

The Schnauzer Detective Agency:

The Case of the Missing Fox



My name is Digit. I'm a miniature schnauzer. And this is one of my adventures.

After solving the case of the cat burglar, I decided to open a detective agency. Solving crimes and helping people is fun! I have a nose for it. Ruff!

I enjoy a nice breakfast. Then Karen and Ted leave for work. It's time to set up the detective office.

I don't have any money, only a tiny supply of dog treats. Until I make some money, I can't rent office space. So for now, I set up in Karen and Ted's living room. I gather some of my sidekicks - Croaky Frog, Squeaky Squirrel, and Mr. Manatee.

"Croaky Frog," I say, "you'll be our Office Manager."

"Croak," he croaks.

"Squeaky Squirrel," I say, "you'll be our Receptionist."

"Squeak," he squeaks.

"Mr. Manatee," I say, "you'll be our Computer Specialist."

"I knew that degree in cyber security would come in handy," he says.

Croaky Frog and Squeaky Squirrel move the furniture around. Mr. Manatee sets up a web page.

"How will we get clients?" I ask the others.

"Croak," Croaky Frog croaks.

"You'll put up signs?" I say. "Good idea."

"Squeak," Squeaky Squirrel squeaks.

"Thanks for helping," I say.

Mr. Manatee types something on the computer. "I'll post an ad online and optimize the cost per click ratio."

“Write something on the Eastport Neighborhood Forum too,” I suggest. “Lots of people read that.”

A few hours later, there’s a scratching noise at the door. I bark out of instinct.

The scratching continues. I can’t reach the doorknob. How am I supposed to open the door? I look at Mr. Manatee.

“I can’t reach it either,” he says.

“I can fling you up there.”

“Oh no, you don’t.” Mr. Manatee starts to run away.

I catch him by the tail, give him a good shake, and fling him into the air. He lands on the doorknob.

Mr. Manatee grumbles but unlocks and opens the door. And in walks a red fox.

I love foxes. They’re so cool. “Welcome to the Schnauzer Detective Agency,” I say.

The fox sniffs the air. “I’m Mrs. Fox. I live in the neighborhood with my husband and five kits.”

“What’s a kit?” I ask.

“It’s a fox puppy,” she says. “Their names are Freddy, Felicia, Ferdinand, Fanny, and Bob.”

Mrs. Fox pulls a handkerchief out of her fur and dabs her eyes. “The reason I’m here is because poor Felicia is missing. I saw one of your signs. Can you help find her?”

“Of course. That is what detectives are for!”

“What did the fox say?” Mr. Manatee asks me. He can’t speak fox.

“It looks like we have our first case,” I tell him.

“Squeak squeak,” Squeaky Squirrel squeaks.

“Good point about the money,” I tell Squeaky Squirrel. I ask Mrs. Fox, “How much are you able to pay?”

“You will have my eternal thanks,” she says.

“That is very nice but we need money to open a real office and also to buy snacks.”

“How about I bring over some nice chicken sandwiches?” she says.

I give a “ruff!” of approval.

“Squeak,” Squeaky Squirrel squeaks.

I tell Mrs. Fox, “Squeaky Squirrel and Mr. Manatee are vegetarians. They don’t eat chicken.”

“I’ll bring a nice lettuce and acorn salad too.”

I give another “ruff!” Then I ask, “Where was Felicia when you last saw her?”

Mrs. Fox dabs her eyes with the handkerchief again, then says, “Felicia was out playing and wandered off. We looked everywhere. I called but didn’t hear any yelps or yowls. We even checked the storm drains.”

I take notes. Then I hit the streets.

I walk all over the neighborhood, listening and sniffing for Felicia. I smell the usual neighborhood dogs. They have regular pee spots where they announce their presence and what they’ve been eating. But no fox kit smells.

I go back to the office and tell Mr. Manatee to print some flyers with Felicia’s picture and our email address.

“That is very old-fashioned,” he says. “These days everyone uses the Internet. I recommend posting on all the social media and sending a press release to the newspapers and blogs.”

“Good idea,” I say. “But print some flyers too.”

Mr. Manatee gets to work. Meanwhile, Squeaky Squirrel runs into the backyard and tries to steal seeds out of the bird feeder.

I give Squeaky Squirrel a good shake and tell him he can do that later. We have a fox kit to find!

I go back out and search some more. Croaky Frog hops after me with flyers in his mouth. I pass them out to people and dogs we see.

The sun starts to set. I haven't found Felicia yet but we have to get back to the house before the humans come home. They might get worried if I'm not there. Also, it's almost dinner time.

“What happened here?” Karen asks when she comes home.

The furniture has been moved around, the laptop is on, and someone tracked dirt everywhere. It looks like schnauzer paw prints. I hope it wasn't me.

“We're trying to find a missing fox kit,” I say.

