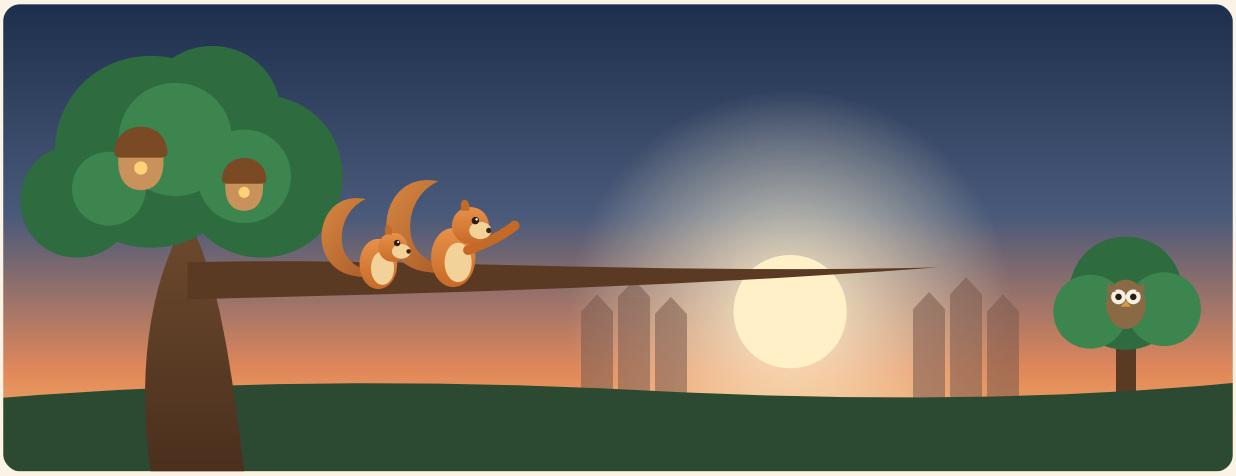
STUFE 1 – WAGEMUT (6–9) · WINTER

The Stolen Winter Acorn

Wipfelweiler guards a huge, gleaming **Winter Acorn** – both larder and lucky charm. This morning it’s gone: a cheeky **magpie** has carried it off to her nest on the old chimney. The young squirrels are to bring it back.

How it works (Level 1): Read the scene aloud. At the end the children together choose one of exactly two paths. When it gets exciting, a Daring Roll follows (2 d6 + stat). Nobody comes to harm: a Mishap just makes the story go a different way, no path is „wrong“.

Scene 1 – Setting Off from Wipfelweiler



The sun is just climbing over the big garden fence, and Wipfelweiler is already wide awake. Usually the morning smells of dew and fresh moss – but today there’s something else in the air: a tingle of worry and excitement. Outside the big store-hollow the elders stand in a circle, whiskers trembling, bushy tails twitching nervously.

For the Winter Acorn is gone. It’s their greatest treasure – gleaming like a little moon and packed full of strength and supplies for the cold season. And this morning its place on the soft moss cushion is simply empty.

Grandma Hazelwort, the oldest squirrel far and wide, dabs a tear from her fur with the tip of her tail. “Without the Winter Acorn,” she sighs, “winter will be long, cold and hungry.” A murmur runs through the crowd. Then the little tit pipes up from the neighbouring branch: “I saw it! It was a magpie! She snatched the acorn and flew to the old chimney – over there, where the Giants live!”

