

Die Hafenkrokodile/Originaltitel/ Ein Krokodil zu viel /Fall 1



# The Harbor Crocodiles

Case 1: **One Crocodile too Many**

Translated by Paul Davenport

What happens:

*No sooner have Ollie, Pat and Leonie formed a detective club than their first case awaits them: A crocodile in the river Elbe is making the headlines and causing fear and panic in the city of Hamburg. How did it get there? Was it intentionally set free or was it abandoned? And who stole the (stuffed) alligator from Captain Frisby's museum? From the exciting and, in the end, successful investigation that follows, the newly-formed detective club takes its name.*

## **A Case for Leonie and her Friends**

*It all began when Inspector Jan Voss needed a photo for his new ID card...*

Inspector Voss left his little apartment on the bank of the Elbe River and headed for Anne Storm's photo studio, which lay a little way downhill in one of the small streets near the Elbe.

Suddenly, a girl with bright red hair shot by him and almost knocked him off his feet. 'Sorry!' she cried and came to a sudden stop a few feet away. It was Leonie Storm, Anne Storm's lively daughter.

'I'm not sure if it would please your mother if she knew that you knock over her customers before they have a chance to reach her store and spend their money,' Voss said. The smile that played around the corners of his mouth told Leonie that he didn't really mean what he said.

'I'm sorry, Inspector, but I didn't see you in time!' she said as she took off her skates.

'You're here at last,' Anne Storm said as her daughter came into the store. 'Ollie was asking about you. He's going to be back in a few minutes!'

'Okee dokee,' said Leonie. 'I'll just hurry and take my stuff upstairs!' And off she went. 'She's a bundle of energy,' Voss said as he watched her go.

'You're right about that, Inspector. Now what can I do for you?'

'I need some passport photos for my new ID card!'

'Is that all? We'll have it in a jiffy. Should the picture be friendly or one that scares gangsters?'

'As friendly as possible,' the inspector said with a smile. 'After all, it will end up in my personnel files.'

He adjusted his collar, ran a comb through his straight blond hair and checked his smile in the mirror.

'Please follow me,' Anne Storm said, smiling as she led him to the studio, where he took a seat in front of the camera.

'The photos will be ready tomorrow. I develop them here. You'll like them,' she said as she adjusted the camera and the lighting.

Just as she finished taking the photos, someone entered the store. It was Ollie, Leonie's friend.

'Is she back?' he asked. Ollie was unlike Leonie. You hardly noticed him when he entered a room.

Inspector Voss looked at him. Ollie was watching him curiously with his intelligent eyes through his rimless glasses.

'You are Ollie Bloom from the pilot's house, am I right?' said the inspector.

Ollie nodded.

Just then Leonie came running down the wooden stairs and greeted Ollie.

While the inspector was paying for his photos, the two of them were whispering to each other. In the end, Leonie said: 'Ask him yourself!'

'No, you ask him,' said Ollie, sheepishly pushing at his glasses, which had slipped down his nose.

'What do you want to know?' asked the inspector curiously. 'If it isn't an official secret, I'll be glad to tell you!'

'Okay,' sighed Leonie and cleared her throat. 'It's always the girls that have to do the dirty work. What do you have to do to become a good detective?'

'You want to be detectives?'

Both of them nodded at the same time.

'We'd like to start by forming a detective club, the two of us and our friend Pat. Maybe we could become real detectives later...,' Ollie said.

'Yes, there's still lots of time for that,' the inspector said with a smile. 'When I was your age, I loved to play detective and I read tons of detective stories. I know exactly what you mean.'

'Can you tell us what's most important for us to know?' Leonie asked again.

'Oh, you must keep your eyes and ears open and you must be a good listener,' said Voss thoughtfully. 'You must question witnesses and try to find out what is true and what is not true.'

'Ollie is a better listener than Leonie!' said Anne Storm as she put away the camera and the lamps. 'But Leonie is better at finding things. Maybe that's because I'm a bit messy. She is used to looking for things I've misplaced.'

'Well, then they make a good team and are well qualified to be detectives,' Voss laughed.

'If you ever need help, Inspector...,' Leonie said quickly. It was typical of her to stay on track once she had started something.

'Leonie, you're getting on the inspector's nerves with your crazy ideas,' her mother said.

'Stay out of this, please, Mom,' Leonie begged her mother. She then gave the inspector an urgent look.

'That's not so crazy at all,' remarked Jan Voss. He paused at the door. 'Of course, I can't ask you to solve a murder case. But there is a case you could maybe help me with.'

'Sure, we could!' Leonie said.

'I'm in desperate need of someone who's good at finding things. Maybe you two could - '

'There are three of us,' Leonie cut in. 'Ollie, me and our friend Pat!'

Right. All the better. And all three of you know the banks of the Elbe like the palm of your hand. Would you like to be my assistants?'

'Definitely, Inspector!' said Leonie, stretching to her full height. She seemed to have grown at least five centimeters and her eyes shone greener than usual.

'We're ready for action,' Ollie said.

'It's nothing dangerous, is it?' Anne Storm wanted to know.

"Maaamaaa!" Leonie cried, her green eyes flashing dangerously.

'It's only a crocodile,' answered the inspector.

'Uh, a crocodile?' said Anne Storm in a shaky voice.

'For the moment, it's only a rumor. We don't really know if it exists. But some people say they have seen something that looked like a crocodile in the Elbe. The police have to investigate the matter. We have to question witnesses and things like that...'

'Uh-huh,' said Anne Storm, relieved. 'Now I remember. I read something about that in the newspaper.'

'A crocodile!' Ollie cried. 'I like crocodiles. They're really interesting. I just finished a book about dinosaurs and crocodiles'

'Good. Then I've got an expert on my team,' said the inspector with a smile.

'Ollie's a whiz in biology. He knows everything about animals,' Leonie said. 'And if he doesn't know something, he looks it up in the dictionary or on the Internet.'

'That's great,' the inspector said, deeply impressed. 'Why don't you tell your friend Pat and we can meet at the Pilot House Café shortly after five to talk about the case?'

'Okee dokee!' Leonie cried.

'The ice cream is on me,' said the inspector.

'That's not necessary,' Ollie said. 'The pilot house belongs to my grandfather.'

'All the better!' laughed Voss. 'But I've got to leave now. I've got a lot to do till then.'

## **Frogs and Crocodiles**

Pat was sitting at the kitchen table doing his homework when Leonie and Ollie Storm rang the doorbell. Their ears were red from running and because they had such exciting news.

'We're assistant detectives! All three of us! For Inspector Voss!' Leonie and Ollie both shouted when Pat opened the door.

'Shh! Are you crazy? Quiet please. My little sister is sleeping!' Pat hissed.

'Aren't you pleased?' Leonie asked, disappointed.

'Sure! But if Henrietta wakes up, it'll get very loud here! Okay, so go ahead and tell me all about it, but softly,' Pat said, closing the door quietly.

'We got to find a crocodile!' Leonie cried.

'It escaped somehow,' Ollie added. 'It's been on the loose for several days already. Inspector Voss has a lot to do, so he asked us to help him find it, since we know the area so well.'

'A crocodile? I heard that in the news,' Pat said. 'I thought it was only a joke.'

'We're meeting the inspector at the pilot house at six o'clock this evening. He's going to tell us more about it.'

'Six o'clock? I hope that mom gets back by then. She has a new job at an architect's office. Usually she works only in the morning but today of all days...' Pat said, his eyes flashing angrily. He didn't like the idea of having to babysit all the time.

'Can't your brother help out just this once?' Leonie asked.

'Sven's got handball practice today!' Pat grumbled. 'They're training for the finals.' Just then the telephone rang. Pat answered it. Moment later, he hung up and let out a loud cry. 'Awesome! That was Sven's coach. He has to be at a club meeting.'

Today's practice is cancelled. Sven can do the babysitting. Hooray! I can come with you!' Pat said, full of enthusiasm.

At exactly six o'clock the three of them were sitting in the garden of the café.

Ollie was right. The ice cream was on the house.

