

*A gift to my friend
The Wizard*

The Magical Book of Ways



*by, Equalens Dragonis Graffias
Asellus Borealis Regulus*

"EDGAR"

The Last of the Great Dragons



EDGAR
Equalens Dragonis Graffias Asellus Borealis Ragulus
but.....you can call me EDGAR

*My Utmost Gratitude to EPAS for finding me and my Magical Friends
in the Annals of Ancient Time and Thought*

*"My Magical Book of Ways," has been Gifted to a True Wizard and Storyteller,
Tony Bullock*

*With the Help of a friend to do the graphic art work and drawings.
Alice Christine, "Christy"*

The Way of the Wizard



Hellooooo children, and welcome to the Tales of the Wizard; that is me, by the way.

Do you believe in magic? Do the fairies, elves, dragons and all the other characters come to life when you curl up in bed at night and read your book? Of course they do.

Nothing is beyond belief in the world of children because you are special, you hold the magic in your soul, and only those with the gift of magic know of the mysterious wonders hidden in the words and pictures.

I too believe, for I have not only seen these wonderful creatures, they are a part of my life and I've watched as they go about their busy lives making the world a better place for all of us, for they know that when they bring joy to the children the whole world smiles.

To all the parents who regularly experience the pleasure of reading to their children I give my heartfelt thanks. You are making the task of my mystical friends so much easier and the joy that you are giving will be returned ten-fold as your children grow up to be happy and well adjusted adults.

The Tales of the Wizard

These are my little stories taken from inside my magical **Book of Ways**.

Before we go on I must introduce some of the friends who are always with me on my journeys and take me into the magical wonderland where only children and those who carry magic in their soul can go.

First of all, I am the Wizard. Yes, a real live wizard with a funny pointy hat, and I can do magic stuff to make everything look good even on those miserable cold days when you have to stay indoors and watch the rain beating against the window panes. "Elliott" Ness and Muffin are my two little dogs. I wouldn't go anywhere without them because they carry all the magic that I can't fit into my pockets, and what good would a wizard be if he didn't have a never-ending supply of magic spells.

Belle is around here somewhere; ah, here she comes, I always know when she's around because she's always singing. As you can see she is a little bear, and she looks just like your favorite teddy, but she's not just any bear, Belle is really, really special. She too, like all my friends, carries magic wherever she goes and, here's a surprise, she can dance. Whenever she isn't sleeping or learning new things from her wise old Pa she pirouettes through the woodlands and practices all the new steps that she will need to know before she can fulfill her ambition to become a ballerina.

Then of course there is Elliott Ness and Muffin. My trusted apprentices, Their adventures are enough to keep the best of us guessing.

Frisco Robin Bear is another of my pals who comes and goes on the magical tour. He discovered the Mollyflies were alive and well and living in the middle of New Mexico.

Who are the Mollyflies, you ask, well they are the Dragon's babies.

Now and again Ole Man Whale and Mama Dew the Polar Bear call by to talk about The Truth About Forever,

their tale of creation.

And of course where would I be without EDGAR.

Equu;lens Dragons Graffias Asellus Borealis Ragulus, EDGAR for short. He is the last of the male Dragons and he and the boy, Ryan are off on adventure after adventure saving the children of the world from the mundane and the thoughtless places where magic does not live.

There are lots more of these wonderful characters who fill my life with fun and games, so many in fact that I can't fit them all onto one page, so I've decided to come back into your computer every month and bring a few more with me each time, and when I do we'll all go on a Magical Mystery Tour and see all the wonders of the world through their eyes, so get your milk and cookies; make yourself comfortable, and we'll begin with the cast of Characters.

Then when we next meet it will be the story of Belle, the Bearfoot Ballerina.



Cast of Characters

Front Row: Pa Bear, Belle the Bearfoot Ballerina, and Frisco Robin

Middle Row: Muffin, Elliott Ness and Mama Dew the Polar Bear

Back Row: Ole Man Whale, the Mollyfly, and The Wizard

All the creatures of the Magical Realm

and *EDGAR*

Well children as you can see there are many-many stories yet to come and many-many friends who make up the cast of characters to experience.

And how wonderful I have arrived at this very moment at this special time of the year to promise each of you a new story each month. Every one shall be tied nicely with a Christmas Ribbon lasting all the year, to be opened each month and read over and over again. In 12 months time you can have a storybook that you can re-visit as often as you like

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artist rendition of Sept 15, 2008 GRB o8o319B

The Way of the Wizard



Hellooooo again children. As I promised here I am again with the first of my little stories. The first time we met I told you just a bit about Belle, my magical little bear. Now I'm going to tell you a bit more about this magical little being, but first let me ask you a question. Do you have a teddy bear?....Yes, I thought so, and do you believe it's a magical teddy bear?.... Yes again, it must be because when you go to bed at night your teddy helps you go to sleep, and when you wake up in the morning there it is, wide awake and ready for another day of fun. All teddy bears have this special gift, each one holds a little bit of magic, and all that magic comes from one source, the heart of a little dancing bear called Belle. She is such a happy and carefree bear that she can make enough magic to spread right around the world. Well, Belle is one of my magical friends and she brings fun and laughter, not only into my life but also to children everywhere. Now, are you having milk and cookies?.... Good, before I go to bed I always have lemonade and honey cakes made especially for me by more of my friends. Maybe when I bring them to meet you they'll make an extra batch and we can share. Anyway, let's get on with the story before you fall asleep.

The Tales of the Wizard taken from inside my magical Book of Ways



Belle's Story

Belle was really a special bear child, right from the day of her birth in the cave alongside the woodlands where she wandered with her Mother, Clinnie Mae, and learned of all the mysteries of life. Her parents could never have guessed how special their little child was. The music that filled her life from dawn to dusk and lulled her to sleep at night was inaudible to their ears, but Belle could hear every note in the whisper of the breeze in the tall pines or the tinkle of the clear waters that flowed over the rocks of the stream where she bathed each morning. Fireflies and dragonflies hummed the melody for her forest orchestra. Woodpeckers tapped the rhythm on a hollow tree and a choir of songbirds sang the magical words that would bring out the sun each morning.

So began each day for Belle.

One day, as she danced through the grass bordering the garden her Pa took a rest from weeding between the rows of sweet turnips and watched her thoughtfully.

"You know," he said sadly. "There are millions of children around the world who will never know how much fun life can be. If only we could come up with a way to spread some of your joy to them it would be a much happier place."

Millions of children who don't sing and dance? That was almost unbelievable to Belle, who had, until then, thought that everyone lived their lives as she did,

"But there must be a way Pa" she said thoughtfully. "If I can find so much to be happy about then there's no reason why I can't share it with others."

"Well, if you can find the answer," Pa smiled, "you'll be the first." With that he went back to his work leaving Belle to figure out a way.



She picked a sweet grape from the vine by the gate, popped in her mouth and let the sweet juice flow over tongue as she wandered off to the stream. Her mind was turmoil of ideas but none that she thought would work. A dragonfly buzzed around her head as she sat on the warm grass and slipped off her dancing shoes before dipping her toes in the cool water. In a moment she drifted into peaceful sleep, something she often did when she was unable to work out something that was worrying her. Her Mother had once told her that if you sleep on a problem the answer will come when you wake up, so that's what she always tried to do.

After a few minutes she woke suddenly, her toes were cold and she still didn't have the answer to her problem. With a sigh she stood up and walked around barefoot on the warm earth. Then she stopped in surprise, her toes were tingling, that was something she hadn't experienced before. Slowly Belle rubbed her feet in the soil, letting it trickle between her toes. As she did so visions started to come into her mind, children, thousands of them, some happy and smiling, others sad and wistful, and she knew that this was what her Pa meant. These were the children he'd talked about, the ones she must somehow reach out to and pass on the secret of happiness. She began to sing and dance, slowly at first, then as the tingling in her feet became more exciting she whirled faster and faster, spinning until even the grass joined in and swayed with the rhythm of her song. Now the visions in her mind began to change. More smiling faces, more happiness, but still, far in the background there were others who she wasn't reaching. There had to be a way to get through to them. With a sigh she sat down once again to think. Unknown to Belle there was another player in the story, one who had been around since time began, and he held the answer to her problem.

Far out from land in a place called the Gulf of Mexico a giant form twisted lazily in the warm water. The Blue Whale heard Belle's song and it awoke memories of times long gone when he too had travelled the world. From his throat there came a deep humming sound which swelled until it created ripples in the calm ocean. Quickly these ripples spread, gaining strength and moving outwards towards distant shores, and as it moved it the sounds of Belle's tune became the song of the Whale and echoed in the depths. The song of love and happiness which had been the first music to be heard on the earth now, thanks to a little dancing bear in the forests of America, was to be heard again.

When Belle went to bed that night she had a feeling of peace that even she had never felt before. In some mysterious way, how, she would never know.. her song had travelled to those distant places that she would never see, and children who had never known happiness could now share in her joy of living. From that day on she always danced bare foot. She knew that by doing so she could spread the happiness she felt all the way through the warm earth, and children even in the remotest corners of the world would feel the tingle in their toes and know the joys of living that made her life so much fun.



Well, I can see your eyes are closing now, so it must be time for me to tiptoe away and let teddy take you to dream world. Sleep well little ones, tomorrow is waiting with more magic just for you.

The Way of the Wizard



Hellooo children.

I hope you have all received the best of presents from Santa and had a great start to the New Year. Now, if you've all had your milk and cookies it's once again time for a story, this time it's about my two little companions, Ness and Muffin, and their latest adventure in New Zealand.

Now, for those of you who haven't started to learn geography yet, New Zealand is a small country in the Pacific Ocean, about one thousand miles east of Australia. It's a place of mountains and valleys, rivers and forests, surrounded by sandy beaches and blue seas. Being in the southern hemisphere summer is in the months of December through to March, the perfect spot for a holiday away from the snows and frost of our home in New Mexico.

We spend lots of time there when I'm not too busy being a Wizard. Of course with my magic spells we can visit anywhere in the world in the blink of an eye so we don't have to worry about catching planes or all the rigmarole of passports and customs.

We are transported magically to wherever we wish to be; which in this story is one of our favourite places, a quiet little spot surrounded by woodlands and close to deserted beaches where Ness and Muffin can explore to their hearts content and come to no harm.

Always when we travel I go in the disguise of a butler with the job of looking after the two boys and making sure their adventures don't put them in harm's way. On the day this particular adventure took place the sun was shining from a clear blue sky, the sea, disturbed only by ripples from a light breeze, shimmered in the sunlight. It was the perfect day for a swim and the boys needed no urging.

With a yell of delight they rushed into the water and began to splash around in the shallows. Both are excellent swimmers and know the rule, "don't go out of your depth" by heart, so, feeling drowsy I lay on a towel and to the sounds of their excited laughter I broke the second rule, "always keep watch when young ones are in the water," and I drifted off to sleep.

From then on I knew nothing of what was to unfold, but the story they told me a day later was quite a surprise to say the least, and in truth I still find it hard to believe.



**Tales of the Wizard
Taken from inside my magical
Book of Ways**

A WHALE OF A TAIL

"WOW! This is really cool," Muffin yelled. He shook himself vigorously, showering Ness with sparkling droplets.

Ness laughed, dived headlong into a wavelet as it broke on the sandy beach and emerged with a large seashell in his mouth. "Bet you can't do that!" he spluttered.

"Of course I can. Just watch this." Muffin leapt forward and in a shower of spray disappeared under the water, only to appear moments later with a surprised look on his face and a mouth full of sand and seaweed. "I couldn't find one," he grumbled. "Just this horrible grass stuff and it tastes funny." With a grimace of disgust he pulled the strands of slimy weed from his mouth.

Ness laughed and once again dived, swimming around his friend before surfacing again, this time with a brightly coloured pebble. "Look at this," he shouted happily. "A real gemstone. It could be worth a fortune," but Muffin wasn't listening. He was staring intently out to sea.

"What's that?" Muffin quavered, "I'm sure it wasn't there a moment ago."
Ness rubbed the water from his eyes and followed Muffin's gaze. "I'm not sure," he said slowly, but it seems to be moving this way."

Muffin looked around in alarm. "I think we'd better get out of the water," he said fearfully. "The butler must be asleep or he'd have seen it."

Together they edged slowly back to the beach, keeping a watchful eye on the large mass that seemed to be coming closer.

"I think it's stopped." Ness whispered. They had been watching the strange object for some time, it was no longer moving towards them but now rocked slowly just outside the shallows.

Ness summoned all his courage and ventured slowly back into the water. Muffin followed at a distance, keeping a wary eye on the mysterious floating mound. Ness paused again to let Muffin catch up and together they waited, wondering what would happen next, but nothing did. The "thing" was now motionless.

"I think know what it is," Ness muttered. "It's a floating island and now it's stuck in the shallow water." His explanation gave his confidence a boost and he began to move forward. "Maybe we can go and explore it before it floats away on the next tide." Muffin wasn't so sure. He'd never heard of a floating island, but Ness knew much more about the world than he did. Side by side they inched into deeper water.



"I think we should turn back now." Muffin said nervously. His short legs no longer reached the bottom and he had to swim. Ness moved gamely on.

"Not far now" he shouted over his shoulder. Now he too was swimming but the "island" as he called it was within reach. He approached cautiously. It was a blue grey colour and looked to have deep wrinkles all over, unlike anything he'd ever seen before. Muffin struggled alongside him.

"What now? Muffin whispered. "This is scary. Shouldn't we be heading back?"

"Not yet. I want to explore it first." Ness struggled to find a foothold on the rubbery mass. He finally succeeded and hauled himself up the slippery side. "I declare this island to be the property of Lord Ness," he shouted gleefully. "Come on up Muffin. We now have an island of our very own."

Muffin scrambled up and wobbled unsteadily before deciding that sitting would be much safer. "Well, it's not much of an island," he muttered "and now that you've got it what are you going to do with it?"



Ness thought for a moment. His friend was right, it wasn't much of an island, but it was better than no island at all. There must be something they could use it for. Then he remembered the shiny gemstone he'd found. "I've got it," he shouted triumphantly. We'll bury our treasure on it like the pirates did." With no more ado he started to scratch at the surface.

"Come and help me dig a hole, Muffin."

"Err, excuse me. What are you doing?" The intrepid explorers jumped in alarm as the deep voice echoed around them. With a shudder their "island" moved beneath them and they had to cling on grimly to avoid being thrown back into the water.

Ness looked around. A seagull circled overhead, eyeing him curiously, but apart from that no one was around. Nervously he got to his feet and crept towards where he thought the voice had come from. "Is there anyone here?" he called fearfully.

"Only me." Once again the mass shuddered beneath them.

Ness summoned his courage and inched forward a bit more. "Who are you?" he asked nervously.

"I might ask you the same question," the voice rumbled. "I was just having a quiet nap and the next thing I know something's scratching my back, calling me an island and trying to dig a hole to bury treasure. Anyway, to answer your question, I'm a whale, properly known as the Ole Man Whale.

Now tell me who you are and as I don't have eyes in the back of my head, how about you get off my back and swim up the front where I can have a look at you.

"I'm Ness, properly known as Lord Eliot Ness," Ness answered eagerly, "and my friend here is Muffin." Ness slid down the whale's side and splashed into the water closely followed by Muffin. Together they swam forward until they reached a gigantic eye, which surveyed them closely.

"Ah, two baby polar bears," the whale rumbled. "I don't suppose you're related to an old friend of mine, Mama Dew by any chance?"

"We're not polar bears!" Ness exclaimed crossly "and we certainly aren't babies. We're dogs, Bichon Frise to be exact."

"Whoops, sorry if I offended your Lordship," the whale chuckled. "My eyesight isn't what it used to be. I should have known Polar bears only live in the Arctic Circle where it's always freezing cold."

"Do you live there?" Muffin asked curiously. "I suppose you must if you know about polar bears."

"Well, I travel all over the world, but I must admit I don't get up there as often as I used to. In fact I haven't seen Mama Dew for thousands of years."

"Thousands of years, nobody lives that long," Ness scoffed. "I think you're pulling our leg."

The old whale's rumbling laughter echoed from the surrounding hills. "Maybe you're right," he gasped as he stopped for breath. "Time means nothing really, thousands, millions, they're just figures. What matters is what you do with your time, now and in the future. That's what makes a difference."

"Well, now that we're introduced you can answer me something. Just what are you doing out of your depth with no one around to help if you get in to trouble?" the old whale asked sternly.

"Err, well err," Ness was so surprised by the question that he couldn't think of an answer. "We have someone to keep an eye on us but he's gone to sleep," he said lamely, "and it's not much out of our depth. We walked most of the way."

"Maybe you did, but did it slip your mind that the tide is coming in. Now you'll have to swim all the way back."

The two boys looked in horror. He was right; the water was now halfway up the beach and rising quickly. There was no way either of them could swim that distance, and the butler was likely to wake up at any time. They were going to be in serious trouble when he found out what they'd done.

"What are we going to do?" Muffin wailed. "He won't let us out of his sight for the rest of the holiday." "And I had plans to go rabbit hunting in the morning," Ness moaned dismally. "Now the butler will have us helping in the garden as a punishment."

"You could remind him that he shouldn't have gone to sleep," the whale suggested. "That's just as bad as you two swimming out of your depth."

"Mmm, but we're still out here, and he'll have to get a boat to rescue us," Ness groaned. "There's no way out of it."

"Yes there is," I really shouldn't do this but your little adventure wasn't really meant to be mischievous so there's no harm in helping you out I suppose." The whale sank lower in the water. "Climb up on my back," he ordered "and hang on. We're going for a little trip."

Ness and Muffin eagerly did as they were told, scrambling high as they could and clinging on tightly. Slowly their giant friend eased into deeper water and turned to head across the bay. "Where's he taking us?" Muffin gasped fearfully "and what will we do if he sinks?"

He won't sink, he's a whale," Ness reassured him, but inside he was thinking the same thing. What could they do? They were almost out of sight of the butler and the whale was swimming strongly.

Then, just as the two worried boys were thinking he'd forgotten about them he turned around the headland and headed for shore.



"Yippee, I've got it," Ness cheered with relief. "Look Muffin, the old jetty. He's going to take us there and we can run back along the beach. The butler need never know we've been anywhere."

"Unless he asks," Muffin reminded him "You know we always have to tell the truth." Ness's face fell. In the excitement he'd forgotten that. "But," he said happily, "if we tell him the whole story he'll never believe us anyway."

The whale took them right to the jetty where they were able to step off onto the wooden platform without getting their feet wet.

"Thank you Old Man Whale," they echoed as the giant form backed away and turned to head off into deeper water.

Slowly the he turned to face them for the last time, the huge eye seemed to wink and his deep voice boomed a final goodbye across the water. Then, with a flick of his tail he disappeared below the surface and was gone.

Ness and Muffin watched for another minute then reluctantly headed at top speed back to the beach to find the butler rubbing his eyes and looking at the rising water in surprise.

"You should have woken me when you came back from your swim," he told them with a smile. "You must have been sitting here a long time, you're almost dry."

The two boys looked away guiltily. They knew that eventually they would tell him the whole story, but right then, it was almost dinnertime and it didn't seem like a good idea.



Maybe tomorrow Ness thought cheerfully, when we come back from rabbit hunting.

Well, there it is boys and girls, exactly as they told it to me. Stranger things have happened and as we have read about an "Old Man Whale" in Belle's story maybe it is true. It's comforting to think that some creatures will help out others just as we humans should. Oh, and Ness and Muffin didn't have to help me in the garden. Their misdemeanours were no worse than mine, but they did go rabbit hunting before they told me, just to make sure.

Have good nights sleep with sweet dreams and may tomorrow be one of sunshine and happiness.

The Wizard.

The Way of the Wizard (March 2009)



Helloooo again children, here I am once again as promised and with me are my little friends, Belle, Ness and Muffin.

In my first story I told you about Belle and the way she learned, with a little help from the Old Man Whale, how to spread happiness around the world. Belle knows the importance of happiness, no-one should be without it in their lives, and our little friends, whether they be puppies, kittens, rabbits and even goldfish, know how to keep us from becoming self centered and miserable.

I have never in my long life seen anyone playing with their pets and looking unhappy at the same time; it just can't be done. It's as if the magic of fun and laughter is locked up in our pets just waiting for us to turn the key and set it free and we can do that so easily by taking the time to play with them.

Of course there is a price to pay for all the fun and games. You must always take good care of them, feed them, make sure they are clean and healthy, and give them the attention they deserve. When you sit down in those quiet times before bed play with them gently, puppies and adult dogs love to be tickled behind the ears, cats and kittens will purr if you pet them softly, but only if you do it in the right direction, from head to tail.

Cats are very fussy about their appearance and don't like to have their fur sticking out like a bad haircut. Goldfish are different, you can't really pet or tickle them, nor should you try. For them happiness is a regular supply of the right food, but not too much, and a clean bowl of water, large enough for them to swim around and look at their surroundings, preferably in a place where they are safe from your cat's unwanted attention.

If you have friends who don't have a pet, and sadly there are many children who don't, allow them to join in with your games, but make sure they know how to treat your precious pet. Let them throw a ball for your puppy to fetch or swing a ball of wool for the kitten to play with. In that way you can help Belle in her quest to spread love and happiness to everyone.

Before I go on here are a few rules you must always remember.

NEVER, EVER, APPROACH A STRANGE DOG AND ATTEMPT TO PET OR PLAY WITH IT. Dogs prefer to be introduced to their new friends so always make sure you have the permission of the owner and;

ALWAYS HAVE AN ADULT WITH YOU. That cuddly little bundle of fun you see playing in the park may be frightened if you rush up and try to give it a cuddle. Always approach

quietly along with Mum and Dad, and ask the owner if it's ok to touch.

Today's story really started a long time ago before Lord Ness and Muffin came on the scene. In those days I had two other little dogs. Jasper, who was the first Lord of the Manor, and his lifetime companion, Anna, who taught him all he needed to know about running the estate.

One of their tasks was to keep the rabbit population on the move and stop them taking the vegetables from the gardens. But, as always happens, the time came when they were no longer able to perform this important task and eventually they passed on.

When the very young Lord Ness appeared on the scene the situation was grim. Rabbits were everywhere, and no-one in the village bothered to grow carrots or lettuce any more. Something had to be done, but Ness and Muffin didn't know where to start. However, an idea of Muffin's started a whole series of strange events in which once again Jasper and Anna were to play a big part.