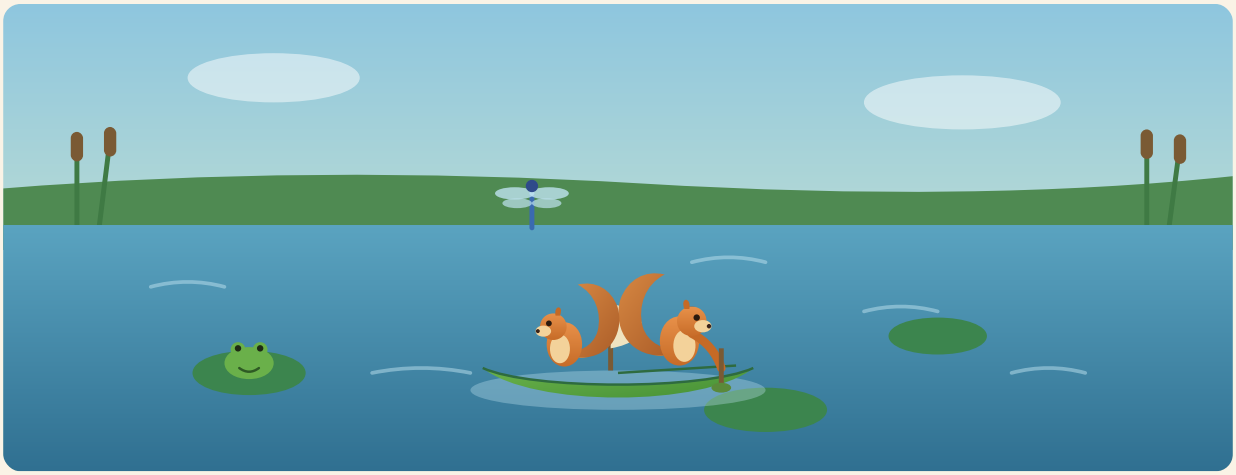
Everyone talks over one another. But the grown-ups are far too heavy and too slow for the thin branches right at the top and the long way there. And so, slowly, all eyes turn to you – the youngest, the quickest, the very bravest.

Your heart pounds right down to your paw-tips. “We’ll bring it back!” you cry – and already you’re standing on the outermost branch of Wipfelweiler. The world spreads out before you, huge as a whole kingdom: the garden, the fence like a mountain range, in the distance the House of the Giants. Two things catch your eye. To the left a trail of shimmering feathers dances away over the swaying twigs – as if the magpie had dropped them just for you. To the right, in a gnarled neighbouring oak, the wise owl dozes with half-closed eyes, the owl who sees everything and knows even more.

Choose one path together:

- **Follow the shimmering feathers over the branches** (Flitz) → continue at **Scene 2 – The Great Pond**
- **Ask the wise owl for advice** (Köpfchen) → continue at **Scene 2 – The Great Pond**

Scene 2 – The Great Pond



No sooner is Wipfelweiler behind you than something huge glitters up ahead: the Great Pond. To a little squirrel it’s as wide as a whole ocean! Dragonflies whirr over the water like tiny helicopters, pond skaters flit along on gossamer-thin legs, and right in the middle, on a lily pad, sits a plump, friendly toad blinking at you sleepily.

“Fancy crossing over there?” she croaks, yawning so wide you can see her pink tongue. “Then be nice and clever. Getting wet is no fun at all, I’m telling you.”

You look around. By the bank a big, dry leaf bobs in the reeds – almost like a little boat, and a broken twig would make a fine paddle. A little further on, though, lies a

whole row of round lily pads on the water, one beside the next, like green stepping stones all the way to the far bank.

Below the surface, colourful pebbles shimmer like sunken treasure, and a silvery fish curiously circles about. A pond skater scoots up, studies you with tiny button eyes and darts away again. As lovely as the pond is – you can tell that here every step wants careful thought.

