alexander thundered.

Bo looked around the room and tugged on Anja’s sleeve. “We need to hide the egg, quick,” he said, sounding worried.

Anja had to laugh. When it came to protecting animals, she could always rely on her little brother. “Good idea. Let’s do that!” she said quietly.

“Mom!” Alexander called out. “Anja and Bo locked the door. And it smells really weird here, like matches. I think they’re lighting a fire in there!” That was just like Alexander! If he wanted to get his way, he would do anything at all. They could already hear mom’s firm steps on the stairs. And seconds later there was a firm and insistent knocking.

“Hey, open up this instant! You’d better not be lighting matches in there!”

“We’re not lighting anything,” Anja replied, and rushed to the heat register with the egg in her hand.

“Oh really?” Mom called sternly. “Then why have you locked the door? You know I don’t like that! Bo? Let me into the room!”

Bo got a scare and instantly forgot that he was a chick-in-the-egg protector. He rushed to the door and turned the key in the lock. Lightning fast, Anja hid the hat with the egg behind the heat register. And just in time, before Alexander and Mom came in. Mom looked around

quickly, sniffed suspiciously, and shook her head in irritation. “They haven’t been lighting any matches!” she said sternly to Alexander.

Alexander pretended to lower his head in shame, aware he’d done something wrong. But of course Anja noticed that he was staring at her backpack. Well, he would have to think again! He wouldn’t find the egg so quickly behind the heat register.

“Once and for all: I don’t want anyone to lock themselves in again,” Mama said in a firm voice. She pulled the key out of the lock and slipped it into the pocket of her jeans. “And now everyone go downstairs! If you all can fight, you can also set the table.”

### ***The Spaghetti Slide***

While Anja and her older brother set the table, they watched each other like hawks. When Alexander supposedly had to go the bathroom and disappeared upstairs, Anja immediately went after him. She caught him as he was searching through her backpack.

“Leave my backpack alone!” she snarled. Alexander only grinned and kicked her school bag so hard that notebooks and books slid out onto the floor. “Just don’t let Mom see this mess,” he gloated, but then he ran back downstairs.

Anja took a deep breath and looked around her room. He was right, it wasn’t exactly orderly in here. But she always knew where to find her things. Quickly she slipped over to the heat register. She almost let out a scream. Her hat and the egg weren’t there anymore! Anja went ice cold. It couldn’t have been Alexander. He had just been looking for the egg. Had Baby Bo... Of course! Her little brother must have taken the egg while they were still in her room. Oh, no! Hopefully nothing had happened to it.

She ran to the stairs and peered down into the living room. Alexander was just disappearing into the kitchen to get silverware. And to the left of the stairs Bo sat next to the sofa and cleaned up his stuffed animals like a good boy. He had taken off his bike helmet – that was very suspicious. His dark brown hair stood up all over his head. Even more suspicious was that he was so quiet. Silently he piled his stuffed animals into a giant mound next to the sofa.

Anja ran down the stairs and grabbed a stuffed lion that was on top of the pile. “Why did you steal the egg?” she hissed at Bo. “Where is it?”

Bo jumped up and indignantly tore the lion out of her hand. “Lupi, be careful!” he said earnestly. No one knew why, but Bo named all his stuffed animals Lupi. Now he rushed forward, lifted Lupi-Lion high over his head, and energetically set him back on the top of the stuffed animal pyramid. It was apparently a little too energetically, because Bo lost his balance and landed with his belly on the stuffed animals. At that moment they both heard it: an unmistakable cracking sound, as if a shell had broken.

Bo looked just as shocked as Anja. Now there was no holding back. Anja pulled her brother down, then grabbed one stuffed animal after another and threw them to the side. Lupi-Crocodile, Lupi-Lion, Lupi-Cat, Lupi-Dog and Lupi-Frog flew through the air and landed on the sofa. The bike helmet finally came into view. In the bike helmet lay Anja’s wool hat. And in the hat...