You can read about it in 'Through the Garden Gate' one of my little books about the precocious pair's antics. Now the rabbit population is down to a manageable level, but to give the boys something to do and make them feel useful I thought up a little game which works to everyone's advantage.

The Tales of the Wizard

Pesky Rabbits



These are my little stories taken from inside my magical
Book of Ways

Ness stretched and yawned sleepily as he awoke from his after lunch nap. The warm sun streamed through the window, bathing Muffin in a warm glow as he slept soundly on sofa.

"Come on sleepyhead" Ness growled. "Those rabbits will be in the vegetable garden eating the carrots again if we don't hurry."

Muffin didn't like waking up suddenly; in fact he would have preferred to stay asleep all day. He rolled over and held a paw up to his eyes to stop the glare from the sun.

"What's the hurry?" he grumbled. "You know we never catch any, they run under the fence and come back when we're not watching."

"Yes, I know that," Ness said patiently, "but if we keep them running they can't stop to dig the carrots up."

"Well, I don't like carrots," Muffin muttered. "So long as they don't get in the freezer and eat all the lamb chops I don't really care what they do."

Ness didn't reply. He knew that his friend enjoyed the chasing game just as much as he did, so he trotted into the kitchen for a long cool drink of water then smiled when he heard the bump and yelp that meant that in his hurry to catch up Muffin had tumbled off the sofa and was on his way.

My humble cottage, also known as "The Manor" is built on a hillside, which means that I can sit on the veranda and watch the boys as they rush around, busily trying to rid the garden of those "pesky rabbits", as they laughingly call them.

I can also control the direction in which their game goes. If I think a rabbit is in danger of being caught a snap of my fingers will whisk him to safety beyond the fence leaving the boys flabbergasted and wondering where he can have gone.

If there are no rabbits another snap and a few will appear amongst the lettuce and carrots, further baffling Ness and Muff as they dash back to guard their patch. This game could go on indefinitely but little dogs need their sleep as much as I do, so when I think they are tiring, a clap of my hands makes all the rabbits disappear and, happy in the knowledge that they've once again saved my garden, Ness and Muffin puff and pant their way up the hill for a well earned biscuit.

However, my little dogs are very bright, and it wasn't long before they began to start thinking something was amiss.

"The sun had gone down behind the hills and the boys were settled comfortably in their beds.

Why do you think we never catch them Ness? They seem to disappear like magic

whenever we get close" Muffin murmured quietly.

"I really don't know," Ness mumbled sleepily, "Maybe it is magic. Remember, the Butler is really a Wizard in disguise, so anything can happen."

"Well, he's in bed and snoring now so he can't make any spells, Muffin chuckled. "Let's go down the garden and see if they can get away from us without his help."

Ness thought that was a good idea. They crept out of the bedroom and sneaked quietly outside, down the path and in less than a minute they were hiding in the shrubbery near the vegetable patch.

"Can you see any?" Muffin whispered as they peered through the leafy branches.

Ness didn't answer for a moment, waiting for his eyes to adjust to the fading light, and then suddenly he saw a movement between the rows of cabbages. "There's one," he hissed, "and another, and some more over there."

Muffin jumped up eagerly, ready to give chase but Ness pulled him back. "Not yet", he growled softly. "There's something wrong here. They aren't eating the carrots or the cabbages. They seem to be working between the rows and pulling plants out of the ground."

Together, without a sound, they inched forward but the busy rabbits ignored them, even when Ness stretched out a paw to touch one.

"There's something odd about this," Muffin said loudly. "They aren't frightened of us at all." He was right. The rabbits went right on working, ignoring the two puzzled pooches; one even had the cheek to push Ness out of the way to get to another plant which it promptly pulled out of the ground.

"I say," Ness, spluttered haughtily, "you are supposed to run away when we appear."

But of course rabbits can't understand doggy language. The little furry animal just gave Ness a questioning look and hopped right past him.

"This isn't fun," Muffin complained. "How can we do our job if they've decided not to be frightened of us?"

Ness shook his head in bewilderment. "I don't know," he answered slowly, "but the Wizard might. We'll have to ask him in the morning."



Together they made their way back to the house and crawled wearily into bed where Muffin spent a restless night dreaming of rabbits digging up all the carrots and taking them away in wheelbarrow while he and Ness stood by unable to stop them.

I was a little surprised when, at daybreak, I wandered into the kitchen to make breakfast. Ness and Muffin, who usually stayed in bed until the last moment, were already up and waiting for me and as I shuffled around getting their food ready I could hear them

whispering. Finally, a little hesitantly, Ness spoke out.

"Err, we have a little question to ask you," he mumbled, "It's about the rabbits."

I immediately guessed what was coming but let him continue. "Ask away," I said, as I popped a couple of eggs in the pan. "I'm always ready to answer your questions."

Muffin is a little less reticent than Ness. "They aren't frightened of us anymore," he blurted out. "We went down the garden to chase them last night and they wouldn't run away like they're supposed to."

"What! You went into the garden when you were supposed to be in bed." I gasped, pretending to be cross. "You know that's forbidden."

Ness looked downcast. "We just wanted to know what would happen when you weren't around," he mumbled sorrowfully. "We had the idea that you might be helping the rabbits escape when we chased them away."

"And we found them pulling plants up but not eating the carrots," Muffin interrupted, not in the least worried by my feeble attempt to appear annoyed.

"Well, I never heard anything like that in my life," I chuckled, "rabbits that pull plants up but don't eat carrots. Whatever is the world coming to?"

"And one pushed me out of the way," Ness grumbled, regaining some of his courage. "How can we guard your garden if they aren't frightened?"

"Well, I see your point, it would make your job a little difficult," I laughed. "Sit down and I'll explain something to you while we have breakfast."

The puzzled looks on their faces soon turned to smiles when I told them the reason why the rabbits seemed to be acting so strangely.

"It all started a long time ago," I explained as they tucked into their eggs and toast. "Even with all my magic I found I couldn't keep up with all the work needed to keep the garden tidy, so, I decided to recruit a few helpers."

"You got the rabbits to help with the gardening?" Muffin giggled. "That's like asking Ness and I to look after the cookie jar."

"Well, almost," I agreed, "but not quite so risky. I knew that rabbits also like to eat other things, dandelions for instance, plus a few more weeds. So we came to an agreement. If they came along at night and kept the weeds in check they could take some of my carrots in payment. I thought that was a good arrangement. Now I don't get back ache from all that weeding."

"Sounds like a good idea," the boys agreed happily. Then Ness remembered. "But they come in the daytime too," he reminded me. "We still have to keep chasing them away."

"Ah, yes," I chuckled. "That was the second part of the agreement. Even though they would rather be asleep in the daytime they agreed to pop into the garden now and then to keep you two on your toes and give you plenty of exercise."

"So it's just a game then, we don't need to chase them away," Muffin said glumly. "We thought it was a really important job."

"Well, it depends what you mean by important. Do you have fun when you chase after them?"

They both nodded happily. "Great fun," they laughed.



"Then it's a very important job," I assured them. "Having fun is one of the most important things in life and to do it without harming another living thing is the best way of all. Now, I see you've finished breakfast, off you go, the sun's shining and I have a feeling that you may be needed in the garden."

As I washed the dishes I could hear their excited barking from way down the hill and from the bedroom the happy sound of Belle humming as her dancing paws pattered across the floor brought a smile to my face. Even an old Wizard like me can find lots to enjoy in life if he surrounds himself with happy faces.

Belle will be ready for breakfast. Now where did I put the honey pot?

Well children, that's another of my little stories. Life is always fun with all my little friends around. Those of you who have pets will know what I mean. I bet your puppies or kittens never look sad. In their busy lives they just don't have the time to be unhappy, and their only purpose is to spread some of that happiness around.

I hope you are getting your share. Off to sleep now, I'm going to see what my helpers are getting up to while I'm away. Maybe there'll be another story in it for the next time I see you.

Good night and sweet dreams.



The Wizard

The Way of the Wizard

April 2009



Hellooo children.

Doesn't time fly when you are having fun. Christmas is only just over and already it's almost Easter and here I am once again with another little story about the adventures of my friends.

This time not only Ness, Muffin and Belle, but also Patricia and Christy, my assistants, and EDGAR, my magnificent Dragon make an appearance.

I'm sure you all know about Easter, chocolate eggs, brightly painted boiled eggs and of course the Easter bunny, but did you know how it all started?

No, I thought not, you are much too young to be bothered by all that history stuff so I'll just tell you the basic story.

Long-long ago, in many parts of the world, people who had great respect for the land and all its creatures celebrated Easter as being the beginning of new life, and the centre of their belief was the goddess Oestre.

Now this goddess had a pet bird, which, at this time of the year only turned into a rabbit, which promptly laid brightly coloured eggs. These she handed out as gifts to the children, so this, you see, is the connection between eggs, rabbits and Easter.

Now don't ask me why she used her magic to turn the bird into a rabbit. Birds are quite capable of laying their own eggs, but you must admit Easter bunnies and chocolate eggs are a great mix. Anyway, the tradition of painting boiled eggs still goes on, and just to make it even more fun we now hide them in the garden and the children have to hunt for them.

New Zealand is now in the early days of autumn, so I am back in my mountain ranch in New Mexico to welcome the beginning of spring. Here, with no one around to see me, I can be myself again, no more Butler's disguise, just a long cloak and my favorite pointy hat.

Best of all, I'm reunited with my faithful companion EDGAR, the world's only remaining Dragon, and as he is on a special mission he became a part of my story.

Now finish your milk and cookies, tuck yourselves into the blankets, and I'll begin.



EDGAR
Equalens Dragonis Graffias Asellus Borealis Ragulus
but.....you can call me EDGAR

The Tales of the Wizard

**These are my little stories taken from inside my
MAGICAL BOOK OF WAYS**

An Eggstra Special Day

"I smell chocolate." Muffin's nose twitched as he cautiously poked his head from beneath the blankets. Ness, snug and warm with his head buried beneath the pillow, snored contentedly.

"Ness, I smell chocolate," Muffin repeated loudly, to be answered only with a muffled groan of despair from his friend.

"Go away Muffin," Ness snapped irritably. "I need my beauty sleep, and you know we aren't allowed chocolate."

Muffin lay back on the pillow and sighed sadly. Ness was right of course, he always was. Once, they had taken a piece of my chocolate and it made them sick so I'd explained to them that although it tasted nice it contained nasty things that dogs are not allowed to eat; but Muffin wasn't put off so easily. One day he was going to try again and he was sure it would be better the second time.

"Are you still awake Ness?" he whispered.

"Of course I am," Ness answered crossly. "How can I sleep if you keep asking me silly questions?"

"Well, I just wanted to tell you something exciting," Muffin muttered casually, "but if you aren't interested I'll keep it to myself."

That got Ness's attention; he popped his head out and waited expectantly. "Come on then," he urged. "What's so exciting that it can't wait a bit longer?"

"Oh, just something I overheard the Wizard saying to Patricia and Christy," Muffin said casually. "But if you'd rather sleep it doesn't matter, I'll go and tell Belle, she's more fun when you are in a bad mood."

"I'm not in a bad mood." Ness retorted. "I just needed to sleep a little longer."

"Alright, I'll tell you," Muffin chuckled. "It's some thing I heard the Wizard saying to Patricia and Christy about eggs."

"Eggs," Ness snorted. "What's so exciting about eggs? We have them for breakfast, sometimes boiled, and sometimes poached."

"And sometimes with bacon," Muffin interrupted impatiently. "I know that, but how often do we have them painted?"

That got Ness's attention immediately. "Painted eggs," he muttered thoughtfully, "and you say you could smell chocolate. Now this really is something to think about. I remember something like this happened last year."

"So do I" Muffin said eagerly. "Didn't we have to go looking for them in the garden?"

"That's it," Ness yelled happily. "It must be Easter again, WOW! Let's go and tell Belle,

she's good at this game."

Belle already knew something was going on although she was too young to remember what had happened a year ago. Her little bear nose was perfectly adapted to sniffing out food smells, even better than Muffin's and she was in the kitchen poking it into every nook and cranny trying to find where the eggs were hiding.

Surprisingly this time, even though eagerly helped by the two pooches she was having no success.

"We're wasting our time in here," Muffin said after a few minutes of aimlessly sniffing around under the table "I know where they'll be."

"So do I, in the garden," Ness shouted. Let's go find them."

They were just about to dash outside when Patricia, Christy and I were coming in the door and were none too happy when they were told they had to have breakfast first.

"But we can eat the eggs we find in the garden," Muffin protested. "It'll save you having to cook some more for us."

"And we promise not to eat too many," Ness added hopefully, "don't we Belle?"

But as I knew just how much these little rascals will eat and more than one boiled egg is too much for their little tummies their protests fell on deaf ears. They padded around impatiently as we prepared their food and gobbled it down as soon as it was ready.

"I'm full now," Muffin complained. "I won't be able to eat another thing."

"Nor me," Ness agreed. "I think we'd better have a rest before we start searching."

Within moments the intrepid pair were sleeping soundly.

Belle watched them for a moment then tiptoed silently out of the door. If they were right she could find all that food, and every one knows that bears can eat as much as they like without bursting. Singing a happy song she trotted down the path with her nose twitching.



Ness and Muff woke with a start. From my rocking chair I watched them rush outside in a panic and heard the excited commotion when they found Belle, sitting in the sun surrounded by brightly painted eggshells, and happily rubbing her very full tummy.

But no one can be angry with Belle for long. Ness and Muffin saw the funny side of it and laughed as she tried to stand up but flopped back in the grass with a groan.



"That'll teach you," Ness said with a smile. "I suppose you found them all."

"I don't know," she wheezed uncomfortably. "I found five then stopped for a snack. Now I'm too full to look for more."

"Five eh." Ness pulled his whiskers thoughtfully. "Well, there's six of us altogether so there should be one more," he decided. "Come on Muffin, if we find it we'll share."

"Well, I don't know where else we could look," Ness panted as he crawled out from under a very prickly bush. "I think Belle may have miscounted and really eaten all six."

"She probably did," Muffin agreed sadly. "Now it looks like we won't get even get one to share."

Disappointed, the pair trudged slowly through the shrubbery, still hopefully searching the branches overhead but to no avail. If there had been another egg it was probably now in Belle's tummy.



Then Muffin spotted the old garden shed, long unused and half hidden in the untended bushes far down at the bottom of the garden.

"We could look in there," he suggested half-heartedly. "It's the only place we haven't searched."

Ness wasn't enthusiastic. "No-one's been in there for years," he grumbled. "It's covered in cobwebs and the last time I tried to get in to catch a mouse the door was jammed."

"Well we can still try," Muffin urged. "Maybe the two of us can pull it open."

Ness's face brightened. "It's worth a try I suppose," he said more cheerfully. "Come on, let's do it."

It was a good idea but no matter how hard they pulled and tugged the door wouldn't move an inch.

Finally Ness had to stop for a rest. That was when he noticed something odd. "The hinges have

been oiled," he gasped. "But there's a new bolt at the top of the door. No wonder it won't open. Somebody's been here and locked it up. I wonder why?"

Suddenly the thought of finding an egg was forgotten. This looked like being a much more exciting game adventure.

Now they redoubled their efforts. Muffin climbed onto Ness's shoulders but still couldn't reach the bolt so they stopped again to think of a way to solve the problem.

Just then a sparrow swooped down and disappeared from view behind the shed. Moments later they heard the twittering of baby chicks from inside.

"I've got it," Ness shouted triumphantly. "There's a window at the back, it must be open."

They scrambled through the undergrowth impatiently and sure enough, half way up the back wall a small window hung open invitingly.

"That's it," Muffin chortled, "our way in." Now it was Ness's turn to clamber onto Muffin's shoulder and with a gasp and a heave he managed to open the window wide enough to squeeze inside where he could stand on a shelf, reach down and pull Muffin up.

Now things started to go wrong. The old shelf had been there many years and was not very sturdy. The combined weight of two rather tubby dogs was just too much and with a creak and a groan it collapsed to the floor in a cloud of dust.

"Atchooo" Muffin sneezed loudly. "Are you alright Ness?" he spluttered.

"I think so, but I can't see a thing for all this dust."

There was another crash and a bump and Ness yelped. "Now I've bumped my head," he complained. "Better wait for the dust to settle before we move around. We don't want to break anything."

The pair sat quietly for a few minutes and slowly the light began to penetrate the murk.

"Hey, what's that?"

In the centre of the floor surrounded by a bed of straw something large glowed dimly in the faint light. Ness crept forward carefully for a closer look then he yelled in excitement. "It's an egg Muffin. "We've found it, and it's enormous."

As their eyes adjusted to the gloom the enormous object seemed to grow in size and get brighter. "I think it's gold!" Muffin exclaimed. "We've found a golden egg Ness but how are we going to get it out?"

Suddenly Ness realized their predicament. Not only was the egg much too large for them to handle. Now that the shelf had collapsed they had no way of getting out themselves.

All they could do was shout until somebody heard them, and, as they obviously weren't meant to be in the shed that could mean trouble.

Muffin wasn't worried yet; he had his ear to the egg and looked very puzzled.

"I can hear something tapping," he told Ness quietly. "Something inside the egg. Come and listen."

Ness crept up beside him cautiously and together they listened carefully. Sure enough there it was again, tap, tap, tap. Then a pause, and tap, tap; tap again, but this time louder. "I think it's trying to tell us something," Ness whispered. "Maybe it is in code!"

"Well I can't understand what it's saying," Muffin said cheerfully "but I'll send a message back."

Sharply he rapped on the glowing shell. Rap, Rap, Rap.

Immediately there was a tumult of taps from inside and the boys jumped back in alarm.

"Whatever they are, there must be hundreds of them," Ness yelled. "Don't do it again Muffin. I think they are getting angry."

It seemed that Ness was right. The tapping increased in intensity and suddenly cracks began to appear in the golden shell.

The boys scurried into a corner and watched perplexed as small claws appeared and pulled away pieces of shell.

Slowly, piece by piece a hole appeared until finally one of the mysterious inhabitants was able to crawl out.

"I think we're safe," Muffin gasped in relief. "They aren't big enough to do us any harm."

"I'm not sure," Ness said cautiously. "Those claws are long and they look sharp."



Muffin gathered all his courage and crept closer for a better look. "Hey Ness," he shouted. "These little creatures look just like miniature Dragons, just like EDGAR, but very tiny."

That was the last straw for Ness. "Push them back inside and stick the egg together," he shrieked. "If they are related to EDGAR he's going to be very cross about us letting them escape." But he was too late.

The first little Dragon spotted the open window; flexed its wings and in a moment was zooming out into the sunshine, closely followed by the rest of his family.

"Now we're really in trouble," Ness mumbled. "We'll never catch them all now and the Wizard is sure to see them."

Muffin wasn't in the least disturbed by this possibility.

In fact he was quite amused. "WOW!! What if they all grow to be as big as EDGAR?" He chortled. "The Wizard will have to grow lots of vegetables to feed them all."

"And we'll have to help him dig the garden for letting them out," Ness grumbled, "we could be working in the garden forever, or maybe he will make us live in this old shed as punishment."

At that moment there was a rush of wind, a resounding crash on the roof and a scrape of metal as the bolt was pulled back.

Slowly the door swung open and a long, needle sharp talon appeared, followed by the huge face of EDGAR.

Ness and Muffin cowered in the corner expecting the worst telling off of their lives, but instead EDGAR smiled. "I see you've met my new family," he boomed happily.

You two are the first beings on earth to see a new breed of miniature Dragons that I've decided to call the 'Mollyflies'

Pretty little things aren't they," he added as he soared into the air to track down his wayward brood.

The look of relief on the boy's faces when they came back to the house was really something to see, but Muffin, never at a loss for words quickly noticed that no-one was annoyed about their escapade.

"Errr, we actually helped them to be born," he said happily. "And because we were busy doing that we couldn't look for our eggs. There wouldn't be any more in the pan by any chance."

This was greeted by a roar of laughter, even EDGAR now perched on the roof with his new family thought it was funny and his chuckles shook the rafters.

As always everything had worked out well, but where my friends are concerned it always does.

Even the worst of calamities has its good side and that's the side we must always look for or life will soon become tiresome.

Well that's all for tonight little ones.

My magnificent gentle giant, EDGAR is sleeping with his brood tucked under his wings, Ness Muffin and Belle are safely tucked into bed and very soon I will be too.

Have a night filled with sweet dreams and a fun filled day tomorrow. Good night, and I'll be back soon with another story.



**from the heart of the Wizard
for
Kasin Stone Obarski
14 January 2009**

**May her heart forever hold
the true values of the earth
and keep safe our hopes for the future**

The Wizard

The Way of the Wizard

May 2009



Hellooo children. Here I am once again, right on time and with another story of the adventures of my little friends, Ness, Muffin and of course Belle, who is now fully recovered from eating far too many Easter eggs.

As I told you last time we met, Easter is a time for celebrating the new beginning that spring brings each year, but it's not the only celebration of new life. Another important day comes around every year at this time; do any of you know what it is? That's right, the first day of this month, Mayday.

Like Easter this day has been celebrated for thousands of years, but not with bunnies and eggs. In the Northern hemisphere this is the time of the flowers. In the olden days people went out into the countryside and gathered Hawthorn blossoms which always came into flower at this time and was thought to have magical properties.

This was used to decorate a long pole, which was then placed in the centre of their villages, and around it a day of singing and dancing heralded the start of the warm weather and the time of rebirth. Much later coloured ribbons were tied to the top of the pole and the young boys and girls, each holding the end of one, would perform a complicated dance.

When the music stopped the ribbons were woven in an intricate pattern around the pole. Then the music would start again and the dancers had to reverse all their moves to unwind it. This form of celebration is still enjoyed today by children in countries all over the world.

Ness, Muff and Belle also enjoy these fun times, but as my little tale will tell, they weren't quite sure of what it was all about.

The Tales of the Wizard

A Merry Mayday Dance

These are my little stories taken from inside my
magical Book of Ways

Belle wiggled her ears, stuck her little snub nose in the air and looked around curiously. "I can hear music," she said tapping her feet in time to something unheard by her two sleeping companions.

"Music? I can't hear anything," Ness grumbled as he awoke from a pleasant dream of pork chops and sausages.