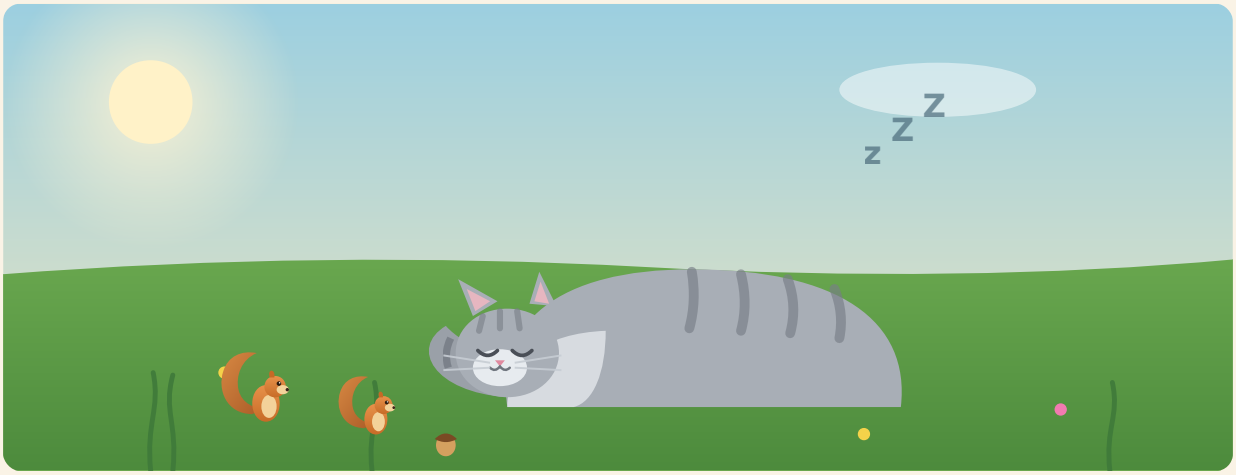
A cloud slides in front of the sun above you, and for a moment the pond turns dark and mysterious. Somewhere there's a quiet plop – a fish? You don't know. A duck cuts its lane in the distance and sends little waves right up to your paws.

On the far bank, you can see it clearly, the glittering feather trail dances on. The magpie won't wait. You gather at the water's edge, whiskers tickling with excitement – and work out how to get across dry-pawed.

Choose one path together:

- **Row across in the leaf-boat** (Flitz) → continue at **Scene 3 – The Dozing Cat**
- **Hop from lily pad to lily pad** (Pfote) → continue at **Scene 3 – The Dozing Cat**

Scene 3 – The Dozing Cat



On the far bank you shake the water from your fur – and stop as if rooted to the spot. Before you spreads a wide, sunny meadow. And right in the middle lies HE: a huge tabby tomcat, as big as a hill of grey fur.

He dozes in the warm sun and purrs quietly to himself, brrr–brrr, like distant, cosy thunder. His whiskers quiver in his sleep, now and then a velvet paw twitches, as if he were dreaming of something truly wonderful. Three lazy "Z"s float above him in the air.

You swallow. Between you and the old chimney at the other end of the meadow there is no other way – you have to get past the cat. A single blade of grass snaps under your paw, crack, and at once one of the cat's ears turns, listening, in your direction. You freeze … but he sleeps on.

A brimstone butterfly flutters over his stripy ear, and the cat snaps at it in his sleep, ever so lazily – and misses, of course. You have to giggle so much that you quickly clap your paws over your snouts. Just no sound now, no giggle, no sneeze!

