

Pompon is our pet. He is a DRAGON.

Hehe! You guys probably think I'm making this up and that he actually is a dog or a guinea pig... No way! Pompon is the most real dragon, one which breathes fires and barbecues sausage links on a stick with his hot breath.

One day Pompon crawled out of our bathroom sink drain. He was tiny and bald — his skin was pink and transparent, through it you could see a beating heart and a piece of sausage lodged in his throat. He looked disgusting. At that moment Gniewosz was standing in the bathtub with soaped-up ears and when he saw the dragon's head in the sink drain he started yelling, that's when I walked into the bathroom. I rapidly covered up Pompon with the cup we use for rinsing our teeth after brushing. When Mom walked in I lied to her by saying that Gniewosz got some soap in his eyes and that's why he was yelling his yapper off. From that time on Pompon became our little secret.

When he was still really small, he always willingly sat on the corner of our linen chest and never strayed too far. I think he was a dragon infant who was very frightened by his trip through the sewer system. He slept all day, waking up in the evening, and coming out the chest. He would catch a fly or two and swallow them whole (you could see how they moved down his gullet into his stomach, yuck!), and he would let out an ugly burp, which sounded like a “hello!” He never answered any questions, so we came to the conclusion that he could not speak.

He quickly realized that he needed to sit quietly when Mom or Dad came into the room, and whenever the vacuum would appear he could not, under any circumstances, stick his nose out of the chest.

Scales appeared on his bald skin after a month — at first delicate as a fish's, later they thickened and became green. His paws, until now pink like a cat's, grew claws. We only noticed this when Pompon scratched the wooden floor and started to pull threads out of the carpet by the bed.

More or less two weeks later Pompon gurgled, he let out a bubble out of his nose and

said: prrr. And later mrrr... frrr... drr... grrrr, and he ended it with a burp and fell silent. At times, when I would wake up in the middle of the night, I would hear quiet sounds coming out of the linen chest, as if someone were changing stations on the radio — yelps, murmurs, bits of songs, lapping sounds, whining.

Finally, one fine day, after we got back from school Pompon blurted out in one breath: “peg, Greg, leg, flag,” and then, very content with himself, “mouse, house, blouse, crowds!” From that moment on he's talked as if possessed. He even knows foreign words, because he overheard them on television. And when he got the end of his tail caught in an encyclopedia, he yammered out, “Oh-secure! Oh-secure!” I think that's French for, “help me!”

Once or twice we came near disaster when our parents came into our room worried by the noise made by the dragon. Never before had I lied as much as when Pompon took a pot with plants and left streaks of dirt on the floor. It's a miracle that my nose didn't grow like Pinocchio's.

My mom thinks we have a obsession with closing the door to our room. She's right, we do. Otherwise Pompon would make a run for it, because he loooves to watch TV. For now he only gets out during the night and prowls the whole house. He steals gherkins from the fridge and perfumes himself with our mom's Chanel #5, which sits in our parents' bedroom.

We found out about these night trips only when Mom told us her dream at breakfast: “Imagine it, I dreamed of a small dragon who was sitting on the carpet. He barely stuck out beyond the edge of the sofa. His eyes shone in the darkness and — you won't believe it — he was spraying himself with my perfumes. This dream was so suggestive that I could feel the smell. He sprayed himself, burped, and whispered, 'hello!' and disappeared under the bed.”

We grilled Pompon about this incident and he spilled it all. He got so revved up that he accidentally confessed to firing up the computer in the evening and chatting on a group for breeders of reptiles. He gives out dietary advice. Apparently he tried to convince the others to feed geckos with gherkins.

We measure Pompon using the door frame. When he appeared in the sink drain he was the size of a small mouse and now, half a year later, he is the size of a guinea pig and is continually growing. Counting his tail, he is about half a meter high. One of these days everything will be exposed, there's no helping it, especially since nearly all of the flowers on the balcony have dried up, because Pompon goes to pee in their pots and Mom has launched an investigation into it. I don't even want to think about what's going to happen.

We have a new worry. Mom is cat sitting for aunt Michasia. It's a Persian cat, a gold-medal winner. That means he won some dumb beauty contest for purebred cats. It looks like the mohair hat of our concierge — it's hard to tell the front from the back. His name is Sultan.

He came to our house with a litter box, a bag of cat-litter, and a silver shovel for picking up cat poop. He also has two porcelain dishes for cat grub and they have mice painted on them. He has a basket lined with pink flannel in which he sleeps. That is, he would sleep, if not for Pompon.

When Mom let the cat into our room, Pompon was playing solitaire in the linen chest. Pompon really likes Solitaire so we made him a little deck of cards out of a soapbox. That's when Sultan walked around the room and then made a beeline toward the balcony and sniffed the pots with their dried up twigs. After a moment he knelt down and took a pee in the geraniums.

Right then a loud hullabaloo came out of the linen chest — Pompon raced out of the linen chest as if shot out of a slingshot, and with two leaps he was right by the cat, he jumped on his back started tugging his shiny fur, until there was cat hair flying everywhere. While doing this he used foreign words that I don't understand, but I'd bet that you won't find them in any dictionary. Sultan hopped around the whole room like mad, but Pompon didn't let him go and tried to bite the cat's ear. At some moment Pompon's tail found itself close to the paws of Sultan and the cat's claws squeezed painfully around it. The dragon jumped into the air and let out a stream of fire which licked the hair on the cat's back. The stink of burnt hair filled the room and the cat climbed our closet as if struck by thunder. With the hair standing on its back the cat snarled at Pompon.

From the start it was obvious that these two weren't going to be buddies. Gniewek tried to reason with Pompon, and even warned the dragon that he wouldn't get his beloved gherkins for a month, but this didn't make the slightest impression on Pompon. He sat under the desk and clawed at the cat, from time to time letting out fire through his nose and in the night he scratched out, "All cats are dumb!," upon our closet.

Sultan spent hours licking the bald spot on his back, as if his fur would grow back thanks to it. He refused to climb down from the closet for two days, whereas Pompon brazenly slept in the cat's basket, and even chowed down his Whiskas from a bowl.

Our Pompon is one tough little dude. It will be really hard to raise him into a decent dragon, after all, how are we to know how to do it? Yesterday I caught him shooting cherry pits from the balcony at dogs waiting for their owners near the vegetable store. But they didn't do anything to him — they're innocent! Looks like we have a gangsta dragon on our hands...

By a hair's breath Pompon was nearly unmasked. It's all because our dad was reading bedtime stories from *The Polish Fairy Tales* to us. Yesterday he arrived at the story of the Dragon of Wawel and, Skuba, the cobbler's apprentice. Pompon sat quietly in the linen chest and listened. He didn't shed a tear for the virgin eaten by the dragon, but when Dad got to the part where the cobbler stuffs a ram with sulfur and drops it off at the entrance to the dragon's lair, sobbing and the sounds of a runny nose came from the chest. Gniewek, whether he wanted to or not, took it upon himself, which really surprised Dad, because Gniewek is a hardcase who didn't even bawl when he watched Bambi. And when the dragon in the story got his fill of water from the Vistula and exploded into a thousand pieces — there came loud sobbing and so Gniewek had to play the role of his life in order to drown out the crybaby. We barely pushed Dad out of our room when the lid of the chest opened. "What are you guys staring at, I was moved," said Pompon while blowing his nose into a pillowcase, "and that cobbler, he's got a thing or two coming!," he added.

*Translated by Artur Rosman*