"That's because Muffin is snoring so loudly," Belle giggled "and anyway, you two never hear anything interesting."

"Do so," Ness snapped. "I can hear the wizard rattling the pots and pans which means breakfast will soon be ready."

"Breakfast!" Muffin yelped and jumped up in alarm. "Have I missed it?"

"Calm down Muffin," Belle laughed. "I was just saying that I can hear music, but Ness can only hear what's happening in the kitchen."

"Nothing wrong with that," Muffin chuckled. "Food is much more important than music, for us anyway," he added hurriedly when he noticed Belle's downcast expression.

Belle loves music. For her it is the whole reason for living. From the first rays of the sun to the last evening song of the lark she sings and dances her way through each day, pausing only at meal times, and even then she can be heard humming quietly and her tiny paws tap softly on the floor beneath her chair.

She really can't understand why some, Ness and Muffin for instance, don't seem to have any interest whatsoever when they hear the birds sing or the water tinkle musically over the rocks in the stream. They do however listen and watch politely when she dances to the latest song she's learned.

However, she isn't downhearted for long for she knows that the two boys are her best friends, even though they can't sing in tune and fall over their own feet when they try to dance.

"I'm going to find out where the music is coming from," she decided with a smile. "I'll



be back for breakfast so don't eat all the honey cakes."

Ness and Muffin watched as she tripped away across the field and into the patch of woodland. Although they usually accompanied her on her little walks they knew she would be safe as I had cast a magic spell to stop her going too far and getting lost.

When she reached the hedge that surrounded my garden she paused, peered through the tangle of branches and gasped in amazement.

The music was much louder, and across the fields she could see lots of children running around and having fun near the old schoolhouse, and most mysteriously, there seemed to be a large tree without branches growing in the playground.

As the sound of music swelled and faded in the breeze Belle watched and listened, her feet keeping time with the rhythm as she practiced a little dance step. "I really must go to see what's happening," she murmured. "This looks like it could be a lot of fun, I'll ask Patricia and Christy to take us after breakfast."

Quickly she made her way back to the cottage where she found the two boys hungrily feasting on a huge breakfast.

"Well, did you find out where the music was coming from?" Muffin mumbled through a mouthful of toast.

"Yes I did, and I'm going to ask if we can go to listen to it," Belle said excitedly. "We could have a lot of fun and I could learn some new dances."

"What about us?" Ness grumbled. "We don't like dancing; we'll have to sit around getting bored while you enjoy yourself."

"Oh you old fuddy duddy," Belle laughed. "There are lots of children there and there's bound to be food." "You could do what you enjoy most, eating."

"Well, I suppose that would make it more interesting," Ness agreed reluctantly. "But when we come home Muffin and I will be going into the woods to practice our hunting skills so you will have to stay around the house till we get back."

"That's alright," Belle agreed as she ate the last honey cake, danced a little jig and dashed off to find Patricia and Christy, who, as she knew well, could easily be persuaded to take them.

Belle hopped eagerly into the truck, followed somewhat reluctantly by Ness and Muffin, who had been hoping for a long snooze after eating far too much.

In minutes they were through the gate, trundling down the road and into the school grounds where they were met by a cacophony of children's excited voices and cheerful bouncy music.

Belle was out of the truck and joining in with the fun in a flash; the children were

enthralled at having a little bear to play with and happily included her in their games.

Ness and Muffin decided to stay where they were for a while and watch the fun from the comfort of the rear seat until the food was served.

As the music played they drifted off to sleep.

Muffin was the first to wake up. Something had changed. The loud music had stopped and all that could be heard was the quiet murmuring of voices. He peeped out of the window to see what was happening then gave Ness a nudge.

"I think it's nearly finished," he said as Ness rolled over and stretched. "They are all standing around that funny pole and talking."

Ness jumped up in alarm. "It can't be over yet," he yelled. "We haven't eaten."

He looked around in desperation, but apart from a wisp of smoke drifting into the air from a barbeque there was NO sign of food. He flopped back on the seat and moaned in dismay. "What a waste of a day," he grumbled. "Not even a sausage to keep us going till dinner time."

"Hey, something's happening over there," Muffin pointed to the pole, "they've got lots of streamer things hanging down and all the kids are holding them."

Ness looked out to where Muffin was pointing. Sure enough, all the children were in a circle and seemed to be waiting for something to happen. Then the music started and they all began to move, some to the right and others to the left.



"I know what that is," Ness shouted with glee. "It's a swing, but they don't know how to use it properly, they aren't running fast enough."

With a bound he was out of the truck and racing through the crowd of onlookers. "Come on Muffin," he yelled. "Let's show

them how it should be done."

He raced into the circle at top speed and grabbed a spare ribbon in his teeth, then with a yell of delight he was flying through the air and swinging around and around, but as the ribbon wound around the pole he went higher and higher, twisting and turning

and getting dizzy with every turn.

Suddenly, high up from the ground he bumped against the pole and clung on tightly while he caught his breath.

Way below the children continued to dance around still holding their ribbons, seemingly oblivious to Ness's plight, and as they danced the ribbons wove themselves into a pattern further and further down towards Ness, until finally they were tightly wrapped around him.

Now he couldn't move a muscle, the music was slowing and the dance was coming to a close.

Then, to his relief the children started to retrace their steps, the ribbons unwinding slowly, suddenly the music stopped.

Ness twisted around until he could see what was happening. A crowd had gathered around the old record player and seemed to be having a conference.

One of them prodded the record, but nothing happened and after a couple of minutes they wandered away. Without the music the dance couldn't be finished and with cries of disappointment the children left their ribbons, but for them the disappointment was to be short-lived.

The aroma of grilled sausages began to drift across the grounds and everyone headed for the food stall. High in the air, tightly bound to the pole, Ness could only watch in dismay as the appetizing scent drifted past.

"What are you doing up there Ness?" Muffin looked up in amazement at his friend.
"Why don't you come down and get something to eat?"

"I can't get down," Ness gasped. "They've tied me to the pole and I'm all tangled up in these ribbon things. You'll have to come up and untie me."

Muffin tried to scramble up but made no impression on the slippery pole. "I can't climb up," he shouted I'll have to get help."

With that he dashed off into the crowd, but his pleas for help went unanswered, no-one outside my little group of magical friends can understand doggy language so they just thought he was a particularly friendly little animal and gave him a pat.

In desperation Muffin headed at top speed to the truck hoping that Patricia or Christy would be there to help. They weren't, but Belle was.

"Wow, you look hot and bothered," Belle, giggled as Muffin staggered to a halt and gasped for breath. "Have you been dancing?"

"No, not dancing," Muffin puffed. "I'm looking for someone to help Ness; he's got

himself into a bit of a problem."

Belle listened wide eyed and couldn't suppress a laugh when Muffin explained what had happened.

"He's tied up to the maypole," she spluttered.

"I know he can't dance, but I didn't think they'd tie him up to stop him making a fool of himself."

Muffin laughed too, it all seemed too funny for words, but Ness had an unfortunate knack of getting things wrong and this was just one of a long list of mishaps.

However, their friend was in trouble and something had to be done. "Can you help, Belle?" he asked hopefully.

"Of course I can," Belle reassured him. "We bears are good at this sort of thing, but I'll want something in return," she added mysteriously.

"Anything," Muffin promised. "Just get him down before all the food is gone or we'll never hear the last of it."



Ness's relief when Muffin returned soon turned to dismay when he realized that Belle was the one who was going to help.

"I'll never hear the last of it," he complained. "She'll make fun of me all the time."

"Oh stop worrying," Belle retorted crossly as she began to climb. "If you keep grumbling I'll leave you here until everyone's gone home and you'll have to explain just how you came to be in this fix."

Ness decided that keeping quiet might be a good idea.

All the people were sitting around chatting and eating and no one seemed to have noticed his embarrassing predicament.

Silently he waited while Belle climbed up to reach him and began gnawing through the ribbons. In less than a minute he was free but still clinging grimly to his perch for fear of falling.

"Don't hold so tightly," Belle told him. Just ease off and slide down. "I'll be below you to stop you falling."

Very carefully Ness did as he was told and was soon down on solid ground, a bit shaky, but none the worse for his adventure.

"Where's Muffin?" he asked in surprise, "I'm sure he was here a minute ago."

"Here I am," Muffin shouted as he trotted out of the crowd. "I just went to get a snack," he added. "These sausages are great."

Ness's eyes lit up. In a moment his embarrassment was forgotten. "Just what I needed," he yelled happily. "Where's mine?"

"Oh, I'm sorry Ness," Muffin grinned cheekily. "I got the last one."

Muffin didn't keep all the sausage for himself. As always it was divided between the three of them and everything ended happily.

Or it would have done, but for one thing. They'd arrived back home, had a snack and now he and Muffin were doing their favorite thing, hunting in the woods.

"Why did you have to promise her anything she wanted?" Ness muttered as they crawled through the undergrowth.

"We'll never catch anything with all that noise going on," he grumbled.

Behind them Belle danced along happily and sang the song she'd learned at the Mayday celebrations.

Well, children, once again we've come to the end of my story.

I can see that you are all ready for sleep so I'll leave you now, but I'll be back soon with another adventure. Until then dance, sing and be happy for there's nothing to be gained by being sad. Have a night filled with pleasant dreams.

The Wizard.

The Way of the Wizard



Helloooo once again children. Here I am again, and as always I have a little story to tell about my life and those special friends who make it so interesting.

June is the time of the year when everything seems to happen at once. Looking out across the river from my old rocking chair on the front porch I can see a small herd of Elk grazing. Walking with them, the first little ones of the season stagger unsteadily on spindly legs as they try to stay close their mothers.

Among the red willow on the riverbank spring flowers nod their heads in the morning breeze.

An idyllic scene, and one I could happily gaze at all day, but unfortunately this is also the time that my garden needs constant attention. Left untended weeds would soon choke the seedlings I planted so carefully after the last frosts of early spring. Insects, essential food for the songbirds that abound in the valley, can also be an unwanted pest in the vegetable garden and I have to be ever vigilant to stop their constant munching of my lettuce and cabbages.

As I said, insects are essential and some can also be beneficial. If we were to kill them all, those delightful songbirds so dearly loved by Belle and all lovers of the countryside, would perish and our lives would be much the poorer for it. So, armed only with a bucket of soapy water and a spray bottle, each year at this time I battle to rescue my precious crops.

However, there are also insects that are not only beneficial to the garden, they also provide much fun for young and old alike. They, like the songbirds, prey on the pests that are such a nuisance, and these insects are the subject of tonight's little tale.

If any of you think that insects can't be fun just settle back on your pillows, snuggle under the blankets, and I'll explain.



The Tale of the Wizard
Taken from my Magical Book of Ways
Dancing Stars

Belle gazed wistfully at the rain pattering on the window. All day long she'd wandered in the woods and along the riverbank composing little tunes in her very active mind and practicing dance steps among the sweet smelling wild flowers.

Even now, in the gathering dusk, her feet kept time to the raindrops dripping steadily from the leaky gutter. She yawned sleepily, took one last look at the clouds drifting over the mountains then crossed her little paws and wished for sunshine when she awoke in the morning.

She was just about to turn and go to bed, when, from the corner of her eye she spotted something moving amongst the trees.

"Hey, come and look at this," she whispered urgently. "Someone's coming towards the house."

Ness and Muffin, ever vigilant, even when fast asleep, abandoned their comfy spot on the sofa; bounded eagerly to her side and stared hard into the shadowy gloom.

Visitors are rare in my mountain valley home, even more so after dark, but as only those who hold the magic key can get past the gate they are always welcome.

Eventually the shadowy form got nearer, and has he clumped up the steps onto the porch and shook off his boots.

Belle let out a screech of delight.

"It's cousin Frisco Robin," she yelled.

She dashed to the door and bounced up and down to reach the latch with Ness and Muffin yapping excitedly behind her. Eventually I managed to shoo them away, opened the door and in came the object of my little friend's noisy attention. Frisco Robin, probably the most adventurous young bear in the land. He was wet and bedraggled from his long journey from his home in Alabama. He swept Belle up in his strong arms and gave her a great big bear hug before crouching to pet his other two admirers, Ness and Muffin.



I got him a warm towel and while he tried to dry himself and at the same time answer all the excited questions, Patricia and Christy, hearing all the commotion, poked their heads around the door to see what the fuss was about.

Immediately they got busy in the kitchen and soon the delicious aroma of cooking filled the house. In no time at all Frisco was sitting by the fire toasting his toes with a bowl of hot soup and a plate of fresh bread on his lap.

Belle jiggled around impatiently until Frisco had mopped up the last traces of soup and sat back in the old chair with a sigh of contentment. Then she hopped onto his knee and demanded to know everything that had happened since she'd last seen him and why he'd arrived so late at night when he knew she had to go to bed.

I was puzzled as well by his surprise visit, but Frisco Robin isn't the sort of bear who lives an ordered life. He will, with little forethought, roll out of bed early in the morning, pack a little food to last him through the day and set off to explore the wide world outside his Pa's patch. Sometimes he'll be away for days and if he's in our corner of the world he always drops by to say hello.

"I came straight here. I've got something for you," he said mysteriously.

"Something for me?" Belle bounced around on his lap and almost fell off in her excitement. "What is it?"

"Whoa, slow down little one," Frisco laughed. "It's not just for you; it's for everyone to share."

Now I was even more puzzled. Frisco had arrived with nothing more than his little pack tied to the end of a stick. What on earth could he carry in there for all of us? Inquisitive faces now surrounded him, bombarding him with questions. But he firmly refused to divulge his secret.

"You will have to wait until morning," he said sleepily, "but I promise you will all get a big surprise."

For Belle, Ness and Muffin, morning couldn't come soon enough. Several times through the night I heard them whispering together, but eventually they were all overcome by tiredness and dropped off to sleep.

When the sun rose over the mountains I glanced into their bedroom on my

way to the kitchen. All three were snoring gently, but I knew that wouldn't last long.

When the first rattles of pots and pans echoed through the house sure enough there they were sitting at the table. As always their happy chattering filled the room but on that day they weren't planning the day ahead. They only had one thing on their minds.

"I wonder what it could be" Belle mused. "It must be something small or we'd have seen it."

"Bones," Muffin suggested hopefully. "He could have left them outside on the porch."

"But I don't like bones and Frisco said it was something for all of us."

"Well, Patricia could use them to make soup," Ness giggled. "That way we'd all have a share."

Belle wasn't sure she liked that idea. "It must be something more exciting than bones," she insisted "or he wouldn't have kept us guessing." She thought for a moment, then, "I've got it," she said happily. "He's going to teach me a new song then I can sing it for all of you to enjoy."

Ness looked at Muffin in horror. "No, it can't be that," he muttered desperately. "Err,,,,,I mean, no I don't think so Belle," he added quickly when he saw the smile disappear from her face. "I don't think Frisco knows much about music."

"Well, we'll soon know," Muffin, piped up. "Here he comes now."

"Good morning Belle, Ness and Muffin," Frisco Robin greeted them all cheerfully as he pulled up a chair to the table. "I hope you all slept well."

"I didn't." Belle hopped down from her chair and trotted to his side and looked up into his eyes. "I did not sleep because you didn't tell us what you brought for us."

"Can you tell us now before I fall asleep again?" She gazed into his eyes imploringly but to no avail. Frisco was adamant. "After breakfast, and only if you three have helped with the dishes. Then I'll tell you."

Breakfast that morning was over even quicker than usual. Belle and the boys had their plates so clean they looked like they didn't need washing,

but that didn't move Frisco one little bit. "Into the kitchen," he ordered with mock severity. "I want to see all the dishes sparkling and put away tidily."

Belle always helps around the house, but Patricia, Christy and I stood by in amazement as Ness and Muffin rushed around drying dishes and pots and putting them away. In minutes the job was done, and Frisco Robin, after a careful inspection to make sure they hadn't missed anything, decided the time had come for his great secret to be revealed.

"All of you, follow me," he instructed cheerfully as he led us out of the house and down the garden. "This'll do." He stopped at my vegetable patch, untied his little pack, and pulled out a small box.

By now I was completely mystified. I always thought I was good at guessing games but Frisco had me baffled. What could he possibly have in that tiny box, and why did we have to come to my garden to find out.

"Right, we're all here." Frisco held up the box. "Now, can anybody guess what's I've got in here?" he asked, looking around at all our puzzled faces.

No one answered.

"Well, I'll give you a clue," he offered. "There's a few of them, and they're alive."

Still no one would hazard a guess.

"Ok, I'll let you look," he grinned. "Maybe I should have given you a better clue."

As we gathered round staring expectantly he slowly and carefully lifted the lid.

"There, now what do you think?" he said triumphantly. "I bet you've never seen any of those around here."

Ness took a close look and shook his head. "You're right," he said slowly. "I've never seen dead leaves kept in a box before."

"What are we supposed to do with them?"

Frisco Robin peered into the box and scratched his head. "That's funny,"

he muttered, "they were in there when I left home." He gave the box a shake and inspected the contents closely.

"Ahh, there's one, but it doesn't look like it did when I put it in there."
Once again we all crowded around and one by one we saw the tiny creature nestled in the leaves.

"It's an insect," Ness decided. "That's just what the Wizard needs, more of these in his vegetable garden."

Then Patricia took a look. "I've seen those before," she murmured. "A long time ago, but the ones I remember glowed in the dark."

"These do that," Frisco broke in with excitement. "At least, they did when I caught them."

He sounded a bit downhearted, his big surprise had turned out to be a flop and whatever he had in the box just wasn't what he'd expected.

Patricia came to his rescue. Quietly she took the box and placed it on the ground in the shade of a cabbage leaf. Then she tapped it softly. "There you are," she said. "Not very bright, but at least they're working again."

Once again we all crowded around, and this time we really could see something different.

There were lots of tiny spots of green light amongst the leaves. A wonderful sight we all agreed, but of what use would it be to us. It was Patricia again who had the answer.

"I remember Pa telling me about those, when I was only knee high." "He said they were a gardener's friend and the more he had in the garden the better it would be."

"That's just what my Pa said!" Frisco exclaimed. "He reckons that they're the most useful insect ever and save him lots of time and effort."

Now Frisco had my full attention. Anything that would save me from those pesky insect pests had to be good. But these little creatures didn't look very energetic and I wondered just what they could do against an army of caterpillars and aphids.

"Don't worry," Patricia assured me. "These are still in the larvae stage.

Just wait till they change and start to spread. Then you should see a difference."

All this sounded good to me, but my little friends had doubts. "What about us?" Muffin asked. "I don't think it's going to be much fun sitting here watching a box of insects."

Belle didn't agree. "I can look after them," she said happily. "I'll make sure they have new leaves every day and Ness and Muffin can let them out to play every morning."

From the look on Ness and Muffin's faces I could see that wasn't a welcome suggestion, but once again Patricia saved the day.

"No need for all that," she said as she picked up the box. "With a little magic and a lot of patience you'll soon see why Frisco brought them to us and why they are going to be so much fun for all of us."

Carefully she upended the box and scattered the contents around the vegetable plot. "There, that should do it," she exclaimed. "Now, who wants honey cakes for morning tea?" And with no more ado or explanation she headed back to the house.

Belle, Ness and Muffin were completely mystified. Patricia had thrown their present in the dirt, now they would never find those odd little creatures again, but Frisco Robin didn't seem to mind.

"Just wait and see what happens," he told them. "One day soon you're going to get a big surprise."

Try as they might they could get no more out of him, but later that day, as he was about to leave to return home he added a little more to the mystery. "Oh, I almost forgot," he said. "You'll find this very useful." He rummaged in his pack and pulled out an onion bag. "Get the Wizard to fix it to a garden cane. Patricia and Christy will know what it's for."

And with a big cuddle for Belle and a cheery goodbye he was gone.

Frisco's present was the main topic of conversation in our little cottage for a few days, but by the end of the week it was almost forgotten. Then suddenly, at dusk on a warm summer night we heard a shriek from the garden and Belle, who had been happily making daisy chains on the lawn, came dashing into the house.



"Quick, come and look," she shouted breathlessly. "I've found some dancing stars." Then she raced off again at top speed with Ness and Muffin close behind and the rest of us struggling along in their wake.

Dancing stars was a good description of what we saw. Tiny lights flashed and flickered around the bushes above their heads as they tried desperately to catch them, but with no success.

Suddenly everything became clear to me. This was Frisco's present to all of us, and Christy solved the mystery of the onion bag. "It's to make a net," she explained. "When we were kids we used them to catch the "Lightning Bugs" as they're called, and we put them in a jar to make a lantern."

Well, obviously there was no time to lose. I was sent packing to find jar, and a cane to fix the net while my family of excited kids and adults hopped around among the cabbages chasing the elusive bugs.

When I returned Belle was the first to try it out. She very carefully and gently had the first of the little flyers snug in the jar. Within minutes we'd all caught one and the little jar was glowing with light. The lid, with a few holes punched in it, was firmly screwed down and Belle, Muffin, Ness and I admired our first Lightning Bug lantern.

Frisco Robin was the main topic of conversation in the bedroom that

night. As the lantern shone a soft light on three little faces I could hear their quiet whispers.

"The best present ever," declared Belle. Ness and Muffin agreed.

"But a few bones wouldn't have gone amiss," Muffin added wistfully as he slowly drifted off to sleep.

The next morning we were up bright and early and, as Frisco had instructed, we took the bugs back to the vegetable garden and set them free.

"We have to give them time to charge up their batteries by getting food," Patricia explained, "or they won't be able to switch on their lights tonight."

Belle, Ness and Muffin were happy to do that. After all they could come back and catch them as often as they liked, and that would be every night until the Lightning Bugs went to sleep for the winter.

For me, the best part would be, not having to spend the warm summer days ridding my plants of unwanted pests. Now I can sit in my rocking chair on the porch and watch my little friends at play. To be sure, it was the best present ever.

Well, that's another of my little tales of the magic and mystery. Maybe you some of you children have Lightning Bugs in your gardens and you too spend happy hours making those fascinating lanterns.

The best fun always seems to cost the least, and with it you can build memories that will last forever.

In your next summer holidays take a good look around and see what nature has to offer. I promise you will never be bored.

Goodnight children. Have a good sleep and I'll be back soon with another tale of life in the magic valley.