'Is this about your detective club?' Grandpa Bloom asked when he was told that they had an important meeting with the inspector. He was very interested in anything that had to do with his one and only grandchild.

Ollie nodded. 'We're working on a case!' he said.

'Excellent! And have you got a name for your organization?'

Ollie shook his head sadly.

'Why don't you call yourselves the ice cream gang,' said Grandfather Bloom with an impish grin.

'The name should sound a little more dangerous than that,' Leonie remarked.

'Besides, we're not a gang. The Frogs are a gang, not us.'

'And who are the Frogs?' Grandpa Bloom wanted to know.

'A gang from the trade school. Real showoffs with green streaks in their hair. They think that's cool. And they spray graffiti - pictures of frogs - all over the place!' Ollie explained.

'Are they punks?' Grandpa Bloom asked uncertainly. He wasn't sure when it came to the names of youth gangs and rock groups.

'Something like that,' Ollie replied vaguely.

'Some of the Frogs are okay. Two of them even play with my brother on the handball team and one of them does job training with him in the group. But some of the others are real creeps. They're always fighting and showing off,' Pat said.

'I see,' said Grandpa Bloom. 'When I was young there were guys like that, too. They hung around the harbor and were always starting fights. I've got a little souvenir to prove that.' He pushed back his gray hair and showed a bright scar just above his right temple. 'That's why I got into karate.'

'Your can do karate?' Leonie said with wide open eyes.

'A little,' Grandpa Bloom said.

'You got to show us a couple of your grips!' Pat said.

Just then the inspector came in and they stopped talking.

'Sorry I couldn't come sooner,' he said. 'But I was delayed. Some kids were raising a ruckus on Harbor Street and that crocodile is causing more trouble! My boss just chewed me out for not having found it yet. Damn it! The police force has more urgent problems than strolling along the Elbe looking for a crocodile.'

'It was seen on the Elbe?' Leonie asked.

'Captain Frisby supposedly saw it there this morning while fishing. Unfortunately, I haven't been able to contact him.'

'I know Captain Frisby,' Ollie said. 'He usually takes a walk along the river bank evenings. We can wait there for him and then question him. He's a trustworthy man. If he said he saw a crocodile, he really did see one.'

'Too bad you can't say that of everyone!' Inspector Voss said with a sigh. 'There are people who say they saw it in their garden or in the Alster. And in every newspaper

article the crocodile gets larger and more dangerous. Eyewitness accounts can be very creative!

Just then, as if on cue, a newsboy entered the cafe garden with the latest edition of the evening newspaper.

*'The first victim of the cruel crocodile?'* was the headline in bold print.

The inspector waved to the boy and bought a newspaper from him. Shaking his head, he read the report.

*'A child is missing. It was last seen in a garden in Blankenese. Its parents fear that the crocodile has swallowed it.'*

Again the inspector shook his head. 'What nonsense!' he said.

'But couldn't a crocodile - ' Pat began.

'Crocodiles *are* dangerous. No doubt about it. But I just happen to know that that child was found a half hour ago. Hiding in its grandparents' garden shed.'

'What can we do to help?' Leonie asked.

'Hunt for clues,' Voss said. 'Find out how large the crocodile is, where it came from, who has seen it. And when you find it, call me immediately. Here. I've got something for you.'

He pulled a small red cell phone out of his pocket. 'This is only for emergencies, not for ordering pizzas. All you have to do is press the speed-dial button to reach me!'

'Okee dokee,' Leonie said and her freckled face broke into a bright smile.

'And here is a pair of binoculars. You can search the Elbe with it,' said the inspector.

'Hooray! We'll start right away!' Pat jumped up and took the binoculars.

'Right! And good luck to ... what's the name of your club?'

'Uh, we haven't got a name. We're still looking...,' Leonie said with a sigh.

'Well, lots of luck to the club without a name!' the inspector laughed and said goodbye.

## **Eyewitness Reports**

The three assistant detectives met Captain Frisby as he was just returning from his evening stroll along the Elbe.

'Hmm, yes, yes. The crocodile,' he grumbled, when they told him about the case.

'This is no rumor! I've seen it myself. That is, I saw the eyes and the tail beating the water as it swam away. It was in the harbor!'

'You're sure about that?' Leonie pressed him.

'I've seen countless crocodiles in the course of my travels and am certainly capable of telling the difference between a herring and a lobster!' replied Frisby, looking a little offended.

'Nobody doubts that, Captain. The question is, how did a crocodile get in the Elbe?'

Leonie sat down next to Frisby on one of the benches close to the Elbe River.

Ollie and Pat climbed on the backrest to the right and left of them because the rest of the seat was full of bird droppings.

Captain Frisby calmly lit his pipe and then thought for a moment. 'Well, the crocodile has probably escaped from somewhere. Have you asked at the zoo? Of course,

there are lots of nutty people who have reptiles as pets. When their pets get to be too large, they just abandon them. It's irresponsible but it happens all the time!

"Is the crocodile large enough to be dangerous for humans?" Pat wanted to know.

'I didn't see it clear enough to say exactly how large it was. But I wouldn't want to take it to bed with me or fight with it for a fish,' grumbled the captain. 'Normally they attack only when they're in the water. On land they aren't dangerous. So if you keep to the bank during your investigation, nothing will happen to you....'

'It was a real crocodile and not an alligator?' Ollie asked.

'Hey! We've got an expert among us!' Frisby said, wide-eyed. 'Yes, it was a crocodile. Probably a marsh crocodile. If you would like to see a real alligator, I have one at home in my little museum,' Frisby said.

'No joke? A real one?' Pat's mouth fell open.

'Well, a real stuffed one. From the marshes of the Mississippi.'

'I'll bet you could tell us some exciting stories about alligators,' Ollie said.

'I surely could. Just come to my place sometime,' the captain said.

'We'll do that!' said Leonie and Pat and Ollie nodded.

'And here's another tip for you: ask Gee Gee. He sells the newspaper for the homeless on the landing bridges. He sees and hears everything that happens around the harbor. I'm sure he has seen the crocodile, too!'

'Thanks! We'll do that tomorrow right after school!' Leonie said.

The next day there were again warnings about the crocodile in the newspaper. A fisherman claimed he saw the crocodile right beside his boat early in the morning as he was sailing out of the harbor.

'It was as big as my boat, I swear!' he said.

Some zealous reporters measured the boat and concluded that the dangerous crocodile was at least six meters long! They called it the 'Harbor Crocodile'.

Parents were warned to keep an eye on their children. Calls made by concerned dog and cat owners, reporting their missing pets, added to the crocodile's bad reputation. Some people who lived on the banks of the Elbe got panicky and complained to the police. It wasn't long before Inspector Voss got a nasty call from Chief Inspector Justus Brenzlee. 'How long are you going to let a crazy lizard make a fool of you, Inspector? See to it that the banks of the Elbe remain a peaceful place. That's your beat, after all!'

Leonie, Ollie and Pat met right after dinner on their bikes at the pilot house and set off for the landing bridges to question their second important witness. Gee Gee was sitting on a bollard next to a staple of newspapers, eating a herring-bun when Leonie and her friends came along.

'Have I seen the crocodile?' he asked, grinning. 'I sure have! I'm eating it right now, right here in my bun.'

'Seriously,' said Leonie, 'Captain Frisby - he thinks a lot of you, by the way - said that you could help us. We are looking for the crocodile.'

'Is that right? The captain thinks a lot of me? Okay, well, I haven't really seen it but I know that it isn't as large as the newspapers say. There was enough room for it in a tin bath tub before it escaped.'

'Very interesting,' Ollie said as he took notes.

Gee Gee watched him. 'Just like a real detective!' he said with a grin.

'You might say,' muttered Leonie.

'Maybe you can tell us how the crocodile got to Hamburg in a tin bath tub?' Pat said.

'Not in the bath tub, of course. In a ship,' laughed Gee Gee.

'What was the name of the ship and why did it come here?' Pat persisted.

'Because it wanted to become a purse,' Gee Gee said with a wink of his eye.