“Oh no!” she blurted. A laugh made her cringe. “I guess Bo was faster than me,” Alexander sneered. “Now the egg is broken. It almost looks like it exploded.”

Anja couldn’t say anything, she was still staring at the countless pieces of eggshell. They were everywhere: on the hat, in the helmet, and on all the other Lupis. Bo began to sob heartbreakingly. Anja was miserable, too.

Mom came out of the kitchen. “What’s the matter now?”

Bo rushed over to her and hugged her knee. “It ... it was blue,” he stammered. “And then red and yellow. And then hot and cold. And now it’s broken.”

Mom furrowed her brow. “I don’t understand a single word,” she said as she stroked Bo’s head. “What was blue?”

“Egghead had found some sort of rotten egg in the park and Bo smashed it,” Alexander explained with a grin.

In the kitchen, something fell onto the tile floor with a deafening clatter. Mom jumped and ran into the kitchen, followed by Bo. “Oh my gosh, the lid on the spaghetti pot fell down!” she called into the living room with amazement.

Anja was still staring at the helmet. It was strange that there was only eggshell to be seen, but no sticky egg yolk.

“Eeeek!” mom screamed in the kitchen, horrified. At the same moment, there was a terrible bang. Dishes broke, then a muffled “pfuff” rang out and Bo shrieked. Anja and Alexander raced into the kitchen. In front of the stove stood two ghosts, a big one and a little one: mom and Bo, both covered from head to toe with flour. An exploded bag of flour lay on the floor. It must have fallen off the shelf, right onto the two of them.

Now one spice container after another rained down from the shelf, as if someone had pushed them off. Pepper and salt, bright yellow curry powder and red paprika fluttered down onto the counter and the stove. Mom tried to catch a bag of lavender, but then there was a loud splash from the spaghetti pot. It was full of boiling water, with the still hard uncooked spaghetti sticking out on one side.

“This can’t be for real,” cried mom in disbelief. “Kids, out of the kitchen!” But Anja and Alexander both ignored her. Because what they saw in the pot was simply incredible. In the spaghetti water, a fire-engine red reptile paddled around contentedly. It must have hatched from the egg and run straight into the kitchen. It wasn’t a blue chick, but a tiny little dragon!

Mom immediately turned off the stove and pulled the pot off the burner. The little creature dove underwater and glided to the bottom of the pot in an elegant curve. Tiny wings flapped up and down like fins. It seemed to feel right at home. Mom grabbed a spoon and scooped the dragon out of the pot. It didn’t seem too happy about this, and looked at her indignantly. It wanted to dive back into the hot water, as if the spoon was a diving board at a swimming pool.

“Stop, you stay here,” mom said and wrapped her fingers around its scaly back. “Ow!” she yelled, shaking her hand. “It’s as hot as a boiled egg.”

The dragon made a beautiful dive and landed belly first on the spaghetti that stuck out of the pot. With a whoop it slid down it like a slide right back into the water.

“That’s enough!” Mom’s eyes blazed. “Get the strainer!” Alexander got the metal sieve from the cabinet.

“But be careful!” Anja pleaded.

Mom grabbed two oven mitts, took the pot by the handles, and dumped all the water into the strainer, along with the spaghetti and the dragon. An angry peeping rang out. Then the little dragon sat among the noodles, completely perplexed. He watched sadly as the water around him disappeared.

“Okay, first let’s let him cool down,” said mom, picking up Bo so he could finally see what was going on. Anja bent over the strainer and observed the dragon. What a cute little thing! She had never seen such beautiful eyes! They were blue with pupils like dark stars. It also had tiny little claws and a curved snout, almost like a seahorse. Then it shook itself so that the last drops rolled off its scales. Then it went “Brrrrr!” It had been bright red a few moments ago, but now its color faded. When it was completely cooled off, it was a gleaming snow white, with grey and black spots on its back that looked like dark snowflakes. Its legs had black stripes, as if it were wearing striped socks. Dripping wet, it clawed its way up to the edge of the strainer and darted off across the counter.