The Wizard

THE WAY OF THE WIZARD JULY, 2009



Hello once again children from the Wizard,
and all my friends, in the magic valley that we
call home.

July is here again and as always we are
enjoying the hot summer sun in our own ways.

Belle is practicing new dance steps, with
regular sips of honey and lemon drinks to keep
her cool; the boys, Rem, Snowy, Ness and
Muffin are chasing the rabbits away from my
vegetable garden, and Sadi, who you haven't
met yet, spends her days swimming in the river
and leaving muddy paw prints
on the front porch.

The rest of us, Patricia, Christy and I try to keep
out of the hot sun and do only what's necessary to keep everything
running smoothly.

July is the month when most of the exciting events in nature are coming to
a close, lambs, born in the early spring are now well grown, as are most of
the offspring of all the animals that visit our little patch.

There is one major event however that had to take place. Ellie, our
beautiful chestnut mare, was soon to give birth, and as this was to be her
first baby foal we were just a little nervous.

Now you may think that horses are big, strong creatures that can look
after themselves, and you are of course quite right.

They have served we humans for hundreds of years, carrying us from
place to place, pulling coaches or ploughs, or entertaining us with their
speed and agility at shows or race meetings.

However, when small they are not so able, and we have an assortment of
wild creatures living in the surrounding mountains that could mean danger
to anything so defenseless as a baby foal.

So, with strong fences in place and regular checks to make sure nothing

untoward is happening we waited impatiently for the big day. The boys of course have little interest in baby horses, they follow us when we inspect the fences every evening, but most of that time is spent looking for something to chase.

Sadi, a very large English Labrador Retriever, takes her duties more seriously.

She sleeps outdoors and is always alert to anything that might cause danger in the hours of darkness ever ready to chase away intruders.



Now with all possible problems attended to we could only sit back and let nature take its course, but never in our wildest dreams could we have imagined how it would turn out.



The Tales of the Wizard
These are my little stories, taken
from inside my magical Book of
Ways

**The Angel and the Birth of a
Magical Creature**

"Well, it can't be long now," Patricia patted Ellie and murmured a few encouraging words in her ear.

Christy raked fresh straw into a pile to make her a comfortable bed, and we headed off back to the house. Ellie watched us leave; her somewhat sad brown eyes seemed to be imploring us to stay a while longer, but other than make her as comfortable as possible there was little we could do.

Sadi, who seemed to have accepted Ellie's predicament as her own responsibility, stayed, she would wait there all night if need be and we knew that she would let us know if anything happened.

"WOW! Look at that," Patricia exclaimed.

Just above the hill a brilliant star sparkled like a jewel in the darkening sky, then, just below it, the moon rose into view, so close that the two seemed to be touching. "Now that's something I've never seen before," she said.

"Nor I," Christy agreed. "That star looks like Venus, but it can't be, Venus is setting in the west right now."

"Could be Sirius," I guessed, "but it's much brighter than I've ever seen it."

Patricia shook her head. "No, not Sirius either," she murmured, "that's right above us."

We watched as they rose higher into the night sky, but none of us could come up with an answer.

It seemed to be a new star completely, and as it rose it became brighter until it filled the valley with its flickering light.

Finally, unable to keep our sleepy eyes open we had to go to bed, vowing that in the morning we would search in our astronomy books until we found the answer.

Belle watched from behind the curtain, she too had seen the star, but unlike us, she had her own idea of what it was.

When we were all asleep and the house was silent she wrapped her warm blanket around her shoulders and slipped quietly out of the door.

Ellie whinnied softly as Belle approached.

Over the past weeks Belle had visited her often and always took her a bunch of fresh grass, a carrot, or Ellie's favourite, a lump of sugar, and so they had become good friends.

Tonight, Belle knew in her heart, was a special night, magic was about to happen and so she had stuffed her pockets with sugar lumps, one of which she gave to Ellie and one she slowly sucked on herself.

She made herself comfortable in the straw and humming a cheerful song she settled down to wait. It wasn't long before she slipped into a deep sleep.

Belle awoke suddenly. The moon and the strange new star were now high in the sky.

She shivered in the cool night air and pulled the blanket



tightly around her shoulders.

Ellie was now lying on her side on the straw bed and moaning quietly, Belle crept up beside her head and sang softly into her ear.

In a moment the big horse quieted and relaxed, laying her head down and breathing steadily, happy now to have some company at this strange new time in her life.

Together they lay still in the moonlight, the little bear crooning and stroking her neck had settled Ellie into a peaceful state.

Now all she had to do was wait.

At first Belle couldn't believe what she was seeing. She rubbed her tired eyes and stared hard. It was true, the star was moving, and getting brighter.

Frightened for a moment she crawled closer, trying to hide behind the horse's huge frame. Ellie nuzzled her softly and Belle regained her courage.

"It's only a star," she murmured. "It's nothing to be frightened of." But she snuggled deeper into the straw, reassured by the warmth of her big companion as she watched the star come closer, so close in fact that it seemed she could reach out and touch it.

Then it stopped and hovered in the air just above their heads.

Across the field Sadi stirred, growled and padded out of her kennel. Something wasn't right; the strange light shouldn't be there and might be a danger to Ellie.

Without a sound she made her way to investigate, then, as she got closer, she saw that Ellie seemed to be content and Belle was with her so she lay down to watch.



The star stayed motionless for a while, as if it were watching, but when Belle crept out from her hiding place in the straw and stood in the open it began to circle slowly, moving closer and closer.

Belle stood her ground, not wanting to move and maybe miss something important.

Sadi inched forward, with a low, rumbling growl.

Then, suddenly all was still.

Belle was transfixed, as if frozen to the spot.

Sadi sank back and appeared to be asleep.

The light began to change shape it began breaking up into myriads of tiny sparkling lights that seemed to dance in the air above Ellie.

The little bear could see everything that was taking place, but could do nothing but watch as once again the scene changed.

The lights moved together again, but this time in a different form, now they took on all the colors of the rainbow, shimmering in the night air as they fused into one beautiful shape.

Belle gasped in delight. Just above Ellie's head fluttered the most incredible being she had ever seen, and in that moment she realized just what it was.

But why was it was there?

Ellie shuddered slightly and tried to rise, then lay back happily when with a flutter of gossamer wings the little creature moved closer to her head and spoke softly in her ear, and in that magical moment the most wonderful thing happened.

A baby foal struggled to its feet and made its first tottering steps, but the most amazing thing was, it was pure white, not a trace of Ellie's chestnut brown anywhere.

With a whoop of delight Belle found she could move again and rushed to give it a cuddle.

"I think you should let it go to its mother now." The voice, light as feather down, sounded like the tinkle of bells in Belle's ear.



"I'm sorry," Belle stammered. "I just had to hold it for a moment to see if it was real."

"Oh yes, it's real alright, and unique too."

The Faire, for that's just what she was, skipped lightly onto the foals back and touched its mane. "Did you know that this is the first of its kind to be seen on earth in thousands of years?"

"But it's just a foal," Belle said slowly. "I've seen lots of foals before, but never a pure white one."

The little Faire laughed. "Ah, But this is no ordinary foal," she explained. "Take a good look, can't you see anything different, something you wouldn't normally see on a foal, or a horse for that matter?"

Belle walked around, carefully inspecting the hooves, legs, body and neck until she came to the head.

Suddenly as she ran her hands gently between the ears she noticed something odd. "There's a lump here," she gasped. It feels hard and sort of pointy."

"That's right, hard and pointy." The little Faire chuckled at Belle's description. "Now where have you seen anything like that before?"

Belle thought for a moment. "On baby calves?" she guessed, "or maybe elk, they have two lumps until the horns grow, but the foal has only one."

She studied the little foal again thoughtfully. "But this isn't a calf or an elk so you will have to tell me."

"All right," the Faire agreed, "but come and sit away from Ellie and her baby for a while, let them get to know each other."

Belle grabbed her blanket from the straw and carefully put it over the foal's back then went to sit with the little Faire.

The night was becoming more mysterious by the minute and already the first flush of dawn was lightening the eastern sky. She must find out all the secrets before anyone woke up and discovered she wasn't tucked into her bed.

"Now, my name is Ariadne," the Faire told her. "Why don't you tell me all

you know about the little people."

"I know you met some of my friends in the forest a little while ago and that you have been listening to our songs all your life."

Belle smiled and nodded. "Yes, your friends in the forest taught me a new song and danced with me," she remembered happily, "and I think I've heard them singing around here early in the morning when no-one else is awake."

"You really are a special little bear," the Faire said in amazement.

"For a long time now my people have thought that all other beings on earth had lost the ability to hear or see us. Perhaps it's coming to the time when we can make ourselves known again."

Belle shook her head. "Not just yet," she said sadly. "Children have been taught to be afraid of you."

"They are told that you do bad things and if they see you they will be whisked away, never to be seen again."

"Then we are going to need lots of help," the Faire sighed.

"Maybe if you could persuade your family and friends that we are harmless they could spread the word."

"If we could once again appear as the real little people that we are, even if only in this valley, in time the world might accept us and realize that we can do them no harm."

The wistful look on the Faire's face made Belle feel really sad, and she vowed that she would start work on her task immediately.

All the folks that made up her family knew the truth about the Faires. Now she would have to convince them to spread the word, and she had an idea how it could be done.

"I have to go now," she said regretfully, "but you still haven't told me what the little baby foal really is."

"It's a Unicorn, of course," replied the Faire with a tinkling laugh "and it will lead the Angel of Faire wherever she goes."

Belle looked disappointed. "Does that mean we'll never see her again?" she asked sadly.

"I was hoping she could stay with us forever."

"And so she can," Ariadne assured her.

"The Angel of Faire rarely ventures out of the forest, but when she does you will be the first to know."

Belle smiled again, now she would be able to look after Ellie and this unusual baby.

"One more thing," she said rather shyly, "Could I name the Unicorn Moon Star?"

"Moon Star!" "What a perfect name," Ariadne exclaimed "I'll tell the Angel of the Faire the moment I see her." "She'll be delighted."



"Now off you go before all your family gets up."

"No doubt I'll be seeing you again very soon."

With a last look at the baby Unicorn she floated up into the dawn sky and slowly changed back into a bright star, flickering and sparkling as she disappeared into the distance.

Belle trotted back to the house, carefully lifted the latch and crept into her bedroom to catch a few moments of sleep before she was called for breakfast.

Already a plan was forming in her mind, but it would need the concerted efforts of Patricia, Christy and myself to make it work.

She drifted off to sleep to dream of the Faire sitting on the baby Unicorn and the tinkling laughter echoing all around the valley.

"Come on sleepyhead."

"You're late this morning and I thought you'd be up early to see if Ellie is alright."

Christy gave Belle a gentle shake. "You're not feeling ill are you?"

Belle laughed. "No, not ill, I feel really good, and I know Ellie will be too so I don't have to rush."

"You know Ellie is alright?" Patricia popped her head around the door and gave Belle a quizzical look. "Did you go out to see her before we got up."

Belle looked a little guilty, but couldn't stop a big smile from spreading across a face. "Well, I sort of went out early," she said, but then I came back to bed."

"That's alright then," Patricia laughed. "We don't want you going to sleep and missing Ellie's new baby."

"Oh, I promise I won't do that," Belle chuckled secretively. "I'll be wide awake to see your faces."

Patricia and Christy shook their heads. "You really say the strangest things sometimes," Christy murmured. "Now come and get breakfast, we're going to have a busy day."

Belle ate slowly, deliberately taking her time to hold the suspense as long as possible.

Before they went to see Ellie she had to approach them with her idea, and she wasn't quite sure how to do that without telling them about Moon Star.

Everyone, apart from her, had finished eating and were waiting impatiently, so Belle made the decision.

"Errr, Patricia, could I ask you something important?" she said slowly as she scraped the last bit of porridge from her bowl.

"Ask away," Patricia smiled. "If you don't ask questions you'll never learn anything."

"Well, actually I was wondering whether you, Christy and the Wizard could do something really important for my friends."

I pricked my ears up, Belle's friends were the creatures of the woodlands and hills; not usually around for us to see, so I listened with interest.

"Well, if it's in our powers we will do it," Patricia said without hesitation, "What is it?"

"I want you all to write a book, a really, really, special book," Belle said hopefully, "and could you paint some special pictures too Christy?"

Now Christy is a really talented painter of everything in nature, but she was about to get the surprise of her life.

"Of course I can," she answered confidently. "What would you like me to paint?"

"The Angel of the Faire ," Belle blurted out. "Do you know what she looks like?"

"Mmmm, I don't recall having ever met her," Christy murmured, "but I reckon I could make a good guess. Is that all?"

"Well, no, not really," Belle said with a happy smile. "Could you paint her riding on a Unicorn?"

"A UNICORN!!!!" We all echoed. "Where in this world would we find a Unicorn to paint a picture from?"

"Oh, don't worry about that," Belle giggled.

"I'll look after that part now that I know you can make me a book."

"Now I will have to explain what I want the story to be about."

And so, before we left the house that mysterious morning Belle told us exactly what to write about, and as she explained it began to fall in to place.

It was to be a book about the real goodness of Faires and the good things they could bring if children were not so afraid and distrusting of them, and above all, to reveal all the lies that have been told about them through the ages.

"Then," Belle said triumphantly, "The Angel of the Faire can come back to Earth and ride her Unicorn."

I must admit it was something I hadn't expected, but Belle has always been imaginative.

We knew she could get in touch with the Faires through her music and dancing.

But to not only bring the Angel of the Faire back to the world, but also her fabulous Unicorn, that seemed beyond the limits of our imagination.

However, we had made a promise and we would have to honor it. Patricia and I resolved to put pen to paper at the first opportunity and Christy decided she would need a whole new box of rainbow paints to do full justice to such an important picture.

But first we had to check that Ellie was still alright, so off we went with a happy dancing bear leading the way.

"Still no sign of the foal." Patricia looked disappointed.

Ellie, happily munching on the lush green grass when we arrived whinnied and trotted across the field to meet us.

She no longer looked tired and worn down.

Now she lifted her head and whinnied as we approached.

Belle's smile faded. "Surely it wasn't a dream!" she thought unhappily.

She looked around desperately but the Unicorn was nowhere to be seen,
and if she were lost surely Ellie would be looking for her.

Then, from far away she heard that tinkling laugh that could only be
made by her new friend, Ariadne.

Sure enough, away at the far side of the field and almost hidden in the
shade of the Aspen trees she saw a flash of white.

"Over there," she yelled, under
the trees by the river."

None of us have eyes so sharp
as Belle's, so it wasn't until the
foal trotted out into the sunlight
that we saw her, and we got the
surprise of our lives.

"Good heavens, it's all white,"
Patricia gasped as she flopped
down onto Ellie's straw bed.



Christy was speechless, as was I. How could an all white foal be Ellie's
baby, but it had to be.

Christy quickly pulled a camera from her pocket and started taking snaps.

Patricia and I stood in open mouthed amazement and Belle did a little
dance of pure happiness as the little creature approached, head held
high; tail flowing behind and showing no fear of us at all.

"This is Moon Star," Belle told us proudly.

And if that wasn't a big enough surprise, she added, "That's my new
friend Ariadne on her back."

None of us had noticed the tiny figure.

Riding high on the foals back she was hidden by the long mane. As
Moon Star turned we saw her for the first time. What
an amazing sight she was.

In the bright sunlight she seemed to glow in a thousand colours. Shades of

red and green flashed from her wings, blue and gold from her tiara and all the colours of the rainbow twinkled in her long white dress, a vision of pure beauty and innocence.

I rarely see Patricia lost for words, but on that warm sunny morning with the larks singing above, the river burbling over the rocks, and everything around us as perfect as nature could make it she was speechless.

.....but not for long.

She had questions to ask, and she might never get another chance.

Slightly red faced she approached the little sprite. "Excuse me," she began nervously. "I may be mistaken but isn't Ariadne the name of the Angel of the Faire?"



That's right," the trilling voice said. She was light as a feather and it seemed to make her glow even more. "I will be crowned with my Angel wings very soon, and so I continue with the tradition."

"Ah, I see," Patricia said looking very amazed."

"I can't quite believe this, but is Moon Star really a Unicorn?" Christy asked.

Again the trilling musical voice answered. "Yes, she's a true Unicorn, directly related to all those that have served us faithfully for thousands of years."

Now Patricia looked sad. "I suppose that means we'll be losing her," she murmured.

"Not losing, sharing, as I told Belle, she can stay here with you."

"If all goes well and my people can once again walk safely and freely on

earth she will be a sign of what is to come," and she added, "Belle will be the only other creature ever to ride upon the fabled Unicorn."

"Then we had better get to work," Christy said smiling.

"Belle's idea is a good one, and if we start right away it won't be too long before you are back in your rightful place."

"Then I must thank you from myself and all my people," The little Faire said demurely.

"And I can leave for now knowing that our precious treasure is in good hands and I will look forward to seeing you all again very soon."

With a last tender stroke of the foal's mane, and a cheerful goodbye to Belle she was gone, floating lightly across the meadow like thistledown and finally disappearing amongst the trees.

"Well young lady, it seems you have some explaining to do," Patricia laughingly scolded Belle.

"Such as how you knew about the foal, how you managed to know the name Moon Star, and, just how did your blanket come to be on the Unicorn's back?"

But Belle wasn't listening. In her mind she was already travelling like the wind, singing a new song of freedom, and best of all, learning to dance with a real Angel.

What more could a bear want from life?

Well children. Once again the magic has visited our hidden valley and left us breathless but happy in the knowledge that we can help bring happiness to the world.

Belle's book of the Faires is underway, and you can take this little tale as a forerunner of things to come.

Now I must leave you to your sleep. May you always dream of happy things and wake up every morning with a smile.

Until next time, good night. The Wizard

The Way of the Wizard

September 2009



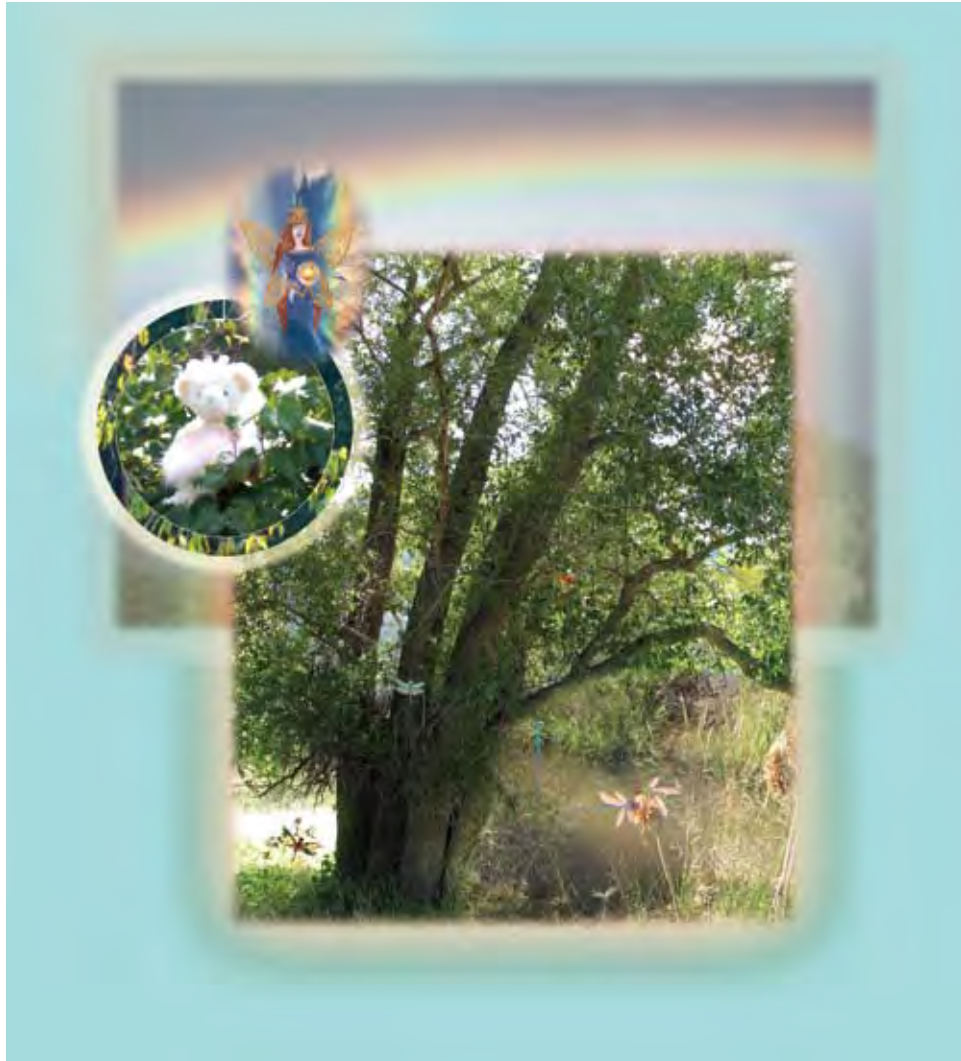
Helloooooo once again children. After a long holiday here I am again with another story from the place of magic my friends and I call home.

Much has changed here in the valley since we last met. Already the first signs of autumn are appearing, leaves of red and gold rustle on the trees and the last of the summer flowers are fading in the garden. Autumn is also the start of a new beginning. As the last apples fall from the trees Mother Nature is already preparing for spring; the dead leaves from this year will cover the ground beneath the winter snows, protecting plants and seeds and enriching the earth ready for next year. Animals are busy collecting berries, nuts and fruit to save for the months when food is scarce, just as I do when

I dig up the last of the potato and carrots to store for the coming cold season.

Of course, my little friends, Ness, Muffin, Rem and Snowy, view this time of the year as a time for fun. Rolling in the dead leaves I've carefully swept into a pile for the compost heap is their idea of heaven, as is the discovery of some new animal that they found eating fallen fruit under the apple tree. Sadi, being our watchdog, is much too busy to indulge in such games. She prowls the land looking for bigger animals that might cause problems, mountain lions or bears, and gives them warning that this is her territory and they are not welcome.

Belle, our amazing little bear, continues to fill her life with music and dance, and as always when she wanders in the woodlands she finds new and magical adventures to share with us. Tonight's story is just one of those, so if you have had your milk and cookies snuggle under the blankets and I'll tell you all about it.



