

CHAPTER SIX

Wonders and wizardry...

Ear-Wiggy stood waiting for the others who, after only a few seconds, arrived amazed and bewildered but none the worse for wear.

“I almost forgot what that was like”, said La’Wiggy, brushing herself down and straightening her beret. The three youngsters stood huddled together in awe of what was before them. They were absolutely dumbfounded. Not a sound, not even a murmur came from the three youngest piggies. They’d never in all their piggy lives encountered anything quite like this before. Ear-Wiggy and La-La understood perfectly so they left them for a few moments to take it all in.

After taking in their surroundings their attention turned to where they were standing. They were perched on a disc-shaped platform, which was hovering slowly in mid air. Still looking slightly shocked a quiet shaky voice came from the back of the platform.

“Where are we, Wiggers? What’s going on?” quizzed Swiggy. All around them were platforms very like the one they were standing on. Each of these platforms, however, was home to a tiny vivid blue shimmering pig watching everything the Wiggy Piggies were doing. Wiggly was trying to count them but every now and then a platform would shoot off into the distance as fast as a rocket. Try as she might she couldn’t keep a check on them.

The inside of the tree was huge - it went on endlessly into the distance in every direction, which should have been impossible, as it seemed to be nothing but a normal tree from the outside. Each of the little pigs on the platforms was performing different tasks. As one finished, the platform shot off and another one took its place. All the pigs were exactly the same. They all wore black spangly waistcoats and monocles on their right eye. Occasionally one of the pigs would take out a crimson trotter-chief, wipe his monocle, chunter to himself and then carry on with what he was doing, which didn't seem like very much at all to the young piggies. Twiglet tugged at Ear-Wiggy's trousers.

"Come on, tell us what's going on." The three were growing impatient and wanted answers immediately. Ear-Wiggy really didn't have time to explain. He was also growing impatient and wanted to see Whinola as soon as possible.

"Look, you three, I know it's a bit weird but try and take in all in. Do not be surprised at anything you are about to see. This a very special place - you will not encounter anything like it again. You are very privileged to be here, so make the most of it."

"That's all very well for you to say, but I want to know what all those little pigs are doing," quizzed Swiggy, looking at Ear-Wiggy impatiently waiting for an answer.

"They are recording everything that is happening and has ever happened in Wiggy Piggy World. This place is like a huge computer, a giant book of knowledge. If ever you want to know anything about your past you've only to think of one of the little pigs and all will be revealed. Now that's all you need to know for now," sighed Ear-Wiggy.

It was quite obvious that the three youngsters thought Ear-Wiggy's half-hearted explanation was a load of old hog wash. Wiggly was just about to ask another question to the exasperated Ear-Wiggy, when a faint breeze coupled with a strange and distant whirring sound soon distracted their attention. It grew closer and closer, louder and louder. Twiglet began to shiver as the breeze grew stronger and the sound became closer. A few moments later their vision was completely filled by a bright white light.

"That looks like a train," announced Wiggly. "Look it's coming straight at us."

"Do not worry, mon-a-mee, it has come for us," explained La' Wiggy. In no time at all the train drew up right by them. With a whoosh and a clunk, it stopped and gently hovered waiting for the party to alight. At the front of the train sat a very large Vietnamese pot-bellied pig. He was as black as coal except for his odd coloured eyes, which were smoky grey. There was something weird about them. If you looked very close you could see minute steam trains moving from one eye to the other. Each time the trains crossed the space between his eyes he gave a slight twitch. The sight of this was hypnotic to the young piggies, who were sent into a deep trance, rocking to and fro in front of the driver. The spell was only broken when the driver winked and the images disappeared as his eyes clouded over. He blinked once more and his eyes returned to normal. He wore a large peaked cap, and a fireman's uniform of red and gold. In his mouth was a huge cigar. He smiled at the party and said:

"Please be careful where you tread,
If you slip, this I would dread.
Sit down as quickly as you will.

You're in for a treat and a wonderous thrill."

The three youngsters followed Ear-Wiggy and La'Wiggy as they stepped carefully into the carriage behind the pot-bellied pig. He took out his cigar, flicked it and without any warning the train moved off in a gush of steam.