'That's not really funny,' Pat said angrily.

'It'd be nice if you took us seriously, Mr. Gee Gee - that isn't your real name, is it?'

Leonie cut in, not wanting to anger such an important witness.

Amused but a little uncertain, the bum looked Leonie up and down. Normally, nobody gave a thought to his name.

'What's my name got to do with anything?' he asked.

'My name is Leonie Storm.'

'And mine is Georg Gutbier, Gee Gee for short. It's as simple as that.'

'Well, Mr. Gutbier, it'd be nice if you could help us with the crocodile,' said Leonie.

'Maybe we could help you to sell your newspapers.'

Gee Gee looked at the huge pile of newspapers beside him and sighed. 'Hey, that's an offer I can't refuse! Okay. Your crocodile comes from the traveling circus

"Miracoli", which was to perform at Moorweide Park in Hamburg last week. In the middle of the week, the circus people were unexpectedly invited to give a guest performance in Rotterdam and hurried to load the circus animals in the harbor. That's when the crocodile escaped. Its cage was probably not locked properly.'

'But why didn't they find it and bring it back?' Ollie said, surprised.

'Because it vanished in the blink of an eye!' said Gee Gee and made a wavelike gesture with his hand. 'And who would want to race a crocodile in the water?'

'Why didn't the circus people report what happened to the harbor police?' Pat asked.

'They were afraid that they would have to stay there until the crocodile was captured.

One of the clowns told me that his boss was even happy that the crocodile was gone. Its food bill was huge and it was difficult to train. Besides, it wasn't fully grown and when it got so large that it would no longer fit in the bath tub, there would be difficulties transporting it.'

'But you can't just take off and leave the animal in the Elbe,' Ollie said in an angry voice. 'It can't survive the winter here.'

Gee Gee shrugged and said, 'Sorry, but there's nothing more I can tell you!'

'Thanks very much. You've helped us a lot,' Leonie said.

Ollie, who had taken notes the whole time, nodded in agreement.

'What about your promise?' Gee Gee said, pointing at the pile of newspapers.

'A promise is a promise,' Pat said pluckily.

And so the three of them were busy the rest of the afternoon selling Gee Gee's newspapers, while he lay in the shadow of a tree on the bank of the Elbe, relaxing.



### Three Detectives Under Way

To his great disappointment Pat had to take care of his little sister Henrietta again the next day.

'Sorry about that, Patrick!' Mrs. O'Brian said to him when Leonie came for him. 'I've got an important meeting. Sven won't be here till after five and your father sometime after that. You have to take care of Henrietta! Don't let me down!'

Grumbling, Pat accepted his fate. Unfortunately, his father seldom got home before seven o'clock. He was from Ireland and worked for an American computer company and often put in overtime.

'We could take Henrietta with us. The fresh air would do her good,' Leonie suggested.

'Where are you going?' Pat's mother asked.

Leonie drew a quick breath. She couldn't very well say that they were planning to look for a crocodile.

'We're going to go skating. If Henrietta comes with us, we could pull her in the cart,' Pat said.

'Oh, yeah. Cart skating!' cried the four-year-old Henrietta. She always wanted to go wherever her brother went.

Mrs. O'Brian thought for a moment, then said: 'Not a bad idea. But don't go too close to the river. You'll end up coming face to face with that mysterious crocodile I read about in the newspaper!' She winked at Leonie, as if to say that she didn't think much of this rumor.

'We'll take good care of her,' Leonie assured her.

Mrs. O'Brian watched the three of them as they took Henrietta and put her in the cart that stood in the little front yard.

Leonie, Ollie and Pat took turns pushing and pulling the sturdy little cart along the path on the banks of the Elbe.

'Faster, faster!' cried Henrietta, as if the children were her carriage horses.

It was hard work.

When the path became too bumpy, they took off their roller skates and continued on barefoot.

'Let's take a break,' Leonie said after a while. 'I've got everything we need for a picnic.'

'Oh, yeah, a picnic!' Henrietta squealed and reached for the backpack.

'First we'll look for a nice place on the beach,' said Leonie.

'There's a great place just a couple of hundred meters further,' Ollie whispered to his friends, showing them a red marked point on the map of the city. 'It's only five minutes from here!'

'What place?' Henrietta wanted to know.

'The place for our picnic,' said Leonie.

When everyone had eaten enough and Henrietta was playing happily in the sand, Ollie explained to his friends what he had learned from Grandpa Bloom thanks to his clever questioning: One of his colleagues saw the animal here yesterday morning at five o'clock!

He placed a finger on a place on the map that was marked with a green point. 'The water has risen in the meantime. So I have to subtract the speed of the tide from that of the current. If my calculations are correct, the crocodile has swum from the harbor on our side down the river towards the North Sea in the time since Captain Frisby saw it. According to my calculations, it should be in this section of the beach where we're now standing.'

'Good! Let's start searching for it. Keep your eyes open!' said Leonie.

'Look for footprints, too,' Ollie added.

'What are we going to do?' Henrietta wanted to know. 'Footprints?'

'Yeah. We going to play 'footprints' - who can make the best footprints in the sand,' Leonie said. That was a game Henrietta would surely like...

But as much as they searched the beach segment calculated by Ollie, they didn't find a trace of the crocodile, not even a footprint.

### **Captain Frisby's Alligator**

Right after school got out, Leonie, Pat and Ollie went to Captain Frisby's house in Övelgönne.

'Did you read this morning's newspaper?' the captain asked expectantly.

'No,' Leonie said. 'I always get up at the last minute. I hardly have time for breakfast, much less for the newspaper. Why? Was there something about the crocodile?'

'You bet there was.' Frisby smiled. 'A sports company with a crocodile as its brand label is offering a reward of 500 Euros to the person who catches the crocodile without injuring it. They want to do an advertising campaign with it. And the Crocodiles - the ice hockey club - wants it to be their mascot.'

The three friends exchanged doubtful looks.

'Hmm. I don't know. Our crocodile as photo model or as mascot...' Ollie muttered. 'I don't like those ideas at all. In my opinion, it should be put in the zoo in Hagenbeck, where it will be properly cared for.'

'First we got to catch it,' said Leonie.

'Don't you dare try!' the captain said quickly. 'That's too dangerous. Let pros do that. It's enough when you find it.'

'That's what I meant,' Leonie said. 'As soon as we find it we'll inform the inspector with our red telephone.' She took the red cell phone out of her little backpack.

'Would it be okay to have your telephone number just to be on the safe side, Captain?' Ollie asked.

'Why, certainly,' said Frisby and dictated his number. 'If you need me, I'll come on the run - provided I'm in Hamburg!'

'But right now we'd like to see your alligator,' Ollie reminded him.

'Right. Come with me,' the captain said and led them into his little private museum.

What an eyeful! A collection of rarities from every part of the world.

Indian arrows and a real peace pipe of the Ogallala Indians, a sacred snake made of wood by the Maoris from New Zealand, a shrunken head from the headhunters of New Guinea, a stuffed porcupine from South Africa, an African voodoo god made of wood, a number of model ships and ships in a bottle, an Egyptian cat mummy and of course, the stuffed alligator, hanging from the ceiling like a chandelier.

'Way cool!' Pat whispered.

'I brought all these things with me from my travels,' said Frisby. 'Unfortunately my globe-trotting came to a sudden end. My shipping line went bankrupt and sold my lovely ship to some foreign company.'

'What did you do after that?' Ollie wanted to know.

'I went ashore and stayed put in Hamburg. My aunt Mila, my mother's sister, lived here back then. She was very ill. I took care of her and earned a living by restoring old ships in the harbor museum. When Aunt Mila died, she left me her house. I renovated it, enlarged the roof and rented it.'

'Otto Flipper, our mailman, lives in it, right?' Ollie said.

'Right! But now you want to see Fred, not Otto Flipper.'

'And who is Fred?' Leonie asked, confused.

'Fred is my alligator!' He pointed at the ceiling, where the stuffed animal was hanging over their heads.

'Awesome!' Pat's mouth fell open.