The Tales of the Wizard

**These are my little stories taken from inside my magical
Book of Ways**

The Magical Pool

Belle hurried down the track that twisted and turned in the shade of the

ancient Pinon pines, eager to get to her favorite spot by the river where the branches of a weeping willow dangled in the fast flowing water. In her head snatches of a tune played constantly, going round and round but never coming to completion. It was a somewhat sad piece of music and it intrigued her, for some reason she knew she would hear all of it if she could just relax and listen to the sounds of the forest.

With a sigh of happiness she sat on the cool grass in the shade of the tree and listened carefully. This was the best time of the day, around her the birds sang; insects hummed in harmony and brightly coloured dragonflies darted amongst the rushes on the riverbank, flashing like jewels in the dappled sunshine.

Belle watched, fascinated as the busy insects skittered here and there over the rippling water, searching for something only they could see, then she lay back in the soft grass; closed her eyes and concentrated on catching every note of the elusive, haunting tune.

The music was stronger here, as she had expected it would be, after all, this was a place of magic where on many occasions before she had heard the lilting tunes that she knew were the songs of the Faire folks, those mysterious tiny beings who were now an important part of her life.

Slowly, as she relaxed and the forest sounds faded into the background, the notes began to come together and she closed her eyes started to hum the tune

"Good morning Belle." The tinkling, musical voice startled Belle; she sat up quickly, and then smiled as she saw her friend Ariadne sitting beside her.

"Hello Princess," Belle smiled shyly. "I was listening to the music and didn't realize you were here."

"Yes, I heard you humming and didn't want to disturb you so I waited until you were finished."

"It's beautiful music," Belle murmured wistfully, "but it sounds so sad, not like the songs your people have sung for me before."

"Sad, yes I agree, it is very sad; it's a song about the way things used to be until something happened a long time ago. The tiny Princess fluttered her wings and settled on a branch in front of Belle. "Let me tell you the story of what really happened and maybe you can help."

Belle leaned forward eagerly. A true Princess was asking her, a very young bear with no knowledge of the world, for help. It was almost too much to believe, but she hadn't heard the story yet so she made no promises and kept her little paws crossed for luck as Ariadne began.

"Many, many years ago our people moved amongst the people of the world in safety," she said.

"No one was afraid of us so we had no need for disguise." "Then things started to go wrong." "Stories began to circulate that we were not what we appeared to be and as time went by these stories got worse until it became so bad that we had to hide ourselves away in daytime."

Ariadne continued, "Of course this made life impossible for us, as, like humans, we need to grow crops for food and collect honey, nuts and berries to store for winter." "Slowly our people began to drift apart, moving to areas where humans had never set foot, in a vain hope of continuing to live openly and without fear."

She paused and looked around at the surrounding mountains and forests regrettably.



"This was once such a place," Ariadne murmured quietly, "the people who lived here accepted us for what we are, but of course it couldn't last." "One day soldiers arrived, fierce men with no thought for anything but their own greed."

Her eyes filled with tears as she continued; "The local people fled in fear and we were once again forced into hiding. "

"But you have no need to hide now!" Belle exclaimed. "No-one in the valley will harm you."

Princess Ariadne smiled. "Yes. Thanks to you and your friends we are safe again, but that wasn't the whole story." She continued, "Something else occurred that was to make it impossible for many of us ever to show their true selves to the world, and that's where you might be able to help."

"You said, many of you," Belle said thoughtfully, "so that means there must be many more hiding away somewhere." "Are they trapped in a cave or something and can't get out?"

"No, if it were so simple maybe we could have done something about it long ago," Ariadne answered. "The truth is, they are all around us, but you can't see them for what they truly are."

Belle looked around in astonishment. "Then where are they?" She asked. "Are they invisible?"

The little Faire laughed. "Not invisible, in fact there's one sitting on your hand right now."

Belle looked down, wide-eyed. Then the truth dawned on her. "It's a dragonfly," she gasped in surprise. "The dragonflies are really Faires in disguise."

Belle inspected the little creature carefully, the wings, transparent but also glowing with colour looked just like Ariadne's but that was where the resemblance ended.

Although the little insects looked magical when they hovered above the stream, they had none of the grace and beauty of the exquisite creature before her.

"Can't you use magic to turn her into a real Faire?" she asked hopefully.

"The Wizard knows some really good spells, maybe he could help."

"I wish I could, but the only magic that will work is now out of our reach," Ariadne assured her.

"But I was thinking that maybe, with help from your friends, you could

bring it back."

"I'm sure we can," Belle said brightly. "Just show me what needs to be done then leave it to me."

Princess Ariadne explained the problem as they slowly made their way through the woodlands. "And so," she concluded, "we have to somehow get the pool back to the way it was many years ago."

But why does it have to be that pool?" Belle asked. "Why can't we just make another somewhere else?"

"Ah, I wish it was so simple," Ariadne sighed "but the stream that feeds this pool is very special, as it flows down through the rocks it washes over some very magical crystals." "They give it the wonderful properties that make it work."

Belle was still puzzled. "But what does it actually do," she persisted. "And why does it have to be a pool?"

"Why doesn't the river work in the same way?"

Ariadne laughed. "I can see that I'll have to explain everything before you'll be satisfied." she chuckled. "So sit down for a while and I'll tell you."

As her little friend told her of the wonderful way in which the pool helped her people Belle began to realize just how important it was to restore it to its original condition, but there were still some things she didn't fully understand. "So the water acts as a mirror," she mused "but when your people look in the river they can't see anything clearly because of the ripples."

Ariadne nodded, "That's right, and that's why you see the dragonflies darting around." "They are trying to find just one calm spot where they hope they will see their real reflection for the first time and can then be seen in their true form. "

"Now do you understand why their song is so sad?"

" It's simply because they can't be like the rest of us who were lucky enough to be here before the pool disappeared."

"Then we must fix it," Belle said firmly. "I want to hear all your people singing happy songs."

"Then come with me". Ariadne fluttered along the riverbank closely followed by the excited little bear.

Belle followed Ariadne through a gap in the tangled bushes and looked around in wonder. In all her wanderings through the woodlands she had never come across such a beautiful spot.

Closed in on three sides by a low, fern covered cliff and with soft springy grass covering the ground, the small, horseshoe shaped glade was idyllic, a place where magic and mystery filled the air.

But all was not perfection. Ariadne led her to the end of the clearing and pointed to the jumble of rocks piled against the base of the cliff.

"There's our problem Belle," she said quietly.
"The pool is buried under all those rocks."

She sighed, "Now do you see why we need the help of yourself and all your friends?"

Belle's heart sank. The rocks were huge, far too big for her to move, even with the help of all her friends. For a moment she thought it was an impossible task then, as she looked at the trickle of water that seeped from the cliff and disappeared into the rock pile, a plan began to form in her mind.

"I think I know how it can be done," she gasped. I'll need the help of the Wizard, Patricia and Christy, but I'm sure it won't be as difficult as it looks." With that she dashed off, forgetting even to say goodbye to her friend.

"Hey, slow down Belle." The old Wizard looked up in alarm as Belle rushed past the vegetable plot. "What's the hurry?"

Belle slithered to a halt. "We've got a job to do," she panted breathlessly. "Ariadne asked if we could help with a really important task and I said we could. Er,,,, I'm mean I said I'd ask if we could," she added hurriedly.

"Well, I'm sure we can," the Wizard assured her, "If it's within our power."

"Oh, it is, I know it is," Belle giggled. "In fact I think it's going to be really easy."

"Well that's the sort of problem I like," he chuckled. "Now, let's go and

find Patricia and Christy and you can explain just what we have to do."

"I'm sure they would love to spend time helping the Faire folk, and please don't you go running off at top speed, you know my old legs can't keep up with you."

Belle jiggled around impatiently on the front porch as the old Wizard hobbled along to the house.

Although the Faire folk had waited a long time for help, she was in a hurry, for she knew that very soon there would once again be hundreds, maybe even thousands, of new friends in the forest, and she just couldn't wait a minute longer to meet them all.

"Ah, just wait a minute until I get my breath back," the Wizard puffed. "Ask Patricia and Christy to bring lunch out here and you can explain what you want us to do while we eat."

"But can't we go before lunch?" Belle protested. "It won't take long, I promise." But her words fell on deaf ears.

The Wizard was too old to be dashing around with no food for fortitude and, as he explained, it wouldn't do for him to fall asleep before the job was finished.

"Now, tell us all what you want us to do," he said as he tucked into a sandwich, "and take your time."

"So, all we have to do is move all those rocks," the Wizard mused, "but you say they are really big." "It doesn't sound like an easy job to me."

"But you don't have to move them," Belle said excitedly. "I've got a plan, and I know you can make it work, and I promise it won't be too difficult."

"Well, it sounds like you've got it all worked out young lady, so off we go."

"Just tell us what we'll be needing and lead the way." He shuffled to his feet and the little work party followed Belle to the old garden shed, which, like all garden sheds held not only the gardening tools, but all the assorted jumble that accumulated over the years and which, the Wizard said, might come in handy some day.

He didn't know just how right he was.

"We'll need them," Belle said thoughtfully as she scrambled around

amongst all the clutter, "and some of that, and this looks like it might be useful." Soon there was quite a pile outside the door. "That's it I think," the little bear mused. "If we need anything else we can come back."

The Wizard scratched his head. "Looks like my old shed has been cleaned out at last," he smiled. "I knew all that stuff would be needed some day."

"I hope your idea works, Belle or we'll have to bring it all back."

Patricia and Christy, with the Wizard's help, pushing a fully loaded wheel barrow followed Belle into the forest and stopped in amazement as she led the way into the secluded clearing.

"WOW!!" "It is a real Faire dell," Patricia gasped. "So close to our house and we never knew about it."

Belle giggled happily. "And it will soon be filled with Ariadne's family," she laughed. "And I found the way to bring them all back together!"

The old Wizard studied the pile of rocks and the jumble of odds and ends Belle had collected from the shed and slowly it began to dawn on him just what Belle had in mind.

"Pass me a spade," he chuckled. "I reckon our little dancing bear should be a Wizard too." He chuckled, "she's certainly thought up a magical solution to this little problem."

They set to work happily and very soon they had dug a hole that he thought would be big enough, right in front of the rock pile. "Now, tell me what you want me to do with this." He held up a sheet of plastic.

"That's to put in the hole to stop the water running away." Belle explained. "Just push it into the hole and put rocks around the top to keep it in place."

The Wizard did as she requested, packing the plastic well into the hole and Patricia and Christy gathered rocks to make a neat wall around the top.

"Now what do we do?" Christy asked. "We've made a nice little pond but there's no water, it's all going under the rock pile."

"That's why I wanted the drainpipe," Belle chuckled. "The Wizard knows how to fix it up on the house so he should easily be able to make the

water run through it and into the pond."

She was right. Amazed at her ingenuity the old Wizard set to work. Belle had thought of everything, even the bendy parts, as she called them, that he carefully fitted together, and soon, with the whole thing held in place by some of the big rocks, the first trickle of water splashed into the new pool.

But Belle wasn't satisfied.

"We can't leave it like that," she decided. "Ariadne said the water had to be still, with no ripples."

"Can't you make the pipe little bit longer then the end will be under the water and it won't splash?"

Luckily there was one short piece of drainpipe left in the barrow.

In a couple of minutes it was fitted and they all stood back to admire their work and congratulate Belle for her clever idea.

As they watched they became aware of dragonflies all around and more coming from the forest.

Soon the whole dell seemed to be alive with the fluttering little insects.

But Belle wasn't finished. "It needs some plants around for them to sit on," she decided, "then they can rest and admire their reflection in the water."

Very soon it was completed to her satisfaction. Ferns and small shrubs surrounded the pool with branches bending over the water, and as the pool filled she could feel the excitement building.

She looked around, searching for her friend Ariadne, desperately wanting her to be there to share the moment when the pool at last began to work its magic, but there was no sign of her.

However, her disappointment was short lived.

As they stood around and watched a wonderful thing began to happen.

First of all the water began to glow with a strange pulsing light.

Then a fine mist, almost like spun silk, drifted around the dell, enveloping all in a crystal clear web and from high in the branches of the surrounding trees soft music played. As they watched, spellbound by the beauty and magic, Ariadne appeared.

For a moment the tiny being hovered above the pool, her image



mirrored perfectly in the water, and then she fluttered down and perched delicately on a fern beside Belle.

"You are crying," Belle exclaimed in alarm. "Isn't the pool working?"

"Oh yes, it's working perfectly," the Princess assured her.

"The tears are of happiness, not sadness. You have all helped us so much that I am at a loss to know how we can reward you."

"But we don't need a reward," they all echoed in unison.

"Just knowing that you are at last together in your true form is payment enough for the little we have done," Patricia assured her.

"And little Belle came up with the perfect solution to solve your problem," Christy added. "Without her we would never have known about it."

Belle blushed with embarrassment.

"I only remembered how the Wizard fixed the leaky gutter and made the water run into a tub for the garden." She whispered.
"So he should get the thanks."

Then she gazed around in amazement. "Look," she yelled,
" lots of new faeries."

And it was true. As the dragonflies hovered over the pool they were transformed into beautiful smiling little beings, their wings flashing in the sun as they fluttered around happily.

Ariadne smiled. "Now we are finally one people again." "No longer do we have to sing the sad song, and for you Belle, we will compose a song of happiness and thanksgiving."

The all too soon they regretfully had to say their goodbyes.

Dinner was long overdue and all the little dogs back at the house would be getting very hungry. As they made their way back
Belle danced along in the lead.

Already she could hear the first notes of the new music, and she knew it was written especially for her. What more could a little bear ask from life?

But there was more to come.

Back at the house Patricia stared in surprise
as she walked into the kitchen.

"Someone's brought us a gift," she shouted to the others. "Looks like little pots of honey."

"I wonder who it could have been."

They all crowded into the kitchen and the Wizard took the top off one of the jars. "Yes, that's honey alright," he murmured. With a spoon he took a small sample and placed it on his tongue.

"WOW!" he exclaimed. "I've never tasted honey so sweet. I wonder who could have brought it for us."

"I think I know," Belle chuckled. "And I'm sure there'll be more to it than just a jar of honey."

Once again Belle was right.

No matter how much they used, the honey pots were always full the next time they looked.

Ariadne had found a way to thank them, and as always with the Faire it was in the sweetest way possible.

Well children. Once again it's time to leave you to your dreams. Have a good night's sleep and may tomorrow bring only happiness.

Good night.

The Wizard

The Way of the Wizard October 2009



Hellooooo children.

As you can see I am back again with story time. I know you can also see I have friends with me. This is Patricia and her granddaughter Kasin. Don't you think she looks a bit like our Belle?

Patricia and Kasin are both very real people with magical books of their own.

Tonight they have with them some of the stories of Belle the Bear Foot Ballerina. I know you all remember Belle. Patricia has known Belle a very long time and she is happy to weave her stories for us.

So Let's get started.

October in the valley is a time of great change.

The nights are drawing in and there's a distinct feel of approaching winter in the air. The rustle of fallen leaves blowing in the cool breeze is a reminder that change is always with us and each year brings new things to remind us that we too are subject to those changes.

This time of the year, when the memories of long summer nights are fresh in our minds, is a good time to sit around a crackling log fire and chat about some of the events of past times, things that have changed our lives or affected the way we



live and observe all the wonderful happenings around us.

We all learn something new each day, if we didn't life would be just a long procession of boring days with no excitement to mark each one as special.

Belle, our little friend with the enquiring mind and ability to soak up new information like a sponge, started her learning process at a very early age.

From the time she was able to wander unsteadily out of the door and survey all the mysteries of the surrounding woodlands and streams her Pa began to teach her of the importance of seeing and understanding the ways of nature and how all the things around her had something important to tell her.

Pa was a wise man indeed. His love of nature enabled him to pass on knowledge in a way that young Belle could understand and remember.

He knew that a child's mind is like a new garden, tend it carefully, feed it with true knowledge and it will become fertile, a place for good ideas and thoughts to flourish and not be choked with the weeds of greed, envy, apathy and discontent that grow so quickly in untended ground.

Although he is no longer with us his teachings live on in this happy little bear, and as we sit chatting with the firelight flickering on the walls and ceiling she often tells us stories of the times when she wandered around the garden and woodlands, holding tightly to Pa's hand as he patiently explained the natural wonders of her world; how she could learn the ways to live a good and full life by learning from them. And why, if she respected the land, she could always trust in Mother Nature to supply all her needs. A lesson we humans would do well to heed.

Here are two of her Pa's many stories



The Tales of Pa
from the Big Book of Nature
added with great love to the
Book of Ways

The Grape Vine Saga

Little Belle loved to watch the sunshine pass between the grape leaves and cast shadows as it filtered to the ground below.



She loved to lie on her soft bear back and catch the sun dust as it floated down to her as she lay under the vines.

Now this was great fun, but more fun was when it was early autumn because Belle could eat the grapes as she played in the sun dust.

In the garden the grapes, called Scuppernongs, were of a special sort; a teaching sort.

Where most grapes required 2 plants to pollinate and have fruit, these were of the stand alone kind.

It was a thing Papa Wilbur Bear loved to talk about.

It was a lesson in standing for yourself and “bearing” in mind who you are and not allow that who you were or were not, or could not be, was based on the dependence of another.

For these vines only require their single life force to grow, and develop and bear fruit.

There was one such lesson Belle would always remember that came from the grape vines.

Papa Wilbur Bear had learned from Mama Dew years ago about the virtues of memories.

His wise words always reminded Belle about the true value of memories.

Learn from the rough memories, for they will always be learning stories that offer help in future times.

They will carry you across the rough patches yet to come.

These rough patches will become teaching stories that can later become happy memories and those always are the truth of growth.

Turn the rough patches into fertile soil so that the growing can always be fruitful.

Belle's little heart always danced with joy when she thought about that.

And for Belle the grapevine lesson of individual strength
was always a happy memory.



Catching the Good Memories

A stitch in time. Mama Bear had said that over and over again.

Belle just always wondered what that really meant.

Then one day when she was out in the garden with Papa Wilbur Bear he began a story.

It was about struggles and hardships.

It was about memories and it was about survival.

He talked with little Belle about his life experiences and his mother's and all the bear clan gone before.

Papa Wilbur Bear sat in the shade of the big sycamore tree and wiped his sweaty bear brow with a soft cloth.



“Listen, Belle”, he began, “and always remember struggles are just stitches in time because they are the weave that designs your life story.”

“Without these stitches you would be lost indeed.”

“Never think that hardships are unfair or a punishment,
but know they are the steps to recover your true heart.”



“So Belle, make all your adventures good memories, and never, never think you are anything but a perfect example of the world of Bear-ness.”

“Be who you are in your inner most heart.”

“Turn all your life adventures into a life long learning experience and move along the journey with laughter and freedom from fault.”

“No good choices.”

“No bad choices.”

“Only choices.”

“What is that song- - - - ?”

“Oh yes, that’s right,.... “Have It All Your Way.”

Little Belle just sang that song over and over in her little bear heart and danced and danced her little bear feet across the dew covered garden.

The Way of the Wizard November 2009



Hellooooo children. Yes, it's me again, complete with funny hat and my book of magical tales of my little friend's adventures in the hidden valley. Those of you who, like us, live in the northern hemisphere will know that summer is now over and many of you will be looking forward to the snow and the fun it brings.

Sleds, or toboggans, as they are sometimes called, will soon be dragged from the dark recesses of the shed where they've lain since last winter. Runners will be cleaned, maybe a new coat of paint applied, and you'll wait impatiently for the first flakes of snow to drift down from the grey sky.

For centuries kids have done the same thing, nothing can beat the thrill of hanging on for dear life as you race down the slopes at what seems to be breakneck speed, then waiting for Dad to come and drag the sled back up the hill for you to repeat the process.

These are memories that will last you a lifetime, and I've seen many excited Dads still doing it, in the name of safety of course, they wouldn't want their kids to come to harm should anything go wrong.

Well, that's their excuse and who am I to disagree, fun is for all ages and the longer it takes to grow up the more fun you can have.

You may wonder why I'm rambling on about snow when for many of you it won't arrive for another couple of months, or for the unlucky ones, not at all.

Well, the reason is that we live in a valley surrounded by mountains, and that means we get some very unusual weather, and often the snow season arrives early and takes us by surprise, so we have to be ready for it. Logs stacked on the porch ready for those crackling wood fires that keep us warm through the long nights. Boots, hats and heavy coats are taken

out of the cupboards and snow shovels are placed outside of the front door ready for use to clear a path to the old truck in the garage.

But this year we were taken completely by surprise, whoever heard of snow in September, we certainly hadn't, and so, when we reluctantly crawled out of our warm beds on an unusually cold morning and saw the flurries of snow outside the window we were amazed.

But for Belle, Rem, Snowy, Ness and Muffin dates on the calendar mean nothing and they couldn't wait to get outside and feel the soft snow between their toes.

Of course we have rules about going out in snowy weather as very often it will deteriorate rapidly and blizzards can last for several days, but so early in the season that would be very unlikely, and so, after a breakfast of hot porridge and a warning not to wander too far away, our happy little adventurers trotted off.

As we busied ourselves indoors we could hear their excited laughter as they played and as we were quite sure no harm could befall them we soon became absorbed in other things, until Patricia glanced out of the window.

"Wow! Look at that!" she exclaimed. "It's coming down so hard I can't see past the end of the porch."

That got all our attention, and for a moment all else was forgotten as we watched the swirling flakes building up on the windows.

"I can't see or hear Belle and the boys out there," Christy said worriedly. "I hope they haven't gone far."

"I'll go and get them," I volunteered, "they are probably in the barn with the horses."

I was wrong, Ellie and Moon Star whinnied softly when I opened the door, but there was no sign of our errant brood.

"I called loudly, expecting them to be hiding in some dark corner amongst the hay bales but there was no reply, not so much as a giggle or a whisper.

Now I was worried, the snow was falling faster and a cold wind was blowing it into drifts against the barn walls. I hurried back to the house to alert

the others, there was no time to waste, our little friends are very small, and already they would be having difficulty walking through the deep snow.

With all the familiar landmarks covered they might be unable to find their way home.

Sadi, our watchdog greeted me on the porch. Although she is already a big dog she is less than a year old and this is her first experience of snow, but she might be able to help. Christy and Patricia donned heavy coats, boots and gloves we set out in what was rapidly becoming a howling blizzard.