It travelled past the little blue piggies on their platforms who were so totally engrossed in their recording of history they took no notice of the passing train. The Wiggys were amazed by the train, which seemed to glide along on thin air. They would have been terrified if they had known that this is exactly what it did! Every now and then the driver tugged on the chain and a whoosh of steam came out of a huge gold funnel. He chuckled out loud, and doing so streams of gooey slobber escaped from his jowls covering his helpless passengers. The train was travelling so fast the Wiggys didn't even notice it.

Ear-Wiggy turned to the others and told them to hold on tight as they were in for a shock. The train went faster and faster. Everyone's faces were transformed to a blubbering quiver and ears were flapping all over the place. As they sped along the train began transforming into a bullet-like carriage. A glass shield embraced the whole capsule. The funnel disappeared and the train sped faster and faster. As it reached its maximum speed of 200 miles per hour the Wiggy Piggies held on for grim death with eyes closed and trotters clenched tightly wondering what was waiting round the next bend in this strange and mysterious place. Swiggy was the first to squint open his eyes.

"Ooh, this is brill! It's just like being at the pig-fair!" He was thoroughly enjoying himself.

“No it’s not! I want to go home!” squealed Twiglet.

“Do not worry, little one, you are quite safe,” laughed Ear-Wiggy.

Before they knew it the capsule had transformed back to a train and slowed right down before coming to a stop with an earth-shattering jerk.

“Oh, mon-a-mee, I feel like I’ve been turned inside out.” La’Wiggy stood up and brushing herself down she kindly helped the others off the train.

“Wow, that was exciting, can we do it again?” smiled Wiggy. Pot Belly took a huge puff from his cigar and said.

“Oh no, not now my little one,

What is here must be done.

I wish you well but I must go

Soon all these mysteries you will know.”

Pot Belly lifted his hat and with his eyes twinkling, waved them goodbye. Within a few seconds he and the train had disappeared into the inky blackness of the tree. They all stood motionless for a while waiting for the next exciting moment.

“Now, pay attention,” said Ear-Wiggy breaking the silence. “Take a good look all around you. You’re very privileged, you know, not many piggies ever get to see this.” Gazing into the darkness they watched as the tree slowly unfolded its mysterious secrets.

What surrounded the Wiggy Piggies was a huge dome, as far as the eye could see. All around was black, like the night sky. It seemed to go on forever and ever. Even beneath them it was black - they didn’t seem to be standing on anything at all. What was beneath them felt soft and spongy, but nevertheless it seemed safe and secure. Ear-Wiggy pointed above at the twinkling lights,

which shone like stars. They *were* in fact stars, in the shape of pigs heads. They all had smiley faces and seemed to be winking. The little piggy stars were outshone by a large bright yellow piggy star, which seemed to be busily counting each star one by one to make sure they were all there. When he had finished this gigantic chore he would start all over again.

“Well I’ll be a Wiggy Piggy,” sighed Wiggly. “I’ve never seen anything like this, it’s amazing. I wish I’d brought my camera.”

“Mon-a-mee, we knew it would astound you all,” sighed La’Wiggy.

Twiglet and Swiggy stood with open mouths, trying to take it all in.

“OOOH, look Twiglet, over there.”

In a hollow to the left of the party were hundreds of little piggies sitting at small floating desks busily writing away. They all wore red cloaks and had three-cornered hats. They were writing so fast that you could faintly hear the quills scratching on the paper. Every now and then the quills would shoot off to get a refill of ink and return so the piggies could carry on with the task at hand. They only stopped and looked up when a shooting star passed them by. But as soon as it disappeared into the darkness they carried on with what they were doing.

Over to the right in a hollow lay a huge cauldron bubbling away. Standing beside it was a funny old fat pig with a red and white polka-dot pinny and a huge purple hat. Every now and then she would wipe her brow and mutter to herself, then start singing in the most awful scratchy voice, stirring the pot as she went. Wiggly found it both alarming and amusing when the cook took her head off, plonked it in whatever she was cooking, then

fetches it out in her trotter and replacing it back on her shoulders.