'Man, it looks really real,' Leonie said, stepping back.

'Stuffed alligators or crocodiles like this one used to hang in drug stores as decoration,' Ollie explained. 'It was thought that their strength and energy would have a positive influence on the medications and the people there.'

'That's right!' Frisby said, nodding. 'I got a letter recently from a pharmacy museum, asking if I would let them have my alligator to exhibit. But I kept him. For old time's sake. I brought him with me from a trip to the Mississippi. I rescued a cotton farmer from a crocodile when I was there. He thanked me with a stuffed crocodile from his collection. Well, anyway, I'm quite attached to my strange souvenirs. That's why I set up that little museum at the rear of my house. That's when my neighbors stopped looking on me as a screwball and started seeing me as a museum director!' He laughed impishly.

'Is a stuffed animal like Fred worth a lot?' Pat asked.

'To me, yes. My display items bring back memories that are worth more than money can buy,' Frisby replied.

The four of them were so absorbed in conversation that they didn't notice that two other people had entered the museum. It wasn't till they left the room with the stuffed animals that Frisby noticed the new guests in a side room.

Leonie had the impression that they had listened to their conversation and she looked at them curiously.

'The door was open and we thought it was okay to come in and look around!' said one of the young men. 'It is okay, isn't it?'

'Actually, my museum is open only on weekends,' Frisby said to the two of them, who had motorcycle helmets under their arm. 'On weekdays it's not worth the trouble, but since you're here, go ahead and look around. You can put your helmets on the window sill over there.'

"*Frogs*", Leonie whispered to Ollie. She had seen traces of green in their hair after they had taken their helmets off.

'Do you really think so? Not everyone with green in their hair is automatically a *Frog*,' Ollie said.

But then Pat noticed the mopeds with the frog stickers on them in the backyard of the museum. 'You're right, they are *Frogs*,' he whispered to Leonie.

'I was here when I was just a kid,' the bigger of the two said to Captain Frisby.

'I remember seeing the crocodile.'

'It's an alligator,' Ollie murmured.

The two of them took a close look at the animal.

'Are the *Frogs* on the track of the crocodile in the Elbe too?' Pat whispered. 'Maybe they want to question Frisby, just like us.'

Leonie thought about that for a moment. 'Yeah, maybe, because of the reward. Of course, they have every right to do so.'

'Do you think the inspector has got other assistant detectives?' Ollie said.

'I'll call him,' said Leonie with a determined look in her eye.

Immediately after they had said goodbye to the captain and left the little museum, Leonie took out the red phone and called the inspector. She told him about the status of their investigation. They had already learned that there really was a crocodile, they had also found out approximately how large it was and how it got into the Elbe.

'Great!' said the inspector enthusiastically. 'I knew that I could rely on you.'

'I have a question for you,' Leonie said.

'Okay, go ahead and ask,'

'Do you have other assistant detectives besides us?'

'No, I don't. Where did you get that idea?'

'Well, the *Frogs* seem to be interested in the crocodile, too.'

'The *Frogs*? They're more interested in moped racing and fighting,' said the inspector. 'We had trouble with them again yesterday. There was a brawl between punks and skinheads in St. Pauli and they joined in. I'd never ask them to be my deputy sheriffs! You don't have to worry about that.'

'That's a relief!' Leonie said with a bright smile.

## **The Attractive Offer**

Two days later Benno Marek's phone rang. Benno was a member of the local editorial team of the evening newspaper.

'Is this the editorial office?' a young voice said.

'It is,' Marek answered.

'Are you interested in printing a sensational piece of news?'

'Of course I am. That's my job!' the reporter replied.

'We could get you original photos of the dangerous harbor crocodile. How much would that be worth to you?'

Marek thought about it, then named a sum.

During the next few moments, the caller seemed to consult with someone. He then said he wanted a hundred euro more. Marek agreed and the deal was done.

'We're going to place today's newspaper next to the crocodile so you can see that our photos were made today!' the caller promised.

'When do I get the photos?' Marek asked eagerly. 'Before we go to press?'

'A courier will be there in an hour. If you give him the money, he'll give you the envelope with the photos at once. It all depends on you...'

'Okay,' Marek replied. 'But the pictures must be exclusive. Just for us, and nobody else.'

'Of course,' the caller said with a little laugh. 'Wait a minute! One more thing: put the money in a sealed envelope so it's good and safe.'

'No problem. Will do,' Marek promised.

'This is exciting! I hope it's not a hoax!' Marek said to his secretary after hanging up. If it was he'd be in deep trouble with his boss. But a true reporter is not afraid of taking risks. The topic appealed to Marek and if he could get an exclusive photo of the real harbor crocodile he would be a whole crocodile snout ahead of his colleagues from the competition. There would be fabulous headlines, the photo would land on the first page and the newspaper would sell like hot cakes. And that, he said to himself, was what counted in the end.

## **Gloomy Prospects**

Leonie, Pat and Ollie had once again spent the whole afternoon futilely searching the Elbe with the binoculars. And when they were in Ollie's room that evening, the binoculars lay on the window sill and they took turns scanning the river. The weather had turned bleak and the visibility was no longer good.

'Maybe our crocodile is dead,' sighed Pat and stretched out on the floor, dead tired.

'Nonsense! It's probably long since back in Africa! At home with its mom and dad,' Leonie said with a playful grin.

'Do you have any idea how far it would have to swim to get there?' Ollie laughed.

'You tell us!' Leonie said.

Ollie looked at the map that hung above his desk on the wall and muttered: 'About 6000 kilometers. If it swam day and night at a speed of 20 kilometers per hour that would take 300 hours, or 12 days and 12 hours!'

'I'd like to be able to swim to Africa that fast!' said Leonie.

'And I'd like to be as good at mental arithmetic as Ollie!' sighed Pat. 'My dad would be happy. He's always telling me Ollie is a great role-model for me because he's so good at the computer.'

'Hah!', Ollie said casually. 'That's no big deal. I may be a computer hotshot, but I'm no good at sport. I'll never be able to turn a cartwheel or do a somersault like Leonie. I'd get dizzy. And I'll never be able to draw or dive as well as Pat!'

'Aw, you can learn anything,' Pat remarked.

Ollie shook his head.

'There are landlubbers and water rats, and I belong to the landlubbers, much to my dad's disappointment. He has been at sea since the age of fourteen.'

Ollie paused in front of the picture on the wall, which showed his father in his helmsman uniform.

'Your dad looks great!' Leonie said. Well, sometimes the apple falls far from the pear tree!'

'What do you mean by that?' Ollie demanded.

"I was referring to the fact that you're a landlubber, not to your looks!" Leonie said with a giggle.

'You want a fight?' said Ollie.

'No, not a fight, peace,' Leonie laughed.

'Just you wait!' Ollie said and grabbed her by her red hair and started pulling.

Just then, the red phone rang. Quickly, Leonie pulled it out of her backpack.

'I've been wanting to talk to you,' the inspector said. 'Have you read today's newspaper?'

'I'm afraid not!' Leonie let out a little sigh and resolved to have a quick look at the newspaper every morning, something that seemed to be quite important for a detective.

'Some mysterious strangers have found the harbor crocodile and taken a photo of it on the bank of the Elbe - it's not clear where.'

'But we biked, skated and walked up and down the Elbe every day!' Pat cried from behind Leonie. 'We searched every centimeter of the area with the binoculars. How is it possible that we didn't see the beast?'

'Crocodiles are like criminals. they go into hiding when they're being hunted,' said the inspector. 'I'm afraid I can't get away at the moment. I'd ask you to take a careful look at that photo and try to find out where it was taken. I'm going to have a talk with Benno Marek, the journalist, when I return.'

'Benno Marek? I think I know him,' Leonie said. 'Mom took photos for him sometimes and I brought them to him. Could we talk with him?'

The inspector hesitated, then said, 'Okay, if you know him. Try to find out who he got the photos from. Maybe your mother can tell whether the photo is a fake. Anything is possible nowadays. Unfortunately, I have to leave right away for an important meeting in Berlin and can't go with you. But I know you'll handle things well.'