The Tales of the Wizard
These are my little stories taken from inside my Magical
Book of Ways,
Snowtime Fun in The Magic Valley

Ness, Snowy, Rem, Muffin and Belle were having fun. Had they looked upwards they might have seen that the branches of the evergreen pine trees were bending under the weight of the snow.

Sheltered from the worst of the weather they had found a small clearing with a light covering of snow and a steep bank that was ideal for sliding down, and they were making the most of it. Rem was the first to notice the change when the wind shook a tree and a shower of snow fell on him.

"Brrrr, that's chilly," he yelped in surprise. The others laughed. With their thick coats they were quite warm, but Rem, who is shorthaired, doesn't have the same protection from the cold.

He shivered uncomfortably as he tried to join in the games, but for him the fun had gone. Now he just wanted to be back on the rug in front of a roaring fire. Reluctantly the others agreed.

"We can come back tomorrow," Snowy growled, "If we're lucky it'll be deeper and we can build a snow house."



"Or a snowman," Belle chirped happily as she slid down the slope for the last time.

Chattering excitedly they trotted happily back along the path, laughing loudly as they dodged the snow which was now falling more often from the tree branches.

But when they came to the edge of the forest they stopped in surprise

"WOW!" Ness exclaimed, as they were hit by the icy blast of wind and snow.

Suddenly the little band didn't feel so confident. Everything looked different; the paths they knew so well had gone, covered over by a white blanket.

"I think we came the wrong way," Muffin grumbled as he peered into the windswept gloom. "I can't see our house anywhere."

Snowy tried to appear calm, but he was worried too. With nothing to show him which way they should go he suddenly felt a touch of panic, but he didn't show it. Instead he made a decision. "That way,,,,, I think," he muttered. "Follow me, and stay close or you might get lost."

"But we *are* lost," Ness grumbled, "and my tummy's rumbling so it must be lunch time."

"Oh, you're always hungry," Belle laughed. "Come on, we might as well follow Snowy." "If he's wrong we'll have to follow our footprints back to here and try again."

Snowy, who just happens to be the only one who isn't white, was easy to see, his black coat stood out like a beacon for a while, but soon he as well had acquired a covering of snow that made him almost invisible.

By now Rem was shivering and feeling very miserable. "Are you sure this is the right way?" he asked for the umpteenth time as they scrambled through yet another snowdrift which threatened to bury him completely.

"Well, I'm not really sure," Snowy snapped, "but if you can do better you can lead the way."

"I'll lead the way," Belle offered eagerly. "I can walk upright so I can see better than any of you."

"Can't see much in this stuff however tall you are," Muffin said uneasily. "If it gets any worse we'll all be buried up to our necks and we won't be able to walk at all."

"Then we'd better get moving," Belle decided. "I am bigger than any of you so I'll clear the way and make it easier for you all."

Belle's method of clearing the way was easy. She simply threw herself at the drifts and then rolled along until a path was made. In that way they made good time, but still they had no idea where they were, and the snow was still falling heavily.



"I'm stopping for a rest," Ness decided. "We could be walking around in circles for all we know." The others agreed, except Belle, "I'll go on a bit further and see if I can find a path," she said. "You four can huddle together with Rem in the middle and keep him warm till I get back."

It wasn't long before Belle returned, and the news was grim. "There's nothing that way," she told the boys as they shook the snow off their backs. "Maybe we should stay here and wait to be rescued."

"Well I think we should go back to the forest," Ness suggested. "We had some shelter there and it wasn't so cold."

"But how do we find our way back?" Belle asked, pointing back the way they'd come. "The snow has covered out footprints."

The others gazed in dismay. The track they had cleared was now invisible. To go back was as bad as staying where they were.

Glumly they decided she was right. All they could do now was sit and wait for help to arrive. But Belle had other ideas.

"No sitting around doing nothing," she said brightly. "That way we'll all get cold and end up under a snowdrift."
"Here's what we're going to do."

The boys listened in wonder as she explained her plan. "But how do you know how to do it?" Ness asked,

"Pa told me once that everything you need to survive is all around you, and all we have at the moment is lots of snow."

"Well, it doesn't sound very logical," Ness frowned,
"but show us what to do."
"It's got to be better than sitting in this freezing wind."

"Right, let's get started." Belle gathered up a small pile of snow and packed it into a ball. Then she started to roll it around in the soft snow and to the boys amazement it grew bigger.

When she thought it was big enough she started on a second one, then a third. By now they were all happily rolling snowballs and the cold was forgotten.

Soon, with a large pile ready Belle began the next stage. She placed the snowballs in a circle and started to pile them one on the other, packing soft snow in the gaps as she progressed and slowly building up a wall with a gap in one side.

It looks to be leaning inwards," Muffin warned her. "It might fall down."

"No, that's the way it's supposed to be," Belle assured him "If I've done it right it won't fall."

As the work progressed the boys were soon warm as toast and even Rem forgot his troubles as he pushed the snowballs around and around. The walls now had almost come together in the middle and they had what looked like half a giant ball with a hole in it.

"Almost finished, and though I say it myself, a pretty good job," Belle said proudly. Now all we have to do is make it smooth inside and out, and we

have our own little shelter."

"Whoopee," Rem shouted happily as he scrambled through the hole, "a snow house just for us. "Now we can keep warm while we wait."

The others quickly followed him inside and were amazed.

"It's warm in here!" Snowy exclaimed in surprise.
"I expected it to be colder."

"That's because the heat from our bodies is heating it up," Belle explained. "Now that we are out of the wind we should be quite comfortable."

"But how did you know how to build it?" Ness asked.
"Have you built one before?"

Belle shook her head. "No, but Pa used to tell me stories about my ancestor, Mama Dew, who lived in a place called the Frozen North where it snows all the time, and he showed me books that had pictures of people called Eskimos who make little snow houses."

They call them Igloos and used to live in them all the time."

"I don't think I could live in them all the time," Muffin said thoughtfully.

"There's something missing."

Belle looked around in surprise. "It's got walls, a roof and a door, what more do you want?"

"A kitchen with a stove," Muffin replied with a grin. "Maybe you can arrange that when we build the next one."

The snowstorm ended as quickly as it had begun.

Patricia, Christy and I had almost given up trying to find our little family when the sun peeped through a gap in the clouds, the wind dropped, and within minutes the surrounding mountains and forests came into view.

But still there was no sign of Belle and the boys. "We'd better get back to the house," Christy suggested. "I wouldn't be surprised if they got back before us."

"A good idea," Patricia agreed. "I'm hoarse with all the shouting; I'll make some soup to warm us all up."

"And I'll stoke the fire," I offered. "I'll bet they are all freezing after being out in this weather."

But we were wrong.

The house was silent, and although we stood on the front porch and shouted there was no answer. Somewhat dejected we went back inside to discuss what to do next.

Sadi, in her favorite spot on the rug began to doze, but suddenly her ears pricked up; she looked around happily, and trotted to the door with her tail wagging.

Fully expecting to see five wet and bedraggled little creatures waiting I opened the door, but there was no one there. Nothing moved in that white, featureless landscape but Sadi insisted on growling quietly. She could hear something, but whatever it was it was invisible to me.

"Hey, come and look at this." Patricia, busy in the kitchen making a pot of soup, shouted. "Down at the end of the lawn. What is it?"

"Looks like an oddly shaped snow drift," Christy suggested.

I



agreed. "Never seen one that shape before but that's all it could be."

Sadi had other ideas.

Again she could hear something and her tail was wagging so hard it looked likely to fall off.

When she started to paw at the back door I let her out and she raced off down the snow-covered lawn barking madly, and then disappeared from view.

Moments later excited laughter reached us and one by one our missing family appeared, apparently from under the snowdrift.

Rather red faced and embarrassed the little band of adventurers crowded into the kitchen. "I feel so silly" Belle giggled.
"We were so close to home and we still got lost."

"And we spent all that time building an igloo when we could have been sitting in front of the fire," Snowy added ruefully as he sipped his soup.

"And I wouldn't have been so cold," Rem chimed in as he pushed Sadi out of the way and claimed his spot by the fire."

"We'll, I thought it was fun," Muffin chuckled. "But I think next time we go out in the snow I'll take sandwiches."

"Me too" Ness agreed looking thoughtfully out of the window.

"In fact, we could have lunch in our little snow house tomorrow. But we'll have to make the door a bit bigger, Sadi almost demolished it when she tried to get in."

The Igloo lasted a whole week, even when the surrounding hills were clear it stood there in the garden, a reminder of how clever our little bear is, but eventually it melted away and collapsed.

Maybe they'll build another when the next snows arrive, but I don't think they'll ever again do it in a blizzard.

Well children, a scary time but once again with a happy ending.

You may be wondering why an old Wizard with all his magic spells couldn't have used them instead of going out

searching in the freezing cold snow.

The truth is, I could, and would have if I'd thought there was real danger,
but by waiting, I gave my friends time to work things out for themselves
and once more Belle proved the wisdom of Pa's teaching.

Had she not listened they wouldn't have had so much fun nor would they
know to take shelter and stay in one place
when they are lost in bad weather.

That's all from me once again. Now it's time you were all asleep. Sweet
dreams little ones and may your tomorrows always be filled with fun.

The Wizard.

The Way of the Wizard December 2009



Hello Children. Here I am once more and this time it's the magical month of December, and Christmas, the time of the year that so many people look forward to is almost here. Already many of you will be decorating the Christmas tree with fancy baubles and coloured lights and Mums and Dads will be searching the shops to make sure they have those special gifts you asked for. Now all you have to do is wait for that wonderful and mysterious night to arrive.

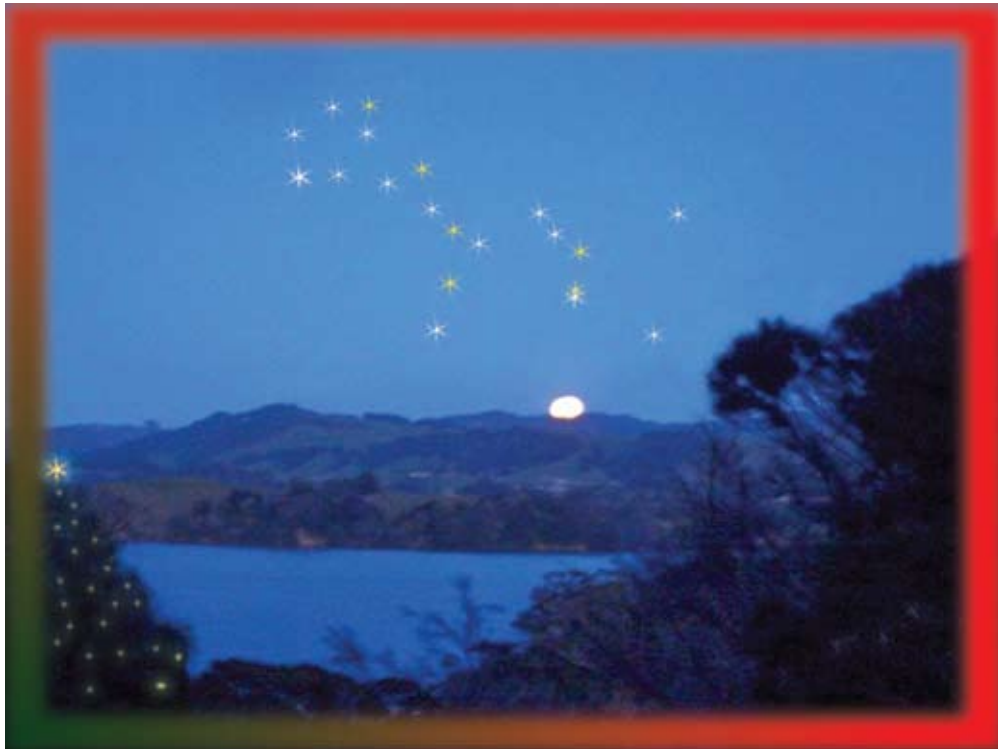
Christmas is traditionally a time of love and giving, all those toys you find beneath the tree when you get up on Christmas day are a token of the love and magic of Christmas.

Unfortunately, in this hectic and disordered world there are those who are not so lucky; children, who for no fault of their own will never know the joys and love of Christmas and have never experienced the thrill of opening a parcel and finding a gift given with love. These children may be someone you know, the little girl you see in the park but never speak to, or the boy in the same class at school who doesn't seem to have many friends. Lack of money is not a crime and those needy people who never take their children to the toy shops shouldn't be treated as a class apart. There is so much that can be done to spread the Christmas spirit. Just take a look in your toy box. How many of those special toys from last year have you outgrown. Do you really need them now that you are a year older and looking forward to playing with the latest wonders of the toy world? Those forgotten toys could make the difference between a sad and lonely Christmas and a time to remember for some child. Instead of throwing them out with the rubbish ask Mum and Dad to find one of the many organizations that collect toys to give to the needy, there will be one close by. Make sure the toys are clean and in working order, and take them along, with a roll of bright wrapping paper of course. The cost of this small gesture is small, the value immeasurable.

For all you parents who are reading this. Teach your children the joys of giving while they are still young. The values you teach them now will help to shape their world in the future.

The Tales of the Wizard
These are my little stories taken from my
Magical Book of Ways

This month's adventure of my little friends takes place in New Zealand. As always we have flown from our magical valley in New Mexico to spend time in the summer sunshine. Unfortunately my family is growing and even though my magical spells are powerful I have yet to find a way of getting them all across the Pacific Ocean without losing someone in the process. So, here we are, Belle, for the first time, with Ness, Muffin and I in our little cottage by the sea and without the others it seems strangely quiet. However, I have no doubt it will change quickly, already Belle is listening to the unfamiliar songs of the native birds and searching the overgrown garden for signs of her friends, the Faires. Ness and Muffin headed along their secret track to the beach the moment we arrived so I'm enjoying a quiet moment gazing out over the harbour. However, things are never quiet for long when my friends are around and I knew that there would be much excitement around the dinner table as they discussed what new adventures they were planning. I was right, the chatter started the moment they arrived back.



The Whales' Song

"Hey! We saw a dolphin" Ness yelled breathlessly as he rushed indoors. "It was swimming at our secret beach and tried to talk to us."

"But it was making funny squeaking noises and we couldn't understand it," Muffin panted as he flopped down on the rug.

"Maybe it was singing," Belle said hopefully. "I wish I'd been there to listen."



"Fishes can't sing," Ness giggled. "They would be blowing bubbles and gurgling all the time."

"Ah, but they aren't fishes," Belle retorted. "They are mammals and have to put their heads out of the water to breathe, so they could sing if they wanted to."

Ness and Muff looked at me in surprise. "Is that right?" Ness asked. "Can't they breathe in water through their ears like fishes do?"

"Oh, you are a silly Billy," Belle chuckled. "Those are gills, not ears, dolphins and whales don't have them."

I nodded in agreement. "Belle's right" I assured Ness, "but I'm surprised that a little bear who's never seen the sea would know that."

"Oh, it's just something that Pa told me," Belle said quietly. "He was telling me a story about 'Old Man Whale' and 'Mama Dew', my ancestor."

Ness and Muffin, who were now investigating the stove to see what was for dinner, looked round in surprise. "We met 'Old Man Whale' at the beach last year," Muffin told her.

"And he thought we were baby Polar Bears," Ness said peevishly. "He told us we looked like an old friend of his called Mama Dew"

Now it was Belle's turn to be amazed. "WOW!" she gasped. "I wish I'd been here to meet him. I bet he could have told me lots of stories and he could have taught me the song he used to sing as he travelled around the world."

"Well, maybe he'll be here again this year," I said hopefully. "It's always good to listen to someone from the old days and learn how things used to be."

Belle was unusually quiet as we ate dinner and afterwards, when the boys went out to play in the garden instead of joining them she climbed onto the old rocking chair on the porch and gazed dreamily at the harbour.
"Do you really think he'll come back?" she murmured.

That's something I couldn't be sure of," I answered honestly, "but whales are creatures of habit, they travel the same paths each year so there's a good chance. We'll have to keep a close watch; he's so big that if he does happen to swim this way we can't miss him."



Then I'll sit here every day," she decided. "If he's still swimming around the world then maybe Mama Dew is still alive."

I watched her as her unblinking eyes scanned the still waters of the harbour until the sun set behind the hills and in the gathering dusk she could watch no more. Her eyelids slowly drooped and she quietly settled into a deep sleep.

I carried her into her bedroom and tucked her in, now I had a problem I hadn't foreseen. Belle, for the first time in her life, was away from her beloved hills and forests and all the friends she'd made. Although Ness and Muff would always be happy to keep her amused their interests were far removed from hers. It would be up to me to find a way to help her, and as I lay in bed that night the beginnings of a plan were forming in my mind.

I was up before daybreak, Belle and the boys, worn out by the excitement of the previous day were fast asleep as I pushed my old dinghy into the water and quietly rowed out into the harbour. When I judged I was far enough I shipped the oars and allowed the dinghy to drift in the tide. The sea was like a mirror, stirred only by shoals of tiny sprats dashing around in their constant search for food. I kept a close watch, hoping that somewhere out there a dolphin would be swimming. Whistling softly I tapped on the side of the boat, hoping to attract it, then I waited. Dolphins are highly intelligent and curious creatures, easily attracted by anything unusual in their environment. Sure enough ripples on the surface a short distance away gave away his presence. I whistled again, he came closer, slowly lifting his head out of the water until he could see, and watching me closely. Now all I could do was wait. The dolphin circled, edging towards me warily, and then he suddenly dived and disappeared from view, only to reappear in an instant right alongside. I resisted the temptation to reach out and touch him as he lay there on the surface, his large bright eyes watching my every move. Then I heard the first sound, a light clicking noise. That was what I'd come to hear. Now I had to use my magical powers. I answered with a low whistle as I searched my mind for the key to decipher the language. In moments I had the answer. Now all I had to do was find a way to make him understand what I was about to ask.

The dolphin floated quietly beside the boat and listened carefully as I explained my predicament, then with a few whistles and a swish of his tail he was gone. Now all I could do was wait and hope he could help.

Ness, Muffin and Belle rushed down to the beach and helped to pull the

dinghy out of the water.

"Where's breakfast?" Muffin asked in surprise, "We thought you'd gone fishing."

"I errr,,, forgot to take my fishing line," I muttered hurriedly, not wanting Belle to hear about the surprise I was planning for her.

"Ahahaha" Ness laughed "and I bet you forgot which spell to use to make the fish jump into the boat."

That set them all giggling; my absent mindedness is a favourite joke among my little friends.

"Never mind," I added. "We'll have bacon and eggs, if I can remember where I put the frying pan."

With hoots of laughter they rushed off to find it. I stopped for a moment, and looked out to sea. The sun, just rising over the hills reflected in sparkling jewels on the ripples and somewhere further along the coast the sound of a boat motor broke the silence. It was going to be a beautiful day, and if my plan worked, a day to remember.

"We found the frying pan," Belle chuckled as I walked in the door.

"And the eggs," Ness yelled.

"And I got the bacon." Muffin said. "Can you remember how to cook or should we do it" he added seriously, Food isn't something he jokes about and he always worries about where the next meal is coming from.

I scratched my chin and thought for a moment. "Well now, if you know where the cook book is I should be able to manage. Now you young rascals wash your hands and then set the table, breakfast will be ready in five minutes."

A good meal is always the best way to start the day. It gives everyone, young or old, a time to sit and chat about their plans for the day, and young ones have so many things to fit into their busy lives that they need lots of food to give them all the energy they'll need. My three companions are no exception, though, like all young ones they are eager to get on with their adventures. Excused from doing the dishes for once they were out of the door before they'd swallowed the last mouthful.

"See you later," Belle and Ness shouted. "At lunchtime, don't forget," Muffin added cheekily.

I watched them as they raced down the garden towards the beach then turned back to my

chores. With a wave of my magic wand the dishwashing problem was sorted in a jiffy. Another wave and the beds were made, dusting done and everything was tidy. Being a Wizard can be very useful at times, but I wouldn't want the little ones to find out just how useful



or they'll never learn how to do things the proper way. With all my hard work finished I was free to carry on with more urgent matters, so, with my binoculars at the ready I made myself comfortable in the rocking chair on the porch.

As the morning wore on I found concentrating on watching the harbour more difficult, the only signs of life had been a couple of small fishing dinghies and soon my eyes became tired and I nodded off to sleep. The excited voices of my young friends returning from their play woke me suddenly. I quickly scanned the harbour but still there was nothing unusual to see..

"We've been to the beach," Belle announced as they came through the door. "I was hoping we'd see the whale but he's not here." She added glumly.

"Well, you have to be patient," I consoled her. "I'm sure that if he knew you were here he'd be longing to meet you."

"Don't you know any magic spells to make him come?" she asked hopefully.

I shook my head. "I'm afraid spells for whales were never taught at Wizard school. They have a special magic of their own and mine would never be strong enough."

"Whales can do magic," Ness gasped. Wow! What sort of things can they do."

"Well, for a start they can hear sounds from great distances and they sing messages that travel through the water for hundreds of miles. That's how they keep in touch with their own kind."

"They sing messages," Belle murmured. "I wonder if,,,,"

"If what? I asked.

"Oh,,, nothing. I just had an idea but it's probably silly. I'm going to have a nap before lunch." She wandered off to her room in a very thoughtful mood.

"Lunch," Muffin said happily, "I knew there was something important to do."

Belle, lost in thought didn't eat much and hardly spoke. After lunch she asked if we could go to the beach again. I was happy to do anything to cheer her up and as all bears love water a cool swim might just do that, so with drinks and sandwiches packed off we went. But I was more than surprised by her actions when we got there.

"I'm going for a swim," she announced.

"Alright, but don't go too deep," I warned her. "It's not wise to swim on a full tummy."

"It's not full," she chuckled." I left some space for later."

"Off you go then and have fun." She seemed to have forgotten her troubles and I watched her paddle out until the water was up to her waist. Then she did a strange thing. She stopped and put her head down into the water and began blowing bubbles. At first I was alarmed, but in a moment she came up for a breath before repeating the process again and again. Then, with a big secretive smile on her face she paddled back to the shore.

"There," she said "That should do it."

Now I was totally confused." Do what?" I asked.

"You'll see," she said cheerfully. "Whales are not the only animals that can sing under water."