“Did you see that, Twiglet?” shouted Swiggy.

“Well, sort of, but I shut my eyes, it was far too gruesome. Has she finished yet?” he asked, feeling rather sick.

“Yes, yes, Twiglet, it’s ok, she’s always been able to do that. Sometimes I wonder if she’ll ever forget and leave her head in there” laughed Ear-Wiggy.

“How could she do that? She wouldn’t be able to see where she was going, or be able to breath, or speak or anything else for that matter.” Twiglet replied.

“She has hundreds of heads, so don’t let it worry you, young un’.” Ear-Wiggy said.

“Please explain that to us then, Ear-Wiggy.” asked Wiggly.

“Not right now, we have to get a move on. All will be revealed later no doubt, right now I haven’t got time.”

“You’re an old spoil sport, Ear-Wiggy, we want to know now, don’t we?” scowled Wiggly.

Before Ear-Wiggy could answer there was a fizz and bright pink billowing smoke appeared before them. It drifted around and about them forming shapes of pigs, tiny at first then growing bigger. Suddenly, just like bubbles, they burst into mists of purple and blue, catching the attention of the whole party.

“Look! Look at that, Twiglet,” gasped Swiggy and Wiggly at the same time. “This is better than bonfire night,” continued Swiggy.

“What puzzles me, Ear-Wiggers, is it’s so huge inside, and on the outside it just looks like an ordinary old oak tree.”

“It’s no ordinary oak tree. This is a very magical place. It holds many strange and wondrous things. I’ve told you before, it would take forever to explain it all to you. Just pay attention, take in all you see and thank your lucky stars that you’re here. Remember, there are many, many piggies who will never experience this...or even have any awareness of its existence.”

“Isn’t this exciting, Swiggy, I can’t wait to see what’s going to happen next.” Wiggly was wiggling more than she normally did. She wasn’t disappointed. There was a sudden flash of lightning and a cloud of iridescent smoke followed by a tremendous crash of thunder.

“OOH I hate thunder!” shivered Twiglet and he scurried behind La’ Wiggy.

“Pay attention, little one.” whispered La’Wiggy, as the smoke cleared leaving them coughing and spluttering. When they had regained their senses they were left gazing upon a huge throne adorned with gold and silver. It was magnificent. Set with precious stones it shimmered in the light of the many piggy stars. On the throne sat the tall, slender, majestic Socara the Sorcerer.

“Is this him, Ear-Wiggy? Is this So-So what’s his face?” asked Wiggly.

“Yes it’s Socara, remember what I told you - don’t look directly into his eyes.”

They all huddled together trying their hardest to overcome their natural inquisitiveness and do as directed. This was no easy task for any Wiggy Piggy. He was indeed a handsome fellow - a tall and proud wild black boar. He had the biggest tusks imaginable which looked immensely sharp and quite gruesome. Sporting a long, flowing purple robe covered in pearls and diamonds, his billowing sleeves fell gently about the floor. This would have caused

him the same kind of problems Ear-Wiggy's ears caused him had he not been a mighty sorcerer. Around his neck was a huge collar, which surrounded his head. On his head he wore a magnificent iridescent pointed purple hat, which was so large it disappeared off into the blackness of the tree. His large black ears poked through each side of the headdress, and whispers of long red hair fell about his shoulders. On the base of his hat was a large ruby, which sparkled just like the jewels on his gown catching even the smallest twinkle of the stars.

He glared down at the piggies as he rested his trotters on the table in front of him. His throne was suspended in mid air, gently floating up and down on a warm breeze. At the foot of the throne sat a little pig resting on his desk with quill poised, waiting for someone to speak. Ever so often he looked up at the great sorcerer, as if waiting for some kind of signal. The Wiggys were transfixed by the sorcerer and found it hard not to gaze into his eyes. There was silence for a few minutes as Socara surveyed the piggies with great intent, his piercing eyes scrutinizing each one of them. The silence was broken as the sorcerer began to speak .