'You do? Well thanks, Inspector,' Leonie said.

'See you tomorrow,' said Voss. 'Good luck to you!'

'Now that's something,' muttered Leonie, hanging up. There was a disappointed look on her face. 'A photo of *our* crocodile in the newspaper!'

'It's not ours yet,' Pat remarked.

'Poor Leonie. You had set your hopes on that big reward,' Ollie said and let out a laugh. 'Or on free tickets to the ice hockey games of the Crocodiles?'

'Uh-uh, that's not it at all, you clown. It's about our first assignment and now someone else has upstaged us,' Leonie said in a huff.

'It makes me mad, too,' Pat said. 'But let's have a look at that photo first.'

'Right! Maybe it's a collage. Maybe they inserted an image of a crocodile into a photo of the bank of the Elbe. That's easy to do with a computer program.'

'Is there any way to know - ' Pat began.

'Yes! Check the original. Come on, it's time we had a talk with Benno Marek!' Ollie cried and pulled open the door.

The journalist Benno Marek looked up in surprise when the three children came into his office.

'Aren't you Anne Storm's daughter?' he asked when he greeted Leonie. 'Why sure. Who could forget pretty dark green eyes like that!'

'Sweet talker,' Ollie murmured.

'I'm not here for my mother - ' Leonie began, her face turning red.

'But because of the crocodile!' Pat cut in.

'You wrote an article about it - with a photo!' Ollie added.

'Oh, so that's what it's about!' Marek's eyes opened wide. 'Funny story, isn't it?'

'Sure,' Leonie said. 'But we'd like to ask you about it. Do you have a spare moment for us?'

'Sorry, I've got a lot of work to do. But I can arrange for you to meet with the editor of the kids' page.'

Leonie took in a quick breath and said angrily, 'We are detectives and we're investigating the crocodile case.'

'I see,' Marek said with a scornful smile, raising his left eyebrow. 'I wanted to be a detective, too, when I was your age. Sorry I can't help you, but as I said I've got work to do. You'll excuse me.'

Leonie stood her ground. 'We've been authorized to carry out this investigation by Inspector Voss.'

'I see,' Marek said again, surprised. 'Okay, please sit down! But I only have a few minutes.' He nodded patronizingly at the sitting corner. And then he listened to what the three children had to say.

'Hmm,' Marek said thoughtfully when they had finished, 'I had a funny feeling from the start, when the man called me. It was, by the way, quite a young voice. He asked me how much I would pay for authentic photos of the harbor crocodile. We agreed on a sum and after that, he sent me the photos.'

'Photos? They were more than one?' Ollie asked.

'Six in all. I chose the best one for my article.'

'Maybe it was an old photo,' Pat said.

'No. It's brand new. You can see yesterday's newspaper on one of the photos, right beside the crocodile,' Marek said.

'Who brought you the photos? A guy with green hair?' Pat pressed.

'It was a normal bicycle courier. He was given the agreed payment and then rode off. I didn't get to see his hair. He was wearing a standard courier bicycle helmet.'

'Can we take a look at the other photos?' Pat said.

'I guess so, if that will be of any help.' Irritated, Marek let out a sigh. He phoned his secretary and asked her to bring him the photos.

Ollie took a close look at the photos and the negatives and muttered, 'No signs of forgery,' he said.

'How do you know?' Marek asked, amused.

'You can tell from the shadows. They change depending on which side the object was photographed from. Have you got a magnifying glass?'

'I'm afraid not,' Marek said with a nervous laugh. 'I'm a reporter, not a detective!'

'Is it all right if we take the photos with us? We'll bring them right back,' Ollie said. 'I'd like to take a close look at them with a magnifying glass.'

Marek hesitated. He wasn't sure what to do because he didn't quite know what to think of the children. But he gave Ollie the photos in order to be left in peace so he could finish his article for the final edition of the newspaper. He asked Leonie to convey his greetings to her mother and accompanied the children to the elevator outside his office.

'Whew, he was glad to get rid of us,' Pat grinned as the elevator took them down to the first floor.

'What an arrogant guy,' Pat said.

'Do you believe that what he told us is all true?' Ollie's voice was full of doubt.

'I think so,' Leonie said. 'Why should he lie to us? Besides, what he said confirms our suspicions.'

'You mean about the *Frogs*?' Pat asked.

'Exactly,' Leonie said with a quick nod just as the elevator came to a stop.

As they were leaving the press building, a moped drove by. Pat got a glimpse of a sticker with a picture of a frog on the rear mudguard. 'Did you see that?' he cried.

'Hey! It was just a coincidence!' Ollie said. 'Don't start imagining things.'

## **Kidnapped!**

The three detectives studied the photo of the crocodile. Even with the help of his super strong magnifying glass, Ollie was unable to find any signs of manipulation.

'The photos are technically flawless,' he said.

'I'll ask my mother just to make sure!' Leonie said.

But Anne Storm found nothing suspicious about the photos either.

'You're disappointed that someone else got to the crocodile before you. I can understand that,' she said. 'But the photos are authentic. Nothing has been copied into them. They were taken one after the other, the light shows that, the newspaper can be seen next to them and you can see the animal from all sides.'

That afternoon the three detectives skated along the banks of the Elbe. Time and again they stopped and scanned the surface of the water.



'If they could find the crocodile, we can find it, too,' Leonie said.

'The Frogs or some other guys took photos of the crocodile, but they didn't capture it, that's for sure,' Pat said with a little smile.

'That would be too dangerous,' Ollie agreed.

'The photo was taken from land. I wonder why the crocodile didn't go into the river when the photographers were all standing around it?' Leonie said thoughtfully.

'Strange. It was in the very same position in all six photographs,' Pat said, wrinkling his forehead.

'Crocodiles are sluggish,' Ollie explained. 'Once they find a cosy place to sun themselves, they remain where they are until they have a certain body temperature. Only then do they go into the water to cool off.'

Suddenly, Ollie stood very still and hit his forehead with his open hand. 'You're right! How come I didn't think of that before?'

'What are you talking about?' Pat cried. 'Think about what?'

'Just a minute,' Ollie grinned, picking up one of the photos. 'This animal isn't a crocodile! Look at its teeth! It's an alligator! It looks just like Captain Frisby's alligator Fred.'

'And it didn't move...are you suggesting it is Frisby's alligator? Leonie cried.

'Now I'm beginning to understand,' Pat said. 'The *Frogs* who were in the museum must have stolen Frisby's alligator and used it as a photo model and sold the photos to Marek!'

'Deduced like a true detective - Sherlock Holmes would be proud of you!' Ollie said with a happy smile.

'Yeah, it sure sounds logical,' Leonie agreed. 'That's why they were looking at Fred so carefully when they were in the museum.'

Ollie studied the picture once again with and without his glasses and then said, 'If that isn't really Frisby's Fred I'll eat my hat.'

'There's only one thing to do: call Frisby and ask him if Fred is still there!' Pat said and grabbed the red telephone.

Unfortunately, Frisby didn't answer the phone.

'Let's go there! I'm sure we can see the crocodile through the window!' Ollie said.

'Okee dokee! What are we waiting for!' Leonie cried excitedly and put on her skates.

Ten minutes later they were standing in front of the little house with the crooked roof dormers and the museum in the backyard. They rang the bell but nobody came to the door. Frisby was definitely not at home. The window curtains were all closed.

'He's not here!' Leonie was disappointed.

Just then, the attic window opened. 'If you're looking for the captain, he's with me!' someone called out cheerfully. It was the voice of Otto Floss, the mailman.

And then the captain's head appeared in the window. 'Oh, it's you, the detectives! Are you in a big hurry or can it wait until tomorrow? We've got to band Otto's carrier pigeons today.'

'We wanted to ask you something,' Ollie said.

'Go ahead!' the captain answered.

'Is you alligator still in the museum?'

'Of course. Where else? He can't very well walk away, as dusty and dry as he is,' said the captain and let out a loud laugh. 'His old bones would creak something terrible!'