Suddenly I realised what she'd been up to. "Ah, you've been singing for the whale." I chuckled. "I thought you were just blowing bubbles." I've learned never to under estimate my little friend but if she could get the whale to appear her magic must be much stronger than mine. As she wrapped a towel around herself and sat on the warm sand beside me she looked very confident. I crossed my fingers and hoped she was right.

"I can hear him" Belle jumped up and stared out to sea. "He's out there calling for me." She rushed into the water and began to sing a song I hadn't heard before. "Then in the distance I spotted a plume of water and a huge tail splashed heavily."

Ness and Muffin, playing in the rock pools turned in alarm at all the noise then shouted in unison. "He's here. The Old Man Whale is back."



"He knows my song," Belle gasped in delight. ""He's singing it for me."

It was true. The Whale's deep voice echoed from the hills as he

approached and matched Belle's singing note for note. When he was as close to shore as he could get I pulled the dinghy into the water; we all piled in and in a minute we were beside him.

"Ah, what have we here," he rumbled. "I recognise two of you, Lord Ness and Muffin I presume. I met you last year when you were, errrr, shall we say in a bit of a pickle."

Ness grinned sheepishly. "Hello Mister Whale" he mumbled. "We've brought you a real Polar Bear this time."

"Yes, I'd noticed." The old Whale blinked his huge eye and inspected Belle closely. "Just like your great, great, great, great, oh, I don't know how many greats, grandma Mama Dew" he said with a smile. "I'd know her descendants anywhere."

"Do you know if she's still alive?" Belle asked hopefully.



"Well, she was the last time I saw her" the huge Whale chuckled. "She will be around for a long, long time, forever in fact. She and I were made immortal a long time ago when she was wandering the earth spreading the seeds of knowledge"

Belle's face lit up with a great smile. "Then will you tell her about me when you next see her,"

"Of course I will, we have a meeting planned in about a hundred year's time." His big eye twinkled, "but she's usually late so it could be longer,"

Belle and the Old Man Whale chatted for a long time. He told her tales about the long ago times when the earth was still young; about the mysterious Faire people, a Narwhal and a beautiful Turquoise princess who became a Dragon. Belle was spellbound. Some of these stories she'd heard from Patricia who had them written down in her book, 'The Truth About Forever,' but this giant creature had known all of those magical beings and he spoke of them as friends. Unfortunately, as all good things must, the meeting had to come to an end.

"Before I go I must ask you a question," the Old Whale said softly. "I have heard you singing my song twice now, the first time was when you were trying to spread happiness around the world, and again today. How did you come to learn it?"

Belle looked surprised. "From the faires of course," she answered. "They know all the nicest music and they teach me how to sing it."

"Ahhh,,,,, I see. I should have known. Mama Dew was a friend of theirs too." Slowly Old Man Whale turned to face the open sea but before he could move away Belle asked one last question. "Will I see you again Mister Whale," she said tearfully.

"Well, I certainly hope so," he answered, "Just sing out when you want me, but if I'm not around, look up into the night sky. Find the constellations Ceres, the Whale, and Ursa Major, the Great bear. Those are the constellations named for Mama Dew and myself. We will always be watching over you." Then, with a splash of his huge tail he was gone.

Belle rubbed a tear from her eye and smiled. "I want to go home," she whispered. "I want to be ready when the stars come out."

I never did see the dolphin again. Maybe he's still looking for Old Man Whale or maybe he too heard and understood Belle's song and knew the search was over. I'll never know.

After that little adventure the holiday quietened down for a while, but it was getting very near to Christmas, and as all children know, that is the time of the year when anything can happen, and with my little family it's always a time of magic. I'll tell you all about it in my next story. Until then, good night and sweet dreams and may your lucky star always shine for you.

The Wizard

The Way of the Wizard

January 2010

Hellooo and a Happy New Year to all my young friends. I hope you all had a very merry Christmas; Santa didn't forget to call, and you are ready for whatever the New Year has in store.



Christmas is always a time of surprises, no matter how careful you were when you wrote your letter to Santa he always seems to know when you have forgotten some little item and his busy helpers will have added them to his sack.

It amazes me that he can remember where you all live, every year on Christmas Eve he arrives on his sleigh and right on time, just after you fall asleep, he carefully places all the gifts under the tree. That is real magic, much better than anything an old wizard like me can conjure up, and that gave me an idea for solving a big problem.

Christmas started early for my little friends. Belle, Ness and Muffin are with me for the summer in our cottage in New Zealand and, as you will remember from my last story, met the Old Man Whale who told Belle many stories about her ancestor, Mama Dew. For the next couple of weeks Belle could talk of nothing else, but as the big day got closer I noticed she was becoming quiet and spending much time alone. I knew what the problem was, but I had no idea what I could do about it. So, with only a few days to Christmas, I made a decision that when they were asleep I would go to see my old friend Santa.



The Tales of the Wizard
These are my little stories taken from inside my
magical
Book of Ways

"Ho Ho Ho," he boomed when I wandered into his vast workshop. "What can I do for you?"

I looked around the huge ice cavern with its snow floor and icicles hanging from the roof and shivered. "A hot drink would help," I grumbled. "Don't you ever think of using heaters?"

"HOHOHO, heaters," he laughed. "Why, the place would melt and I'd have nowhere to store all the toys." "Come in the kitchen and I'll lend you my spare coat and boots."

Leaving the elves busily packing the sleigh I made myself as comfortable as possible while Santa made two steaming mugs of sweet hot chocolate.

"Now my old friend, what can I do for you?" he chuckled as I snuggled myself into his oversized coat and struggled into the huge fur lined boots.

I wrapped my hands around the hot mug and sipped the delicious liquid as I told him of my predicament. He listened carefully, and then shook his head.

"You've left it a little late my friend," he murmured thoughtfully, "As you know this is my busiest time of the year." Then he noticed my glum expression and smiled. "However I'm sure we can do something, but I may need a little help."

The thought of me, just an ordinary old wizard assisting Santa, the greatest magician of all time, was the biggest surprise I've ever had. "Just tell me what to do," I said eagerly. "I'll do anything."

And so my jovial old friend and I huddled around the table and, as his little helpers rushed to complete the wrapping and loading of presents for children around the world, we hatched a plan.

I arrived home tired but happy. Santa, as always, had come to the rescue, but his idea would need more magic than I knew. All our little friends would have to help if it was to work and give Belle the only Christmas gift she wished for.

"Only two more days," Belle murmured wistfully. The harbour sparkled in the morning sun and the happy laughter of Ness and Muffin playing in the garden drifted in through the open windows. "Do you think we'll get a white Christmas?" she asked suddenly.

Surprised by the question I answered without thinking. "A white Christmas!" I exclaimed. "Good heavens no, It never gets cold enough for snow in these parts."

Belle's hopeful expression drooped. "I like the snow," she said unhappily. "I like sitting by the fire and eating roasted chestnuts." "I wonder if all our friends in the valley will be having a party."

That gave me another idea to get Belle out of the sad mood she was in. Now it may come as a surprise to all you modern children, but even an ancient old wizard can have a few modern tricks up his sleeve. "Come with me," I told her. "Let's give them an early Christmas present."

Belle followed me into the kitchen and watched as I pulled my old computer out of the cupboard. "Now, if I can remember how to make it work," I mumbled "I'll show you some real magic."

It took a while but eventually I had all the little plugs in the right places and the machine hummed into life. I tapped the keyboard and watched as the picture on the screen changed and to my delight it was exactly what I wanted.

"Now, this is a microphone," I instructed Belle. "If you sing one of your songs into it I can make a record and send it all the way to the valley and they can listen to it."

My little friend looked doubtful. "I've never sung into one of these before," she said shyly. "Are you sure they will hear me?"

"Of course they will," I assured her. "Sing one of the songs the fairies taught you and I'll let you listen before I send it."

Belle hummed a few lines then slowly, as she gained confidence her beautiful voice became stronger and her face lit up in a beaming smile.

"That's my best song," she said happily. "I hope they can hear it."

Quickly I pressed the play button and once again the music filled the room.

"There you are," I chuckled. "A perfect recording, now all I have to do is send it to them."

"Yippee," She yelled happily. "I'm going to tell Ness and Muffin about it." And off she dashed into the garden.

That little brainwave gave me the perfect chance to explain the plan to Patricia and Christy. Quickly I typed a letter telling them that Santa would be calling on them earlier than usual and what they would need to do before he arrived, then, with a click the message was gone. Now all I could do was wait and hope that their computer was switched on.

It was evening in New Mexico when suddenly a quiet spot in the mountains was filled with the sound of Belle's beautiful song.

Rem and Snowy stopped their play and dashed into the room to see if their friends had returned early. Out in the barn Moon Star trotted to the door to greet his favorite pal, and in the surrounding woodlands those most mysterious of creatures, the Faeries, listened in wonder as the sound drifted through the trees. Suddenly the valley, so quiet without little Belle, had come back to life.

Patricia read the message I'd sent and began the first steps to put the plan into action.

Now it may come as a surprise to all you children, but Christmas comes earlier in some parts of the world, a fact that makes it possible for Santa to bring the toys to everyone in the same night, as even he can't be in more than one place at the same time.

New Zealand is one of the first calls on his list. To make the plan work he

had agreed to set off sooner and go to our valley first and be there the day before Christmas.

Then of course he would have to go right around to the other side of the world to start again in the right place. Only a man with the magic of Santa could do that.

So, as Belle, Ness and Muffin went to bed on Christmas Eve Santa was already well on his travels, and, the big surprise was only hours away.

Back in Amalia Moon Star was restless. Normally when the sun goes down he settles into his bed of straw and sleeps, warm and snug, sheltered from the chills of the mountain snow. But tonight something was not right, and as Patricia and Christy approached the barn he trotted to meet them.

"It's all right, Moon Star," Patricia assured him with a hug. "We're going to give you a special Christmas, and Belle will be getting the surprise of her little life."

At the mention of Belle the little foal whinnied and trotted eagerly to meet his little friend, then he stepped back into the shadows in alarm as with a rush of bells and a swish of snow a mysterious stranger arrived at the gate. "Well, I'll be bellowed over," the red caped rosy-faced old man chuckled.

"I do believe I just saw a Unicorn." He stepped closer and inspected the little animal closely. "I was right!" he exclaimed, "what a wonderful surprise." And surprising Santa was a real feat, indeed.

"And he's going to be Belle's special Christmas gift with your help," Christy smiled.

"Then we'd better get to work then." Santa unpacked a strange looking carriage and pulled it into the barn where, with Patricia and Christy's help, he hitched up Moon Star with an invisible harness.

"Now I'll get the boys," Patricia laughed, "They are going to get the shock of their lives when they find out what we have planned for them."

Wrapped up warmly in long coats, gloves and woolly hats, Rem and Snowy tumbled eagerly into the little carriage, but though Santa urged him to lead the way, Moon Star refused. Some thing was wrong, and time was running out quickly

Patricia found the problem. "He can't go without Princess Ariadne," she gasped. "But I don't know where she is."

Now that was a problem. Moon Star is the Royal Unicorn, only Princess Ariadne and, with special permission, Belle, is allowed to ride him.

"I got it!!!. The computer," Christy exclaimed. "Remember the Wizard sent Belle's song for Christmas." With no more ado she rushed off to the house and in a moment the clear sounds of Belle echoed again through the valley.

All they could do now was wait and hope

Way down in the secluded valley known only to the Faires and their special friends, the little people, lit by the soft lights of the glow worms, listened peacefully as they heard Belle's song.

But suddenly, when the music played again, and yet again, Ariadne became alarmed. "Something's not right," she whispered in her soft whisper. "I'll have to see what it is." With a rustle of gossamer she floated above the treetops and in a moment was floating above her group of friends who soon explained their predicament.

"Well, I was just about to go to sleep," the Princess laughed, "but who could miss the chance of a night with Santa and his sleigh. Come on Moon Star, we have presents to deliver." And with a hiss of snow on skis they were on their way.

Over mountains and valleys Santa and his reindeers sped. Moon Star and Ariadne, with Rem and Snowy hanging on tightly.

As they rose in the air, little Moon Star let out a laugh. "Look," he said, "we can see the entire valley from here on high."

Snowy begin to peer cautiously over the edge of the carriage. "WOW."
"You are right!"

"Look there is Mr. Louie's and Ms. Gloria's house...now where is their dog Karma, I bet she would be surprised to see us go by." "There is Mr. Joe and Ms. Rita's house." "All his big machinery looks like tinker toys from this view." "And look at his sheep they are so small from here."

Remedy finally had his interest peaked enough with the mention of the sheep to have a fast look over the edge.

"GOSH!" he howled. "There is Martha's and Mr. Lee's house. I bet Cruz is asleep in his bed waiting for Santa to come. "I know Isabella and Tianna are already asleep." "I like it better from up here." Let's do this more often."



As Moon Star turned to look back he pointed his little Unicorn horn to signal his best friends, Martine and Anna that he would be back.

Between Martine's and Loren's house, Moonstar and the boys looked down and wished Sadi the best Christmas ever while she was visiting Sandi and Gary, and getting ready to have some puppies.

Moonstar looked to Loren's house to remind him he would be around for their next riding lesson right after Christmas.

And with that they were gone. All wide eyed with wonder and laughing with joy.



They all watched in fascination as night changed to day then back into night as the little band raced across the silent sky. Oceans, clouds, rivers and cities passed in a flurry as they followed the ancient path through the stars until finally Santa hauled back on the reins.



"Here we are," he boomed, "right on time."

Snowy and Rem peeped over the edge nervously as the reindeer, closely followed by Moon Star, slowly drifted lower. A small harbour surrounded by hills mirrored a bright moon, and close by, almost hidden in the woodlands, a cottage, complete with a Christmas tree nestled near the shoreline.

As the heavily laden sleigh bumped to a standstill alongside Moon Star and his little group Santa carefully placed his gifts around the tree for all his friends then climbed aboard.

"I've got to go now, lots of work to do," he chuckled, "but there's one last thing to do before I go.... Merry Christmas everybody," he hollered loudly, then, with a ringing of bells he was gone.

Unsure what to do now Rem and Snowy looked around in amazement. From the snows of their mountains they had been uplifted in an instant to a strange warm land, and it seemed that no one had told them what to do next.

Belle woke suddenly and stared out of the window. High above in the distance she thought she saw a strange sight. "I must have been dreaming," she murmured "but I'm sure I heard Santa."

Moon Star wasn't dreaming, he heard Belle's quiet whisper instantly and trotted to the front porch where he tapped his hoofs impatiently on the step.

"Wizard, Ness, Muffin," Belle shouted nervously. "Come quick. There's a lot of noise outside."

The Wizard of course was ready; he'd been told to expect our visitors at midnight on the dot and had been quietly waiting in the chair. Now he rushed to the door with Ness, Muffin and Belle to see the commotion.

"Wait there for a moment, I'll see what it is," he told them. Carefully he eased open the door, then, as he stepped forward he switched on the lights.

"Surprise!!!!" he shouted. "Merry Christmas everybody."

For a moment all were taken completely by surprise, but not for long. Belle spotted the tiny figure sitting on the fabulous Unicorn and all else was forgotten.



"Ariadne and Moon Star," she whooped in delight, "but how did you get here?" she asked as she rushed down the steps to give her little foal a huge hug.

"Santa brought us," Rem laughed excitedly as he the boys tugged off their boots and coats.

"And we had our own sleigh pulled by a Unicorn and a Princess," Snowy giggled, "and Santa had eight Reindeer and they can fly over mountains."

"And he brought enough presents for everybody in the world," Rem added, not to be outdone in all the excitement.

Ness and Muffin were speechless as the two boys recounted their experiences, but Belle smiled quietly as she looked at around at all her friends, "I've got the best presents right here," she whispered.

"Most of our friends are here together for Christmas, but I wish Patricia and Christy could have been here, that would have been perfect."

Then, right on cue, The Wizard, who had been pottering around in the kitchen, gave them another surprise. Very softly and sweetly a choir began to sing. Belle, in amazement, listened in delight. "A Christmas song for the Faires," she whispered.

"Yes, and specially written just for you," Ariadne said happily.

Then, as the beautiful sounds faded, two more voices were added to make Belle's night complete.

"A VERY MERRY CHRISTMAS FROM ALL OF US" Christy and Patricia sang. Belle brushed a little tear of happiness. "Now Christmas is perfect," she murmured.

Well, even though it was the middle of the night it was a party to remember, presents, food, games, and all the things friends wish for on that special time of the year. But as always, good things must come to an end.

We had to meet with Santa before dawn to go back home to the mountains in Amalia. But there was time for a few things.

Ness and Muffin got to ride in Moon Star's sleigh where they took Ariadne to see some of New Zealand's countryside.

Rem and Snowy, lit by a full moon, swam in the bay, where they agreed that the warm waters of the ocean were much to their liking. Belle, as always, shared her brief time singing and dancing with Princes Ariadne around the little Christmas tree.

Then, as the first light of dawn lit the eastern sky, they heard the faint familiar sound, Merry Christmas everybody. Santa was on his way, and the party was almost over.



Quickly they exchanged hugs and goodbyes, Snowy and Rem donned their warm clothes, and as the sleigh bells jangled to a stop they were ready for off and on their way home.

As the echoes faded Belle and the boys were sad for a moment, but only for a moment.

"This was the best ever Christmas." Belle decided. Ness and Muffin agreed as they watched all our friends disappear into the distance.

The old Wizard smiled and turned away. Christmas Eve was over and his little friends would need to get some sleep.

Somewhere in the distance a small carriage with two tired little dogs and an enchanted Princess on a white Unicorn were racing through the night on their way home. The world of children was as it should be.

Well, once again our little Wizard story is over.

Belle, Ness and Muffin are having fun on the beaches and hills of NZ and we'll be soon thinking of heading home to the mountains.

Wherever you are at this time of the year I hope we have fun, and I'll be looking forward to meeting you all for the next story.

The Wizard.



THE WAY OF THE WIZARD

February 2010



Hellooooo once again my young readers and welcome to yet another ramble into the mysteries of life in the magical wonderland that I and my friends in the valley call home.

Yes, once again Christmas is just a memory and Belle, Ness and Muffin and, of course myself, left the warmth of New Zealand's beaches to return to the chilly mountains of our home in New Mexico. As we sit and watch flurries of snow drifting past the window already my friends are looking forward to new adventures.

However, before the melting snows of spring bring the first snowdrops, we have other ways to pass the time, and as always, Belle has a head bursting with new ideas and can't wait to begin her next project.

As I drowsily relaxed in my old rocking chair beside the warmth of a crackling fire and Ness and Muffin slowly drifted to sleep, Belle, wandering around the cozy kitchen and looking for something to occupy her mind, looked carefully at the calendar.

"What does that mean?" she asked suddenly.
I shook myself awake with a start. "Umm, err..... What does what mean, Belle?" I mumbled.

"Oh, I'm sorry I woke you," Belle apologized, "but I was looking at the calendar to see if there will be anything interesting to do and I saw this."
She pointed at the date, "February 14th. has been marked." "Is that something special?"

I gave my spectacles a rub and looked carefully. "Why yes it is." "That's St Valentine's day," I smiled, "a very special day indeed."

"Special for me?" Belle asked hopefully. "Are we going to have a party?"

“Well, we could have a party,” I chuckled, “but that's not why it's a special day. “

“Make yourself comfortable by the chair and I'll tell you what it's all about.”



THE TALES OF THE WIZARD

**These are my little stories taken
From inside my
Magical Book of Ways**

“Long ago,” I began, “children at a very young age were put to work in the fields and when the day was over they were too tired for anything but eat and sleep.”

Belle was shocked. “They didn't have time for fun?” she gasped. “Not even to sing and dance?”

"No, not even that," I assured her. "Some of the lucky ones could spend time to learn to read and write, but there was never a spare moment for joy and laughter."

"But how did they make it change?" Belle asked. "Was it something to do with Saint Valentine?"

"No, even before that Juno, who was the most important Goddess at the time of the Romans, decided that the children needed one special day on which they could forget their worries and enjoy life, and so she began one of the most best known celebrations, the one that we know as Saint Valentines day."

Belle thought about all the fun we have in our mountain lives, Ness, Muffin, Snow and Rem, Sadi and Moon Star, and most of all, Ariadne and here faerie folks who bring such laughter with their songs and dance.

"It must have been a sad time," she decided. "We were so lucky that Juno decided to help, but just what did she do?"

"Well, it was a simple plan really." "She got all the children and put their names in a box; girls into one, boys into the other." "Then each child, picked out a name without knowing who they would pick."



"Whoever picked the name would spend the whole day having fun with that person." "In later years it changed, the children themselves decided who they would choose and began to send cards to special friends."

"So I can pick a special friend and send a card on the 14th?"
Belle laughed.

"What a wonderful idea. I'll make a really good one," she almost sang the thought out loud. Then while I settled down to my interrupted nap, off she went to her bedroom to begin work.

"Christy," Belle called as she looked into the room where a table was littered with pots of paint and stacks of paper and, where her friend, liberally daubed with all the colors of the rainbow, sat at the window painting pictures for a new story.

"If you are not busy can you help me with something," Belle said shyly."

Christy carefully moved her easel and brushes from harms way and invited her little friend into the art room. "Now, what can I do for you," she smiled.

Belle carefully told her what she intended to do "So I need a few things," she explained, "but I'm not going to tell you who the card is for," she said secretly. "No one must know until the right time."

Christy happily agreed. Belle often has little surprises to keep us guessing and after all, Saint Valentine's Day is all about surprise. And so, with a box of paints, a brush and a few sheets of paper, Belle trotted off to her own little room.

Now Belle, as you will all know, has many friends, and to her, all are special. As she carefully thought of what picture she would paint she began to realize that one card would never be enough, nor even two or three.

She carefully counted the sheets of paper. "Only five," she murmured. "I need more." "Maybe I could cut them into two."

So with her scissors she quickly snipped them to a smaller size "That's better," she decided, "but maybe I should count how many I need before I start to paint a picture."

"Not enough," Belle decided as she counted the list on her fingers. "I know, I'll cut them in half again." Snip, snip, snip, but no matter how many times she clipped at the paper more and more friends were added to the list.