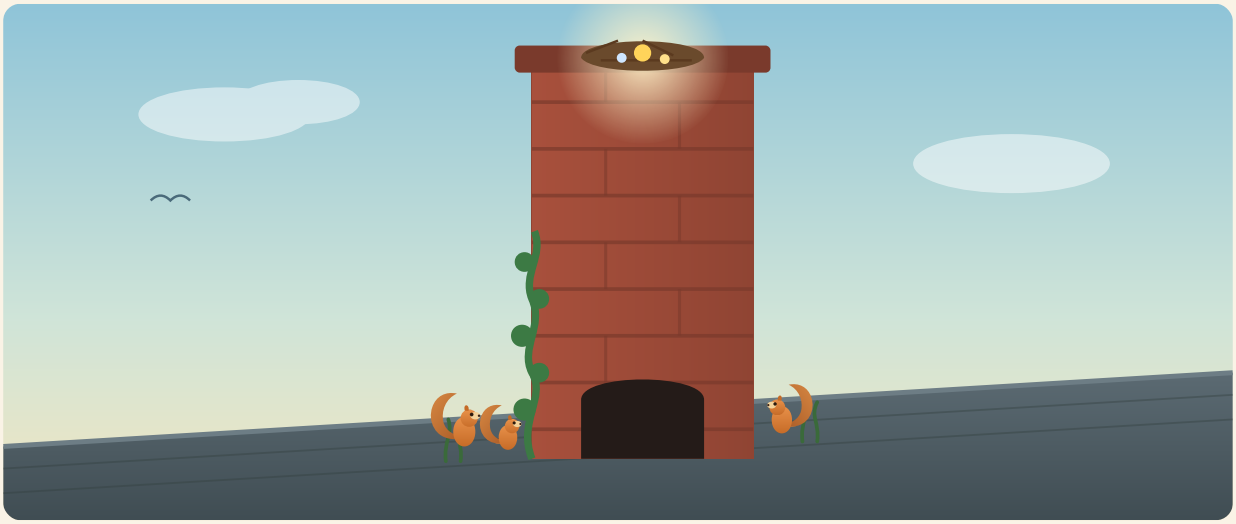
Luckily there are options. In the tall grass you spot a narrow, shady path where the big purrer can barely see you. And in your cheek pouch there's still a shiny acorn: roll it far across the meadow and the curious cat might chase after it – leaving the way clear.

The cat sighs in his dream and rolls a little to one side. Now or never. Very quietly, nose to nose, you talk over how to get past the great, purring mountain – without him opening so much as one eye.

Choose one path together:

- **Creep along the grass path on soft soles** (Flitz) → continue at **Scene 4 – At the Foot of the Old Chimney**
- **Roll the shiny acorn away and lure the cat off** (Köpfchen) → continue at **Scene 4 – At the Foot of the Old Chimney**

Scene 4 – At the Foot of the Old Chimney



At last you've left the big cat behind you. Beyond the meadow the grass thins out – and suddenly there it is: the House of the Giants, as big as a mountain. And right beside it, rising into the sky, the old chimney: tall as ten oaks stacked on top of each other, of red bricks that smell of soot and ancient tales.

You tip your heads back so far it makes you dizzy. Way up top, tiny from down here, something sparkles in the morning light. Between twigs and old wire it flashes and glitters gold – the magpie’s nest! And in the middle, you’re quite sure, the Winter Acorn must lie.

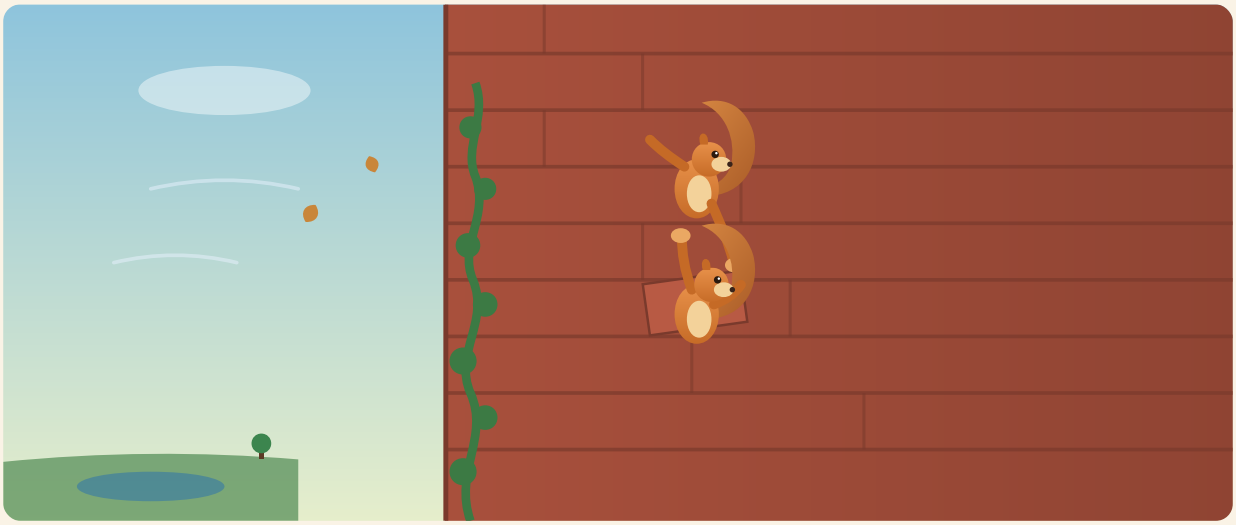
“Up … up there?” the smallest of you whispers and gulps. The chimney is cracked and mossy, in places the mortar crumbles. Outside, wild ivy climbs upward, with leaves like little ladders – good for climbing, but the wind whistles round the corners and tugs at your paws.