Actually, it only tried to dash away. But then it slipped in a little drop of olive oil, landed on its belly, and slid right into the open sack of lavender. There was a “Uffoomph,” followed by a cloud of lavender in the air. A weak cough came from the sack.

“Alexander, quickly, go in the basement and get the old hamster cage!” mom instructed. The dragon opened its tiny mouth wide and took a deep breath. And then – “aaaaahh chooo!” – it sneezed a cloud of lavender in Anja’s face.

### ***There’s No Such Thing as Dragons***

“It can’t be a dragon. There’s no such thing!” How many times had papa already said that today? Since he had arrived home he and mom had been looking through animal books. In mom’s office were rows and rows of books, and lots of computers. When she worked there, endless rows of numbers, pictures and mysterious characters appeared on the screen. When she was finished with them, all those numbers and pictures turned into a new computer game. And then Alexander and Anja got to be the first to try it out.

“Maybe it’s a... um... Komodo dragon,” papa muttered now. He was still wearing the dark gray suit he wore to work. His blonde hair that was normally so disheveled was combed perfectly straight.

“It says here they can be three meters long and are dangerous.” Papa adjusted his glasses and compared the picture of a gigantic green lizard with the tiny little white dragon. Then he shook his head in bafflement and ran both hands through his hair. The neat hairstyle fell apart. Now, with his hair tousled, he looked more like his usual self. “No, it isn’t a monitor lizard, not a giant lizard, and not a fire salamander either.”

“I’m telling you, it’s a flying dragon,” said Anja. “It has to be!”

“They only exist in books and movies,” papa insisted.

“Aaaaah-choo!” the dragon sneezed. Mom had placed a little towel in the cage for it and the dragon had nestled into it until only the tip of its nose poked out. In the cage it looked like it was in a prison cell. Anja felt sorry for the dragon. But her parents didn’t want it running around loose in the apartment.

“It’s obvious that it has to be a dragon,” Alexander chimed in. “A normal animal would never swim in hot water voluntarily.”

Mom nodded thoughtfully. “That’s true.”

“Now our Egghead has to be extra careful!” Alexander cried with a sneer. “Because what do dragons eat? Little girls!”

Bo’s mouth dropped open in fear. Alexander stomped toward Anja pretending to be Godzilla. “I’ll eat you up, Egghead!” he grunted, making a scary face.

“Waaahahaha!” sounded from the cage. Everyone turned around in surprise. The dragon was laughing so hard it was shaking, even holding on to its shaking belly. And its mouth was open so wide they could see its tiny, forked tongue and a pink throat. It gasped for breath and pointed at Alexander, who still stood with his back hunched and his arms raised above his head in a monster pose. He did look terribly confused, though, which the dragon obviously found hilarious. “Waaaahaha!” it broke out into peals of laughter, laughing so hard it tipped over. Like a beetle it lay on its back, giggling and chortling without end.

Alexander lowered his arms. The corners of Anja's mouth started to twitch. The laughter was contagious; she couldn't help it!

“But...but... lizards can't laugh,” papa said in a weak voice.

Bo broke out into giggles, and then there was no stopping it. Anja joined in, and even Alexander cackled like a crazy hen.

The dragon briefly looked at the laughing faces in bewilderment, then let itself get caught up in the merriment. It screeched even louder than Alexander, pounding on the floor of the cage. Slowly a grin spread across mom's face.

The dragon swallowed wrong, coughed and then hiccupped a pale purple cloud of fragrance into the air. Even papa couldn't keep a straight face then.

“It must have eaten too much of the lavender,” Anja gasped.

“Heeheehee!” the dragon giggles filled through the room.

“You are the strangest creature!” papa said, shaking his head.

“Lavundel!” replied a peeping voice. No one was laughing now. Everyone stared into the cage.

“Did it just say something?” mom asked.

The dragon snorted proudly. “Lavundel!” it crowed louder. Then it giggled again, as if it had told a funny joke.

“It not only laughs, it can talk, too,” said papa incredulously.

“This is a case for Mr. Meisenbeisser!”