'Okay, but we've got to show you something. It's urgent!' Ollie said. 'Can we come up?'

'I'll come down,' Frisby said.

Frisby studied the photo the children showed him and muttered, 'Well, I'll be darned if that isn't my Fred! I can tell because of the black spot above his left eye.' Shaking his head, he started for the museum, the children right behind him.

He opened the door and cried, 'I knew it. There's Fred, right where he's always been!' he said, pointing at the ceiling.

Sure enough, Fred hung there in all his terrible splendor.

'And how did Fred get onto this photo?' Leonie asked.

'No idea,' said the captain, scratching himself behind his ears helplessly.

'Over here!' Pat said. He had been looking around for clues that the *Frogs* had kidnapped the alligator and returned it to its place.

He leaned over the hammock in the corner and pointed at a dark scale.

'If I'm not mistaken, this scale comes from the shell of an alligator. I think I know now what happened,' Pat said.

'Are you thinking what I'm thinking?' Leonie looked at Pat with wide open eyes.

Pat nodded. Ollie examined the scale with his magnifying glass and nodded, too.

'What's going on here?' Frisby wanted to know.

Leonie explained to the captain what they were thinking. 'We suspect that the photographer kidnapped Fred for the press photo. He used the hammock to transport him. We found this scale in the net.'

Frisby studied the scale and then examined Fred's shell. 'Right. It came from here,' he said. 'There's a tiny hole on his right forefoot. Just you wait till I get my hands on the one who did this! But - but how did he get into my museum?'

'We'll take a look around,' Ollie said, looking like he was entirely in his element.

The three detectives searched the whole museum for clues.

'He entered through the bathroom window,' said Pat after a while. 'It was left open!'

'And there were at least two of them. One person couldn't have carried the alligator in the hammock without damaging it,' Leonie said thoughtfully.

'That's two guys I'll beat up,' Frisby growled. He stared at the table cloth, which lay all wrinkled up on a little side table. 'I just noticed something. This table cloth wasn't wrinkled up like that!'

'It looks like the kidnappers used it to cover Fred in case they ran into someone on their way to the river,' Pat said.

'When were they able to enter the museum without being seen?' Leonie asked.

Frisby thought about that for a moment. 'That must have been the day before yesterday, when Otto Floss and I took a trip to Stade on the ferry. We wanted to buy some fresh fruit and new bands for his courier pigeons. We left the house about 11.30 in the morning.'

'That fits,' Ollie muttered after glancing at the photo. 'The day before yesterday was Tuesday. We had practice at the sports ground. The sun was shining. And yesterday it was cloudy. The photo was taken around midday.'

'How do you know that? There's no clock in the picture,' Pat said.

'The tree trunk that you see in some of the photos throws a short little shadow to the right,' Ollie explained.

'Yeah, I see it, too,' said Pat.

'Summing up: at least two kidnappers enter the museum through the bathroom window, seize Fred, put him in the hammock, cover him with the table cloth and - when nobody's around - carry him down to the river. A boat was waiting. They put him in the boat and sail to the place where the photo was taken. It is on the north bank of the Elbe,' Ollie said.

'And how did you figure that out?' Frisby's eyes were wide in amazement.

'What they did took longer than a half hour for sure. So it was shortly after 12 noon,' Ollie said in a calm voice. 'The sun was already a little in the west. If the shadow in the photo is on the right, that means - '

'Correct!' Frisby cut in. 'That means it must be the north bank. The shadow would be on the left side on the south bank at that time of day.'

'Wow!' Leonie said to Ollie, 'Said like a true detective!'

'It's only logical,' Ollie said, his face growing red. 'Besides, taking the photos on the north bank means that the kidnappers didn't have to cross the river. It was a lot easier that way.'

'We can find the place quickly with the help of the photo,' Frisby said. 'I've got a little motorboat. We can all get in it and drive down the river a ways.'

'Maybe we'll find clues left behind by the perpetrators at the scene of the crime,' Leonie said.

'Please remember that we're not looking for Fred, we're looking for the real crocodile in the Elbe,' Ollie reminded the others. 'And the kidnappers haven't found it any more than we have.'

'Maybe we'll meet up with the crocodile along the way, who knows,' Frisby laughed.

## **Searching for Clues**

Leonie spoke to Inspector Voss on the red telephone and told him about the excitement caused by the fake crocodile.

'My, but you've been working hard! I'm impressed by your commitment! And your talent for logical deduction. Some of my young officers could learn a lot from you!' the inspector said approvingly.

His praise made Leonie turn almost as red as the phone.

'Ollie is the one who's so good at deducing,' Leonie said quickly. 'Maybe we'll have found out even more by the time you return to Hamburg on Sunday! We're going to search the bank from a boat in the river!'

'Out of the question! That's much too dangerous,' Voss protested. 'If I hear that you did that it will be the last assignment you'll ever get from me.' He was obviously very concerned for the children's safety.

'Don't worry, Inspector. We've got a real captain on board! Captain Frisby will accompany us,' said Leonie quickly.

'Well, okay, that's different,' Voss said, relieved. 'Can I have a word with him?' Frisby assured the inspector that he would be making a harmless boat trip with no danger to the children.

'The children want to take photos of the coast and compare them with the picture in the newspaper,' he said.

After talking to the inspector, Frisby asked the three children to tell their parents that they were taking a boat trip on the Elbe with him.

Leonie asked her mother for a camera. Ollie brought his magnifying glass with him and Pat brought the binoculars. The little boat lay at anchor in the museum harbor.

Frisby insisted that the children put on lifejackets. 'It's the rule!' he said.

'The poor crocodile will get lockjaw if it tries to eat us,' Pat grinned and pulled on the strap of the thick, orange-colored lifejacket.

'Did you know that a crocodile cries big fat tears if it tries to swallow something too large?' Ollie asked.

'Tears of sorrow?' Pat said, straight-faced.

'Nope. Of stress,' Ollie said.

'So that's where the expression *crocodile tears* comes from,' Captain Frisby said, surprised. 'Now that's something I didn't know!' He started up the outboard motor and steered the boat around the other ships and out of the harbor. He waved to his friend, the harbor master, as he drove by.

'Who's all that on board?' the harbor master said.

'Three famous detectives,' Frisby said. The harbor master laughed, thinking Frisby was joking.

'He has no idea how diligent you are,' Frisby growled. 'I'm really impressed by what you've found out. Hats off to you! By the way, do you have a name for your detective club?'

Leonie shook her head.

'What do you think of *The Foxy Foxes*?'

Leonie hesitated, then shook her head. 'It's not bad but it would be a bit embarrassing. We prefer being foxy to being called foxy.'

Frisby laughed heartily and said, 'I'm going to turn off the motor here and let the current carry us along the bank. Keep your eyes open and your binoculars and camera ready.'

Leonie took photos of the bank.

Pat looked through the binoculars.

'That's the tree!' cried Pat suddenly, pointing his index finger towards a meadow on the shore.

'Right!' Ollie said after taking a quick look at the photo. 'That's the one!'

Frisby started up the motor and headed for shore. As soon as the water was shallow enough, Pat jumped on land. Frisby threw him a rope to tie the boat to the shore with, and then he helped Leonie and Ollie get off the boat before getting off himself.

'There was another boat here a little while ago,' Pat said. He showed the others the imprint on the bark of the tree trunk the boat had been tied to.

'Yeah, it looks like you're right,' Ollie said, rubbing his index finger over the damaged bark.

And then the three detectives, diligent as always, found still more clues! Empty beer cans were strewn about and a newspaper from Tuesday. And there was a cross next to the telephone number of the editorial office of the final edition.

'Hoorah! A hot lead!' Pat, who was the first to notice the cross, let out a loud whoop.

'Now we know that the kidnappers called Benno Marek from here!'

But Leonie found the best clue: an empty spray can with a frog sticker on it.

'Inspector Voss can find out if it's the green color the Frogs use when spraying their graffiti,' she cried.

'Be careful, don't touch the can! There might be fingerprints on it!' Ollie raised a warning finger.