Your sharpest nose, though, spots something else: down below, half hidden behind a fern, a dark opening yawns. A sooty old flue that runs straight up like a secret tunnel. Inside it’s dark, narrow and smells of cold smoke – a little spooky. But sheltered from the wind, well hidden, and no magpie will see you coming there. You huddle close together, nose to nose.

Choose one path together:

- **Climb up the ivy on the outside – bold in the wind** (Pfote) → continue at **Scene 5 – The Climb**
- **Climb up inside through the sooty flue – dark but sheltered** (Flitz) → continue at **Scene 5 – The Climb**

Scene 5 – The Climb



And then, at last, up you go. Inch by inch, paw over paw, you climb the huge chimney. Soon the ground is so far below that the great meadow looks like a green handkerchief and the pond is just a shiny button. Your tummy goes a little fluttery – but you simply don’t look down.

Halfway up it gets really tricky. An old brick sits loose in the wall and wobbles alarmingly when you grab hold of it. A cool gust whistles round the corner, tugs at your bushy tails and makes you sway for a heartbeat.

Out of a narrow crack in the wall peeks a sleepy woodlouse, curls up in fright into a tiny ball and rolls away. Despite your trembling paws you can't help grinning. Then you pull yourselves together and climb on, claw by claw, always along the rough red wall.

The smallest of you briefly loses their grip and slips down a little – but at once there's a paw that grabs and holds tight. "I've got you!" you call to each other, and with a strong heave you're safe again. Suddenly the fear is only half as big.

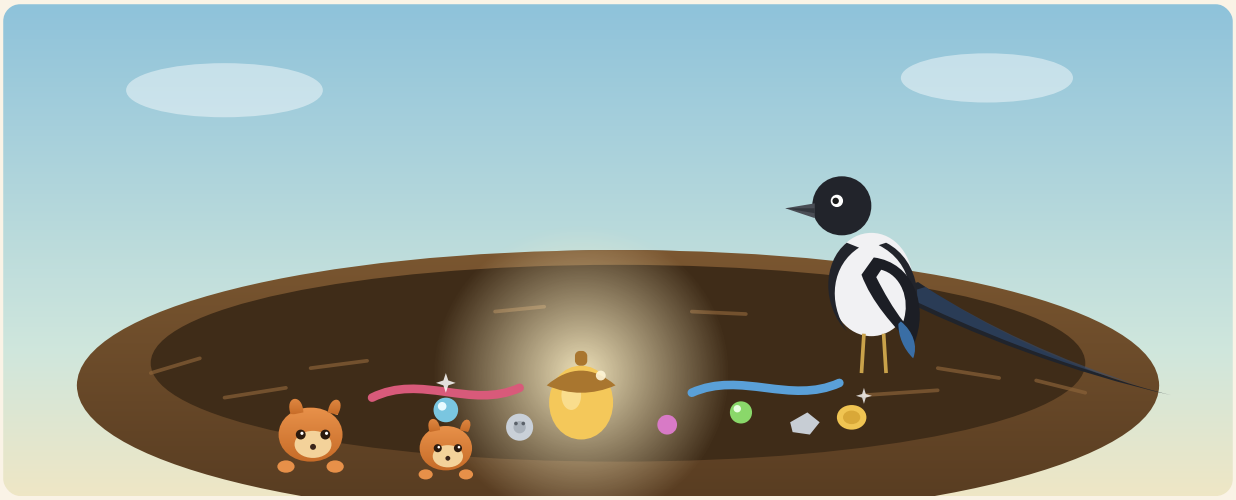
For alone this chimney would be far too tall and too steep – but together you manage ledge after ledge, help each other over the hard bits and cheer one another on.