“Good day to you,” he said in a deeply haunting and melodic voice. “What can we do for you? Why do you pay us a visit? Why do you disturb us?” he continued. As he spoke he rose higher in the air. When he had finished speaking he descended slowly to his original position.

“We have come here to ask for your help, sir. We have had many strange things happen in Pigalilly-Hamlet over the past few of days. Things have gone missing, even Big-H has disappeared,” explained Ear-Wiggy, making

sure he did not look directly at Socara, which was very difficult indeed.

“We do not understand what you are saying; you do not make yourself clear. We are most intrigued to think that Horace Horatio Henry Hornblower Hog has disappeared.”

Socara was so amused with the facts brought before him he threw his head back and gave the heartiest of laughs. As he flung his hands in the air he seemed to almost disappear for an instant. He shimmered iridescently in the darkness, appearing to flash in and out of existence, as he muttered some unpronounceable and ancient words of magic. When he had finished speaking a golden beam of light as bright as the sun, yet gentle on the eyes, shot down from above coming to rest in the palm of his right trotter. As the light faded away Socara was left holding his magic wand - a wand of pure gold that buzzed and crackled with power. Waving it this way and that he produced silvery beams that floated and danced gently on the air. The beams turned into a misty image of Big-H.

“Wow!” they were left gasping.

“Look at that, its Big-H!” spluttered Twiglet excitedly.

“No, no little one. That is an image of the Big Hog. We can see he is still alive. He has fallen into the hands of a mysterious slayer. We think we need to call on our mistress, but before we summon her, please tell us more. *We* are most curious.” He stood up for the first time, signalling to the little pig sitting at the desk in front of him. He waved his wand in a complicated pattern in the air again.

“But wait, *we* will give you the insight of our mind.” Socara paused for a second, and then continued. “For just a moment you will be able to see through our eyes. This privilege is not for the faint-hearted.”

“Oooer! I don’t like the sound of this,” winced Swiggy, clutching hold of his bag.

“No, me neither. I don’t want to look at him, them or anyone; I just want to go home.” Wiggly couldn’t make head or tail of the sorcerer. She was totally confused.

“*Pay attention,*” he growled, “We are not in the habit of waiting, and you may look directly at us without fear.” Socara was most displeased; he sighed in a most agitated manner. With another wave of his wand the atmosphere changed completely. An invisible and unseen force they were powerless to resist made the Wiggy Piggies look directly at Socara. There before them was a screen of shimmering light. It was as if they were looking through a beautiful waterfall full of the magnificent colours of a rainbow. No sound could be heard, not even a ripple. As the water fell it changed from red to gold, then to blue then green and yellow. It shimmered gently before them.

They could see into the great sorcerer’s eyes; it was like gazing into a deep bottomless well - mysterious and never-ending. Ear-Wiggy was mesmerised, he found himself unable to stop telling the sorcerer what had happened back at Pigalilly-Hamlet. The others were dreading the long tale, but amazingly they were completely unaware of Ear-Wiggy speaking. Instead they were mesmerised by the melodic sound of flutes playing softly and whispers of bird song that was totally hypnotising. With astounding speed the tale had been told. The little piggy in front of Socara hurriedly wrote

down everything that Ear-Wiggy had said. As he finished there was a thunderous flash and everything was back as before.

“Ha ha,” laughed Socara, as he sat back down. “What an astounding story. You are all certainly in a predicament. We will do something for you, but be aware, Wiggy’s, it will not be easy.” Socara threw back his head and blew with all his might onto his wand. “We now summon you, mighty Whinola. Come to the aid of Pigalilly-Hamlet.” With a wave of his wand and a mutter of seemingly unintelligible words he was gone and in his place sat the professor.

“Ear-Wiggy, why does Socara always say ‘we’ this and ‘we’ that? He’s weird, I only saw one of him, didn’t you?” whispered Twiglet.

“Yes, of course. I don’t really know why he talks like that, Twiggers, it’s this place – it’s not like any other and it has strange goings-on. Don’t worry, perhaps we will find out later,” he said.

Before Twiglet could ask any more questions, Whinola gently sat down in Socara’s place.