Leonie rolled the spray can carefully in one of the pages of the newspaper without touching it.

'Now we know that the Frogs are probably the ones responsible for the photo with the false crocodile,' Ollie said slowly. 'But we still don't know where the real crocodile is!'

'If it's still alive,' said Pat, shaking his head worriedly.

Benno Marek almost lost his temper when the three detectives presented the evidence that his 'harbor crocodile' was nothing but a hoax. He had been duped. How embarrassing! 'If my boss ...,' Marek moaned. His sun-tanned face turned pale.

Pat grinned gleefully, secretly pleased to see the reporter squirm.

'I'd appreciate it very much if you kept this to yourselves,' Marek said with a sheepish grin.

'We won't spread it around, Mr. Marek, but of course we've got to tell Inspector Voss,' Leonie replied.

'Yeah, and Captain Frisby knows about it. He was with us,' Ollie added.

'He should keep it to himself, too. Who knows? Maybe I can do something for you and the good captain sometime,' Marek said with a knowing look.

Leonie winked at Pat, nudged Ollie with her elbow, then said, 'You can do something for us right away, Mr. Marek. Write a nice article about Captain Frisby's lovely museum! He would be pleased. A little publicity would be good for him.'

'He could certainly use the extra cash to beef up his pension!' Pat nodded in agreement.

'Of course! I'll place it in the weekend edition!' said Marek, relieved. He pulled out his appointment book and said, 'I'll go there tomorrow and take a good look at the captain's museum.'

'Perhaps you could write an interesting article about crocodiles, too,' Ollie said, straight-faced.

'I'm afraid I don't know that much about crocodiles,' Marek said with a twisted smile.

'Oh, Ollie knows all about reptiles,' said Leonie quickly. 'He could give you good informations. He was the one who found out that the crocodile in the photos is not a crocodile.'

Marek shook his head. 'Well, it was stuffed but it was a crocodile at one time.'

'Uh-uh,' Ollie said with a wide grin. 'It was an alligator.'

'Isn't that the same thing?' replied Marek hesitantly.

Ollie shook his head. 'Would you like to know what the difference is?'

'I certainly would,' said Marek, nodding his head.

'You can see the eye teeth of a crocodile when its jaws are closed. You can't see the alligator's.'

'Amazing!' Marek murmured. 'There's always something new to learn!' He promised to fulfill Ollie's wish and write an article about crocodiles.

The opportunity to do so came sooner than he thought...

### **A Sunday like any Other?**

It seemed as if half Hamburg was up and about, attracted to the Elbe by the glorious weekend weather. In the Pilot House Café, Ollie's mother Jenny and his grandparents were busy serving the many guests in the garden of the café. Two of the part-time waiters were sick, so Ollie was there, too, helping out. Unfortunately, he was preoccupied with the crocodile in the Elbe and was looking out at the river instead of watching where he was going. And then it happened: He had just entered the garden, carrying a blueberry cake, when he tripped on a tree root. The cake flew from his hands and landed on the ground beside him. How embarrassing!

'No big deal,' Grandpa Bloom, giving Ollie a friendly look. Just then, he saw Leonie appear, pushing her bicycle. 'If I didn't have to work in the kitchen, I'd go for a nice bike ride' he added with a sly smile.

'A bike ride?' Ollie's eyes opened wide in surprise. but then he saw Leonie and his face brightened.

'Mom has to work,' Leonie said. 'She has to do a photo report about a fancy wedding in Blankenese this afternoon and I thought that Ollie and I could work, too.'

'Work?' Grandpa Bloom shook his head. 'In this beautiful weather you should go on a bike ride instead.'

'We can do both,' Leonie laughed. 'Ride along the Elbe on our bikes and keep an eye out for the crocodile.'

'Hmm,' Grandpa Bloom thought for a moment. 'Why don't you have a look at the area around the hill at Swinesand,' he suggested. He had been a pilot and knew the Elbe like the palm of his hand. 'That's where we always looked for stuff washed up by the river. Perhaps your crocodile ended up there, too.'

'Great idea!' Ollie cried, suddenly in a much better mood. 'Wait while I put on a fresh T-shirt.' He pointed at the blueberry stains. 'Have you talked with Pat?' he said as he turned to go.

Leonie nodded. 'He can't come. Today is his father's birthday.'

'There's nothing you can do about that,' Ollie sighed. That was one of the few times he wasn't jealous of Pat because of his large family. He would have loved to have

lots of brothers and sisters like Pat, even though baby Henrietta often got on everyone's nerves. And a father who was at home at least on the weekend. Ollie changed clothes quickly and removed bits of the blueberry cake from his face and his hair.

Meanwhile, Grandpa Bloom brought Leonie an ice cream. He was showing her the spot on the map they should take a special look at when Grandma Bloom called for him to come to the kitchen because the espresso machine had to be refilled with coffee powder.

Shortly after, Ollie appeared wearing a bright white T-shirt.

'Man, oh man! You looked like you just stepped out of an ad for washing powder!' said Leonie, whistling approvingly. 'Downright dazzling!'

Ollie grinned and removed his bike from the bicycle stand.

The promenade was so crowded they had to push their bikes. After that, they rode behind each other, keeping their eyes on the river. When they came to a part of the promenade from which they couldn't see the river, they got off their bikes and went down to the shore to search it by foot. But as in the days before, the crocodile was nowhere to be seen.

'I was reading in my book again. They love warm, sunny places,' Ollie said. 'Mornings, when it's cool, they lie on the shore to warm up. When it gets to be too warm they go into the water. Today it's not really warm, is it? There's a cool breeze.' 'Do you still believe it's here somewhere?' Leonie sighed as they got on their bikes again.

Ollie shrugged. 'Maybe it's long gone, destination North Sea.'

'That would be a shame,' Leonie said. 'Our first real case.'

They still had several kilometers to go till they reached the place Grandpa Bloom had told them about. It lay directly opposite the little island called Swinesand.

But once again they were disappointed. Grandpa's insider tip proved to be a bummer. To be sure, they found a couple of crate boards, an empty plastic box, a bleached tree trunk and the remainder of a fishing net, all of which a tidal wave had washed onto the shore along with tons of gravel. But no sign of a crocodile.

Leonie had a picnic basket with her. She pulled out some fruit and sandwiches and placed them on a tree trunk bleached by sand, wind and water until the surface looked like polished silver.

For a few moments Leonie dreamed that she was at the seaside. Almost every summer her mother took her with her for a week or two to the Island of Föhr. It was wonderful! But this summer her mother had to make photos for an advertising campaign and had no time for a vacation.

'Look! Over there!' Ollie shouted suddenly, shocking her back to reality. 'Something's wriggling in the net!'

'Is it a fish?' Leonie cried as she jumped up.

'We should let it go and put it back into the water,' Ollie said.

'Yuck! I hate to touch living fish!' said Leonie. 'They're so slimy.'

Together they neared the net, which was hanging from the root of a tree. From the position of the floating balls attached to the net, they could see that the net extended far out into the river.

'Pull!' Ollie said as he took off his shoes. 'I'm going to wade in and set the fish free!' He took his first steps and was soon up to his knees in water.

'That's hard work!' Leonie was puffing and panting, pulling as hard as she could on the net.

Ollie came back to the shore.

Now they pulled together.

'A giant fish!' Ollie cried.

'A shark or something,' Leonie said anxiously.

'Dummy. There aren't any sharks in the Elbe!' Ollie let out a loud laugh.

They continued pulling.

'Maybe it's an old tire,' Ollie said.

'A tire doesn't wriggle!' Leonie cried, pointing to the swirls on the surface of the water.

Suddenly, they got a glimpse of scale armor, flashing in the net.

'Oh my God!' Ollie shouted. Shocked, he let go of the net and watched it glide back into the water.

'Do you believe that was, uh, is really our crocodile?'

Ollie nodded quickly. 'Seems so. It must have got caught in the net. What are we going to do now?'

'I've got the cell phone! I'll call the inspector immediately!' Leonie said, pressing the speed dial.