Above you, very close now, you can already hear a soft rustling and jingling from the nest. Only one last, steep stretch of wall lies between you and the top. You take a deep breath and gather all your courage in your little paws.

Choose one path together:

- **Spring to the next hold with a bold, lightning-fast leap** (Flitz) → continue at **Scene 6 – The Magpie's Nest**
- **Brace each other and push up paw by paw** (Pfote) → continue at **Scene 6 – The Magpie's Nest**

Scene 6 – The Magpie's Nest



Panting, with sooty paws and pounding hearts, you finally reach the rim of the nest – and what you see there makes your whiskers tingle. The nest is a real treasure

chamber! Glass beads in every colour, a silver shirt button, a crumpled scrap of tinfoil, a coin that flashes like a little sun, and ribbons as bright as a rainbow.

Right in the middle, though, like a proud little queen on her throne, sits the magpie, preening her glossy feathers with a pointed beak. “Beautiful, aren’t they?” she rasps without turning round. “Everything that sparkles and glitters is mine. All mine alone.”

And then she starts to chatter, the way magpies do: about the glass bead she wheedled out of a croaking crow, about the button that glints so wonderfully in the sunlight, and about the very newest, very finest piece of her collection – a round, golden ball she only discovered this very morning. You know at once which “ball” she means, and you have to hold yourselves back hard not to cry out in shock.

For there you spot it: the Winter Acorn, half hidden under a bundle of colourful ribbons. It shimmers up at you so sadly, as if it wanted to whisper: Please, take me home.

The magpie isn’t really wicked at all – just terribly in love with everything that shines. She probably took the round, golden Winter Acorn for the prettiest treasure of all and carried it proudly home. Now she sits on it like a hen on her egg and won’t let you out of her bright, curious eyes.

You take a deep breath. You’ve never been this close to the goal. In your cheek pouches all sorts of odds and ends from the journey jingle, and in your heads the ideas whirl. For how do you get a treasure back when a proud magpie sits on it – without anyone coming to harm?

Enemy: Magpie (Puff 3)

Choose one path together:

- **Snatch it in a flash and flee on a glide** (Flitz) → continue at **Finale – Back in Wipfelweiler**
- **Offer the magpie your shiniest pebble in trade** (Köpfchen) → continue at **Finale – Back in Wipfelweiler**

Finale – Back in Wipfelweiler

And then you have it – the Winter Acorn, safe and warm in your paws! Whether you carry it off on a glide with the scolding magpie at your back, or cleverly offer her your finest pebble in trade – in the end you sail home to Wipfelweiler in triumph. And there such a cheer breaks out that the leaves dance!

Grandma Hazelwort laughs and cries at once, the elders drum on hollow nuts, and out of every knot-hole curious little snouts peep. There are roasted beechnuts, sweet maple sap and stories deep into the night – and you, the little heroes, sit right in the middle and get to tell it all three times over (each time a little bit more thrilling).

Later, when the stars twinkle over the Great Oak, each of you takes a shiny acorn and presses it into the soft, dark earth. “That’ll blossom by next time,” says Grandma Hazelwort with a wink. And so you snuggle down happily into your moss beds – already dreaming of the next adventure.

Reward: 2 acorns each and a great clan feast