Karen doesn't speak schnauzer very well and thinks I want to go outside. Oh well.

The next day, I search the neighborhood again. Still no sign of Felicia.

Then Mr. Manatee summons me. “I found a lead on the internet,” he says.

Mr. Manatee shows me an interview with The Amazing Archie, Trapeze Artist Extra-Ordinaire. The Amazing Archie is performing in a traveling circus over by the mall. In the interview, he says he is training a sidekick named the Flying Fox.

Hmm. It's a lead worth checking out. The circus is only in town for a couple of weeks, and there's only a few days left.

I've never been to the mall. Mr. Manatee calls an Uber cab for me and prints the address on a sheet of paper.

When the Uber arrives, I show the address to the driver. He stares at me, then looks around. "That's very cute, but where's your owner, little doggy?"

I tell him I want to go to the circus.

He scratches his head and leaves without me. Why can't more people learn to speak schnauzer?

Fortunately, one of our neighbors across the street has a taxi business. He's outside washing his car, which he does several hours each day. I run over to the neighbor and give him the piece of paper with the address.

He stares at it. "The mall, huh?" he says. "You must be out of dog food. Come on, let's go. I'll wait for you there so you have a ride home."

He drives me to the mall. I walk around until I reach a big lot full of tents and scary-looking rides. The circus.

"Excuse me," I ask a man with big shoes and a red ball for a nose. "Can you tell me where to find the Amazing Archie?"

The red-nosed man leans down and honks a horn in my face. It's very loud. I run away. Schnauzers have very sensitive ears.

As soon as my ears recover, I walk around the circus, looking for Felicia or the Amazing Archie.

A man in a white coat stares at me. He carries a long pole with a big net on the end. “Hey, you!” he yells.

Oh no! A dogcatcher! I’ve heard about them. I run away as fast as I can.

The dogcatcher runs after me. “Come back here!” he shouts. “No dogs allowed!”

This town is so unfair. Dogs should be allowed everywhere.

I keep running but can’t seem to lose him. I see cotton candy that someone dropped on the ground. I grab it with my teeth, but instead of eating it, I fling it toward the dogcatcher, hoping to distract him.

The dogcatcher ignores the cotton candy and keeps running after me.

I run toward one of the tents and slip underneath the canvas. The tent is big inside but mostly empty. I smell popcorn. Yum. I love popcorn.

Then I smell a fox! On the other side of the tent, I see a fox kit. She’s watching a man in blue tights as he swings on a bar overhead.

I run closer. “Felicia?” I bark.

The fox kit looks at me. “Yes, how did you know?”

“My name is Digit. Your mother hired me to find you. She’s very worried about you.”

The man in blue tights does a somersault in the air and lands between me and Felicia. “Who let this dog in here?”

I bark at the man. “What’s it to you?”

“I’m the Amazing Archie,” he says. “No one barks at me.” He tries to catch me but he’s not as nimble on the ground as he is in the air.

Then the dogcatcher runs into the tent and points at me. “There’s that stray dog!” he shouts.

The Amazing Archie yells back, “Catch it and maybe we can sell it. Schnauzers are worth a lot of money.”

No way will I let that happen. I run around the tent while the two chase me. Around and around we go. I start to get scared.

Then I think about Felicia and her mother. I’m a detective and I have a job to do.

I nip at the men’s heels and run between their legs. The dogcatcher swings his net at me but misses. The net lands over the Amazing Archie’s head.

“You idiot!” the Amazing Archie shouts as he tries to free himself.

I grab one of the dogcatcher’s shoelaces with my teeth and pull it. He trips and falls onto the Amazing Archie. They both sprawl to the ground.

“You idiot!” the Amazing Archie shouts at the dogcatcher again. “You numbskull!”

I run over to Felicia as the two men start fighting each other. “I’m here to take you home,” I tell Felicia.

“But I don’t want to go home,” she says. “I’m going to be a famous circus performer and travel the world.”

“You can do that when you grow up,” I say. “But your mother and the rest of your family miss you very much.”

“I guess I miss them too,” Felicia says. “But they could always come visit me here.”

“You’re still too young to leave home,” I say. “You can join the circus when you’re older.”

Felicia’s ears droop. “But I want to join now!”

“Tell you what,” I say. “You can come over to my house whenever you want and practice with Squeaky Squirrel. Squirrels are very good acrobats.”

“As good as the Amazing Archie?” she asks.

“Better,” I say. “And by the time you grow up, you’ll be an expert.”

“Deal,” she says. Felicia follows me to the exit. I find a half-full bag of popcorn on one of the chairs and give it to her for the ride home.

Back home, Mrs. Fox is overjoyed to see Felicia and gives her lots of kisses. Mr. Fox is happy too. So are her sister and brothers, Freddy, Ferdinand, Fanny, and Bob.

And thus ends the first official case of the Schnauzer Detective Agency!