'Call Captain Frisby, too!' said Ollie nervously. 'He can come with his boat and tow the crocodile away.'

Unfortunately, neither Voss nor Frisby answered the phone. 'Frisby is probably at Floss's again!' Leonie said, disappointed.

'Do you have Floss's number?' Ollie asked.

Leonie shook her head. 'I don't think he even has a telephone.'

'It's a good thing that Pat is at home!' said Leonie. 'I know his number by heart! He can go over to Floss's and inform Frisby.'

'Good idea! Frisby can come with the motorboat and bring Pat with him!' Ollie said.

'That would be the quickest way to do it. Besides, Pat would be sore as hell if we captured the crocodile without him.'

Pat answered the phone right away..

'I'm on my way!' he cried when told what his two friends had discovered.

Leonie finally reached Inspector Voss by calling the harbor police.

'What?' You really found the crocodile?' At first, the inspector couldn't believe his ears. To be honest, up till that moment he had thought the crocodile was a figment of the imagination. Well, finally, his boss would get off his back about it. But still, the case wasn't yet completely solved.

'What are we going to do with the crocodile?' Leonie wanted to know.

'Good question,' said the inspector. 'I was just thinking about that.'

'Right now it's caught in a fishing net,' Leonie explained. 'It somehow got tangled up in it. But the net is in the river.'

'Leave it there, please. Whatever you do, don't get too near it!' the inspector warned.

'I'm on my way with help.'



'It seems to be quite weak from struggling in the net,' Ollie said, getting up close to the phone. 'Hurry, Inspector!'

'Captain Frisby is coming, too. He knows a lot about crocodiles. Pat informed him,' Leonie added.

'Very good,' said the inspector. 'Maybe I can get an animal keeper from the zoo to come, too. The crocodile could stay there for starters!'

He once again warned the children to stay clear of the crocodile, then hung up.

'Yippie!' Leonie cried and literally jumped for joy. 'We did it! We solved the case!'

'Quiet!' Ollie gave her a sharp look. 'You'll frighten the poor crocodile so much that it'll escape and swim away.'

'It's so tangled in the net that it can't possibly get away,' Leonie said.

Ollie thought for a moment. 'But it could get carried away by the current. We should drive some pegs in the ground to keep the net from drifting away.'

'But we promised not to go too close to the crocodile!' Leonie said.

'All the same, we should look for some wood for pegs to fasten the net and the rope in the sand with.'

They soon found what they were looking for. With the help of a large rock they drove the pieces of wood between the part of the net that lay on the shore, always being careful not to get too close to the crocodile. When they finished, Ollie rolled a heavy stone onto the net.

'It's moving!' Leonie shouted.

'That's good. It means that it's still alive,' Ollie said calmly. 'But it can't get away from us now. The pegs and the stone are a good strong anchor.'

After that, they sat and waited. Time went by at a snail's pace.

'I was thinking,' said Leonie. 'Putting it in a zoo is a good idea! The circus wouldn't want to take it back.'

'Yeah, it's a better idea than being the mascot of an ice hockey club or being used for sales promotion,' Ollie said, nodding.

'You're right about that,' Leonie agreed.

Just then, they heard the sound of a motor boat. Unfortunately it wasn't Captain Frisby or a police boat with Inspector Voss. It was a boat full of suntanned young people. Laughing and waving, they shot by very near the shore, towing a water skier. 'Whew! That was close!' Leonie said. 'I thought for a minute they were going to chop the crocodile's head off!'

The waves from the boat were now washing onto the shore and rocked the net with the crocodile back and forth.

'It's a good thing we secured the net,' Ollie said. Carefully, he took a few steps toward the crocodile, eager to see it. Its eyes were closed at first, but suddenly it opened them and looked directly at Ollie.

'It looks so sad,' Ollie said. 'Don't be afraid, we going to help you!' he cried.

It wiggled its tail weakly, as if it understood.

'It's not very big! Perhaps it's a young Nile crocodile,' Ollie said thoughtfully.

'You could keep it and put it in your bathtub,' Leonie said playfully.

'I've only got a shower. It'd be a little cramped in there for both of us,' Ollie grinned. 'Nile crocodiles get to be 4 to 5 meters long!'

The three detectives continued to wait, a real test of their patience. More than a half hour went by before Captain Frisby and Pat finally arrived, Inspector Voss in their wake. There were two men on board Ollie and Leonie didn't recognize. One of them was from the harbor police, the other was an animal keeper from the Hagenbeck Zoo.

'At last!' Leonie said as Pat stepped onto the shore.

'Sorry but I couldn't get here sooner!' Voss shouted. 'I had to wait for the others.'

'And I had to inform my friend Jansen,' said Frisby. 'He's got a cutter with a lifting crane. We can heave the crocodile on board with it. It's not very big, is it?' he said, leaning down to get a closer look at the animal.

'Thanks for calling me,' Pat said and gave Leonie the camera she had asked for.

'Crocodylus Niloticus - a Nile crocodile,' said the man from the zoo. 'With the right kind of care it can get to be quite large! The zoo will take good care of it.' He continued his examination. The net was wrapped firmly around the knee joint of its foreleg, making movement almost impossible.

'The net was a downright trap for that poor animal,' the man from the zoo said. 'The more it thrashed about with its forelegs, the more it got tangled in the mesh. If you hadn't found it, it would have died a painful death.'

'It's extremely stressed as it is. And probably hungry,' Ollie said.

At last Jansen showed up with the cutter. He fastened the lifting gear carefully under the net with the crocodile and then heaved it out of the water.

Leonie took photos of each phase of the rescue operation. 'These are for our friend Marek,' she said with a broad smile. 'So he can at long last write his crocodile article.'

'Right. This time it's a 100% real crocodile, no fake,' said Frisby.

Benno Marek was over the moon when he heard the story of what happened and saw Leonie's photos.

'You're almost as talented as your mother!' he told Leonie.

'She had to take photos of a bride today. I had to do the crocodile,' Leonie said, letting out a loud laugh.

Benno Marek wrote a brilliant article about the rescue operation. It was almost as if he had been there himself. And Leonie, Pat and Ollie came out looking good, too.

He ended his report with the words: 'I don't think our very capable detectives need to look for a name for their club much longer. They should name it after their first case: The Harbor Crocodiles!'

'The Harbor Crocodiles? Sounds pretty good!' Ollie said.

'Harbor Crocodiles. Sounds *very* good to me!' Leonie said.

'At least it sounds more exciting than *Frogs*,' Pat added, rolling his eyes.

The crocodile was well received by the zoo. And since all the animals in the zoo are given a name, the three rescuers were invited to the naming ceremony.

They were even asked to choose its name.

'Hmm. Big mouth, thick skin and sharp claws,' Pat said with a grin, 'Let's call it Henrietta!'

And these are the next three adventures of Leonie, Pat and Ollie:

Case 2:

**The Colibri Operation: Top Secret!**

Leonie's mother has photographed a brand new car model for the Colibri Agency. But her atelier is broken into and the secret photos stolen. Is it the work of industrial spies?

With the help of their sharp wits and their new Chinese friend, the Harbor Crocodiles manage to find out who is behind the theft and set Inspector Voss on the right track.

Case 3:

**The Mystery of Cat Mansion**

One day a cat suddenly appears at the detectives' clubhouse. It leads Leonie and her friends to a mysterious mansion full of cats. The owner of the mansion, Mrs. de Meer, has fallen and injured herself. The Harbor Crocodiles get help immediately. Later, when Mrs. de Meer asks them to take care of her cats and they have a closer look around the house, they discover that a dangerous secret lurks there.

Case 4:

#### **Blind Passenger in Danger**

Jim has come from Africa to Hamburg as a blind passenger. He is searching for his father here. But his father is on the run, hiding from the evil Black Uncle. Ollie, Leonie and Pat decide to help their new friend. But before father and son can be happily reunited, the three detectives must overcome many obstacles. Their cleverness and even Grandpa Bloom's karate skills are needed to solve the case.