"I need more," she decided, but as Belle didn't want to disturb Christy again the only way to do it would be to cut them again. Patiently, and with great care, the tiny pieces were cut, smaller and smaller until they could be reduced no further, and Belle finally, with the tiniest brush she could find, began to make her miniature pictures.

Luckily the snow fell heavily for several days and we all stayed indoors so Belle was able to work undisturbed for day after day until eventually the huge undertaking was finally finished; but only just in time.

As always, Belle was awake early. While Patricia made herself busy making breakfast, she laid out the cutlery then went to sit at the window. Outside the fields and forests sparkled in the fresh snow and above the first rays of the sun lit the mountain peaks. It was going to be a special day, Belle thought happily.

"Do you think it'll be windy today Patricia?" she asked suddenly.

Patricia stopped what she was doing and looked out the window. "Well, it looks calm now," she said curiously, "but anything can happen later." "Why do you ask?"

"Ah, that's a secret," Belle chuckled, "but it would be really good if there's a nice breeze later."

There were more secrets, lots of them in fact when Christy, Patricia and the Wizard arrived for breakfast.

Rem, Snowy, Ness and Muff, along with Belle and Sadi, each had a brightly colored envelope, but the strangest thing was, none of them were signed, only the words, 'to a special friend,' were on the carefully painted cards.

That Snowy thought, was strange. "I think whoever sent my card forgot to put their name on it," he said with a grin.

"Mine too," Muffin added. "What about the others?"

Sure enough none of the names were written on any of those carefully painted cards.

"But it doesn't matter, they don't need to have names," Belle insisted as the others puzzled over the rather odd conundrum. "All you need to know is that someone thinks you are special and

has taken the trouble to tell you so."

"So it's a present for everybody and from everybody." Ness decided with a chuckle. "That's a great idea." "It sounds like something you had a hand in, Belle."

The little bear looked innocent. "Not me," she protested, "I didn't make any of them." But the little secretive smile gave the game away. "Well, not any of these ones," she added.

"But I'm not telling you any more, you will have to wait."

With the dishes washed and put away the boys decided to plan for a day of fun in the snow, but Belle had other ideas.

"Not yet," she said firmly. "I still have my surprise for everyone, but we have to go to the mountains for that."

The Mountains!!!! All agreed that was an even better idea. Coats and boots were quickly donned while Patricia brought the truck from the garage.

Within minutes the wheels were crunching on the frozen ice as they chugged carefully along the icy track. Belle sat quietly. On her lap was a large bag tied firmly and gripped tightly in her little hands, and she wouldn't let anyone see it, or even guess at what was in it.

"You'll have to wait," she insisted. "This is my surprise and nobody will know until I'm ready." With that she turned away and, with her little snub nose pressed against the glass, stared at the window and watched as the truck climbed higher into the hills.

"Here we are. Right on top of the world," Patricia laughed as they stopped right at the highest point. "If we want to go higher we'll need a helicopter."

In all directions the mountainous hills spread around us. In the far, far distance our valley, looked like a postage stamp and the high pine trees below appeared as nothing more than matchsticks.

The boys piled out of the truck and immediately began a play fight while Christy made the most of the beautiful weather to take pictures. I chatted with Patricia as Belle, still acting very oddly, began to untie her mysterious parcel, all the while looking around and watching that no one else could see.

Patiently she waited as the boys enjoyed their fun, but just as it seemed
they were getting cold and hungry and ready for home,
Belle called them over.

"Just a few more minutes," she promised, "then you'll see
my presents for the whole world."

Then, as we all watched in excitement,
something seemed to be happening.

First the trees down in the valley shook off their coating of snow, then
slowly the whole mountainside seem to shiver restlessly and a sharp breeze
drifted around us as we crowded around the truck for shelter.

Belle waited.

Now her bag was fully untied, but still it wasn't quite time.

Then, like a rushing wind, there it was.
"Come and watch, quickly," Belle urged.

At that moment the wind and cold was forgotten. We watched in
amazement as our little friend opened up her bag and a myriad of tiny,
gaily colored scraps of paper scattered in the wind.



Within moments they were picked up like confetti to be spread high into the air, whirly and twisting among the trees until finally they were out of sight, scattered to the far winds.

While the boys dashed around happily as they tried in vain to catch the last tiny scrap the mountain fell silent again and Patricia, Christy and I watched in delight as Belle performed a little dance followed by a delicate curtsy.

Just one hidden remnant from Belle's work of art remained. Caught up in corner of the bag Patricia found one final message from our little friend and picked it up to read the delicate writing on the message.

HAPPY SAINT VALENTINE'S DAY TO THE WHOLE WORLD
FROM BELLE AND ALL HER FRIENDS.

Well little ones, once again another story from the valley is over and we are looking forward to spring.

Very soon we will be seeing the first lambs in the fields around us and the trees will be showing the first buds, and of course our little friends will be ready and waiting for new adventures.

Until then, wherever you may be, have fun.

The Wizard

The Way of the Wizard

April 2010.

Helloooo again my little friends.

Here we are again in the wonderful valley nestled in the mountains of New Mexico and as always we have another story to tell.



Those of you who read my last tale about the mysterious and somewhat scary goings when our friends, Joe and Loren, tried to move a giant rock, will remember that I promised to tell you what became of it after it was moved.

Well, although everything has settled down since we heard those terrifying sounds and the rock is safely fastened on it's trailer, we still have yet to know when and where it will be placed in it's new home.

But right now the sun is shining, the birds are singing and Spring is finally making its presence known, and as always, Belle's constant conversation and enquiring mind will keep me fully occupied as we head out for our morning walk.

The Tales of the Wizard
These are my little stories taken from inside
my magical "Book of Ways"

The Magical Singing Rock



"The Elk have come back." Belle's cheerful voice rang out as I headed out of the door.

Quickly I stepped back inside to get my glasses.

Like most people who live far away from the noise and turmoil of the cities
Belle and I measure seasons by the changes in the countryside.

Elk and bears are among the first to begin foraging in the valley and there
is always competition to see who can be the first to spot one.

"There, across the river by the trees." Belle danced in excitement. "Am I
the first to see them," she asked hopefully.

"Well, you surely saw them before I did," I laughed as I polished my glasses and had a closer look. "Ah! Now I've got them. Looks like the same herd from last year, six of them."

"Eight," Belle corrected me with a smile. "We had two babies last year."
"Mister Wizard, do you think we'll have more little babies soon?"

"I'm sure of it," I promised her, "but we'll have to wait for early summer."

"Then I'll have to start looking for my first bear while I'm waiting," Belle decided.

"Our Swallows are back to the barn already," she informed me, "and they are using the same nest as last year."

"Don't they make new ones like other birds?"

"Sometimes, if the old one gets damaged and can't be repaired, but as their nest are made indoors out of the wind and rain they usually just tidy them up to make them look nice for the hatchlings."

"Can we make bird feeders again like Patricia and Christy make?" "I want to watch the Humming birds when they come back."

Once again I re-assured her. The seasons come and go, but in our little magical world, hidden from all but a few lucky people, life in the valley never changes.

"Could we go up to the hill now?" Belle asked. "I want to see where we climbed up the tree and Mister Joe tumbled in the bushes when the rock chased him."

The hill isn't steep, not much more than a slope, but from there we have a clear view over the house, across the river and to fields that lead to the surrounding mountains; a place of space and tranquility where we can sit and watch the world go by.

This is one of the few areas where Belle is happy to be lost in the silence of her own thoughts, so I made myself comfortable on a fallen tree stump and waited as she wandered quietly amongst the bushes and trees.

It wasn't long before she was back, and she seemed excited about something as she scampered through the shrubs.

"Mister Wizard," she called breathlessly as she came closer, "come with me quickly. I have something to show you."

From the tone of her voice I knew this was must be something out of the ordinary so I hurried as fast as my old legs were able as she impatiently urged me to go faster.

"There," she gasped as I scrambled through the bushes, "what is it?"

What was it indeed? Where, just a short time ago the giant rock had laid, now there was a hole, but not just any old hole. This one was deep, and far below I could hear water rushing underground.

"Get back quickly," I warned her. "It looks like an underground spring and there's no knowing what will happen."

Belle didn't need to be told twice. The recent events with the rock and Mister Joe's truck had shown her what could happen to the unwary and she scuttled back to the woods.

I watched at a safe distance for a while.

Far below rumbles and gurgling sounds could be heard. More earth and stones fell into the hole.

Then I realized the rock, had it not been moved, would have been swallowed whole, such was the size of new crater.

Joe would have to be informed, and quickly.

There could be no knowing where the water would be heading, our little house was below the hill and, as everyone knows, water flows towards the river.

Everything we own could be at risk.

Joe arrived promptly, and his news wasn't good.

Already the garage, locked up since Patricia, Christy and the boys left for Atlanta, was awash, and a small spring alongside the drive bubbled on its way towards the stable.

"There's no other way for it," he said seriously.

"We'll need to put pipes in to drain it in another direction, and we'll have to do it quickly."

When Joe say's quickly he means just that.

Within half an hour he and Loren began to start work with the digger and soon the clatter and rumble of the huge machine echoed across the surrounding hills.

With little else to do but wait I decided it would be a good time for a walk into the forest. A newly hatched family of eagles was nesting on the highest point of an old pine and it would be a good time to observe the giant birds as they foraged to feed their young.

Soon the noise and clamor faded as we climbed past the Aspen trees and into the cool air.

Belle, as always, watched and listened.

To her there is no such thing as silence. Even the slightest move amongst the trees is watched and observed, the merest sigh of breeze could be a clue that some animal maybe hiding from view as we pass by.

I had other things on my mind. I was beginning to believe that the mysterious happenings with the rock must have been connected with the stream and maybe all the noise we'd heard was a warning, not just to the rock, which surely would have collapsed into the resulting chasm, but also to ourselves.

Belle brought me back from my daydreams with a quiet "Hush." as she cautioned me to be still.

"I can hear something," she whispered. "Something's moving across the next slope."

I stopped alert for any sounds that might be around, but nothing stirred.

Belle would not be put off.

"I heard it," she insisted. "A crackling sound, as though something stepped on a twig."

I had no doubt Belle was right. Humans have long forgotten

how to be in tune with Nature.

The world of nature demands that keen eyes and acute hearing are of the utmost importance in the animal world. I waited, hardly daring to breathe, but whatever had disturbed Belle seemed to have moved on.

We headed to a clearing above the tree line. Here the air was sweet and clear, and the sky blue as crystal in the warm mid day sun.

High above was the jumble of twigs that served as a nest hung precariously in the fork of a dead Pinon Pine.

That was what we had come to see.

As we found a place to sit in the shade a huge Eagle stretched its wings and flew off to hunt on the lower slopes.

Belle moved closer, she knows how powerful these birds can be. To them a small animal little bears included, means food.

The birds were busy. As one returned with food it's mate immediately left for more, a continuous food chain that would ensure that the chicks would soon reach maturity and leave the nest.

But Belle was restless.

Her eyes regularly scanned the surrounding slopes as if expecting something or someone to appear, but the hills and mountains were silent.

"I can smell something," she said quietly. "It smells like honey." Her little button nose twitched as she looked around, searching for the delicious aroma.

"It's over here I think," she decided. "Can I go to look?"

"Not without me, and we're not going to climb trees looking for it, I don't want to get stung by angry bees," I laughed. "We'll take a look around as we make our way home."

"It's getting stronger." Belle's mouth was watering as she inspected every tree in the hope that maybe some tasty morsel might just happen to drip onto her tongue, but although the scent was now all around the sight of it eluded her.

Then she realized something wasn't quite right.
"Which way is the wind blowing?" She asked quietly.

I held up a wisp of grass and watched for a moment as it twitched in the breeze "From the valley," I decided. "Why do you ask?"

"Well, I was just thinking, the honey seems to be everywhere we go, it's almost as if it's heading right to our door."

"Well, whatever it is I hope it isn't taking my last jar," I grumbled.

The house was strangely quiet. In the yard the machines stood idle, only a wide ditch with pipes already laid showed how much work Joe and Loren had done while we lazed in the sunshine.

But it wasn't totally silent.

"Something's there." Belle stopped in her tracks and listened.

Sure enough I heard it too, a strange sound, as though someone was walking over a loose floorboard. Before I could stop her, Belle rushed forward and turned the corner.

For a moment she stood, open mouthed in disbelief at something sitting in my old rocking chair on the porch.

Then, with a squeal of delight, she rushed headlong and leaped onto the lap of biggest bear I have ever seen.

"Cousin Frisco," she yelled. "When did you arrive?"

Well, that was a pleasant surprise.

As I hurried to pour cool drinks for all of us Belle made sure we were told of all the adventures Frisco had enjoyed since we last met.

"And did you eat all our honey?" she chuckled accusingly.

"We were going to have it for tomorrow's breakfast."

"Not me," Frisco rumbled. "I took it from the hive, close to where you were watching the eagles. I thought I'd find out how good a tracker you are, but you obviously haven't been practicing."

"So it was you all the time" Belle said crossly "You know nobody else can find you when you're hiding." "Anyway, if no-one else has seen you I can claim my first bear of the season too."

As we sipped our lemonade it was Belle's turn to tell of all her exciting happenings around the valley. But the most recent one, the story of the rock, really captured Frisco's imagination.

"Mister Joe nearly got squashed by a rock," she informed him seriously, "and then our hill turned into a river and it almost washed the garage away."

"And where is the rock now?" The big bear asked in alarm. "I hope it hasn't been broken up or sent away."
"Oh no, it's still on the trailer," Belle chuckled. "I don't think anyone dare move it again."

"Ahh, that's good." Frisco was relieved. "The stone is extremely old and very important." "We'll have to make sure it's put into a safe place where someone can set it exactly in alignment with the stars."

"And it has to be someone who knows the old ways," I added, "and the best person to do that would be Patricia, but she isn't here."

When Joe and Loren arrived back from lunch all talk of the rock was forgotten. With a cloud of black smoke and a roar from the noisy engine they went back to work and soon the new drain was completed.

"That should do the trick," Joe said as he warily eyed up Frisco Robin. Loren stayed safely in the digger, but after the formality of an introduction and a handshake they relaxed.

Then Joe remembered. "Oh, yes, you had a call while you were out. Patricia, Christy and the boys are on their way home, they will be here in time for dinner."

"Whoopee!" Belle shouted. "Won't they get a surprise when Frisco is waiting to see them."

"And they'll get a bigger surprise if dinner isn't ready," I groaned. "I was expecting just the two of us, now I have to cook for the whole gang and we don't have time to go to the store"

"Well maybe we can help," Joe offered. "Belle seems to be the first to

have spotted both a bear and an elk this season so it's only right that we have a party to mark the occasion."

Joe made a few calls and soon we had a party. Louie and Gloria brought the tables and chairs over from their house.

Martha and Mr. Lee with their grandson Cruz's help cooked the tamales. Martha's son Virgil, his wife, Maria and their two small daughters Tiana and Isabel began to tie the trees full of bright colored ribbons.

Mr. Anthony, Martha's brother, and Ms. Virginia and her mother, Ms. Estelle came along with the lemonade.

Joe put out a call to his wife Ms. Rita and she brought the burritos. Their grand children Martin and Anna came along to play with Belle and to meet Frisco.

And everyone brought green chilies.

Patricia, Christy and the boys had a real treat waiting for them when they arrived.

Well, as you would expect in our little village, everything went perfectly. As a backdrop of gold, orange and red tints painted the setting sun we unwillingly said good night to all our friends.

"A perfect day," Patricia murmured sleepily. "I'm ready for bed."

"Me too," Christy agreed. "I think Belle and the boys are already asleep."

Our little troupe, full to overflowing with good food and worn out by the fun and games, were all snuggled into warm rugs on the porch.

Even Frisco Robin, who always seems ever energized, failed to suppress a yawn. "I'll make myself comfortable on the porch with Belle and the boys," he said quietly.

"Sleeping under the stars will be another exciting adventure for them," Patricia laughed as she told everyone good night.

Frisco laughed as he gently removed the chocolate Easter Eggs he had carefully packed in his nap sack and hid them under the porch in the cool night air.

He was dreaming of the rabbits and hiding all those brightly colored eggs.... But mostly he was thinking about all that chocolate and sharing it with his little friends.



The fire flies, the dragonflies, and the fairies all could be seen flitting around in the cool evening air as we all headed to our beds for a good nights sleep.

As I began to think about sleep I was still remembering the events of the day and wondering what the morning would bring and where Patricia would place the rock.

Well, children it is time for this Wizard to head to his bed. Tomorrow will come all too soon and then that begins the adventure of finding out where the fairies tell Patricia tonight in her dreams to put our big rock.

And of course next time we will discover if Frisco actually saved some of the little chocolate eggs for hiding or if he munched them all in his dreams....

Good night and sweet dreams.....
The Wizard

The Way of the Wizard May 2010



Hellooo Children. Yes, it's me, the Wizard, once again and I'm ready to tell you the final chapter of the tale of the Stone.

As you will remember, much had happened when we last met but, thanks to Joe and Loren the hole that appeared where once the Stone had been standing has been filled in.

The flooding that threatened to wash our garage away has been safely diverted towards the river, and already the garage is drying out.

Now that Trish, Christy and the boys are home very soon we will know where Trish is going to place the huge rock that has caused so much excitement.

At the moment all is quiet at the cottage. After a huge feast the night before no-one was in a hurry to get out of bed.

After an uneasy night of wondering what else might go wrong I finally nodded off to sleep, only to be awakened, in what seemed no more than a few minutes, by Christy. The big day had arrived, and soon the decision would be made.

The Tales of the Wizard

**These are my little stories taken from inside my
Magical Book of Ways**

The Stone's Final Resting Place



"Breakfast is ready." Christy peeped through the door where Ness, Muffin, Rem and Snowy were still fast asleep in a jumbled heap of rugs and little dogs.

Frisco busied himself collecting the chairs that were still outside from the previous night, while Belle set the table.

"No cooked breakfast for me, thank you." Ness flopped on the kitchen carpet and immediately closed his eyes for another nap.

"Nor me. After last night's feast I couldn't eat another crumb." Snowy said as he curled up beside Ness and immediately lost all interest in food.

Not so Muffin and Rem. "We're having honey on toast," they decided.

So, while Frisco, who seemed to be the only one with an appetite, tucked in to fried eggs and the last of the sausages from the barbecue, the rest of us spread buttered toast, thickly coated in honey, until the last trace was scraped from the pot.

"Right, today we have to decide what to do about the stone." Patricia informed us all as the last of the food was eaten and the plates cleared away.

"Mister Joe reckons it should be moved into a safe place as quickly as possible."

"But where can we put it?" I asked. "We thought it was safe on the hill but look what happened."

"Well, as Mister Joe thinks we'll never have the same problem now that the drain pipes are in place I think it can go where it was first intended, on the grassy knoll just above the river." "That would be perfect," Christy agreed. "We could see it from anywhere on the land from that site."

All were in favour of that, but Patricia had one worry.

"Mister Joe thinks it may be difficult to get the trailer up there, and there's no room to use a digger so we'll have to dig a huge hole by hand. That may be a problem."

"Mister Joe and Loren will fix it," Belle assured us. "They can fix anything."

With Belle's personal guarantee that our friends from the village will soon have the giant rock in place we all felt better. After all, despite the previous mishap the huge monolith was still intact, and so it was agreed; once again Joe and Loren would be asked to come to the rescue.

The truck groaned as Loren tried to reverse the heavily loaded trailer up the slope. Sliding side to side, wheels spinning crazily, inch by inch it crawled, until, with a shower of dust and gravel, it came to a stop. "That's as far as it'll go," Joe grunted in exasperation. "Only a couple of feet more and it would be far enough."

"I think I could help," Frisco had been watching carefully as the two men had tried to maneuver the overloaded truck, only to fail when they were so close.

"Try now," he suggested, "I'll see if I can make a difference." With his broad shoulders and powerful arms straining under the immense effort he put his back against the truck and heaved. The wheels moved imperceptibly, scrabbling for grip. "Once again," he shouted. Then, just a fraction at a time, the truck started to move.

"Joe, unable to believe what he'd just seen he almost forgot to tell Loren to stop. "That's far enough," he yelled. Then, with the brakes secured, Frisco stepped back and wiped his brow, grinning sheepishly as a great cheer went up from the group.

"All we have to do now is dig a hole," Patricia laughed. "I bet you don't have a giant shovel in your pack by any chance."

"No, but I do have these." Frisco showed his huge hands with the long hard claws. "I reckon these will make short work of it."

"But not just yet," Christy ordered. "After all the hard work you deserve a break, so I brought lemonade." "That's just what I needed." Frisco made himself comfortable in the shade and took a long drink.

"What about you Mister Joe?"

"I'll be there in a minute." Joe struggled with something under the trees then came out with a long log. "Help me to wedge this under the trailer wheels, Loren."

"If the brakes fail it'll run right back down the hill again and I don't think Frisco would be too pleased if that happens."

With everything checked and double checked Joe pronounced it safe, and with the sun at its height the boys thought it a good time to play in the river while the rest of us moved under the overhanging branches to enjoy a few minutes in the shade.

It was Joe who noticed something was wrong. As Frisco regaled us of his travels in his homelands of Alabama, Joe listened, but kept on full alert for any sign of danger.

"Did you hear that?" he shouted. Immediately he got to his feet, jumped into the truck and tried to drive away. But he was too late, The log he'd placed carefully under the wheels, prevented him from going anywhere. A hollow beneath the trailer wheels quickly turned to a crack, then, as a

cloud of dust swirled around it, the crack became a hole
and the trailer began to sink.

"Keep back," Loren shouted in alarm. "It looks like it's going to sink into a
pit."

We could do nothing. As if in slow motion the trailer tilted and slid towards
the chasm. Then the rock began to move, clattering noisily down the
slope as it plummeted into the depths. Then in a moment it stopped and
the land became silent.

For a long minute none of us could speak,

Then Belle smiled quietly, then laughed out loud. "It's singing to me," she
shouted in happiness. "The rock is singing."

She was right. This was not the tortured sounds we'd heard when we first
moved the rock, it was indeed as if it was singing in triumph.

I could hear it, and so too could Patricia, Christy and Frisco. As for the
others, with the rock half buried and the trailer almost upside down I guess
they thought we'd lost our minds.

But even so, despite our jubilation, it was a while before anyone dared to
move closer. "Loren was the first to creep forward and look into the hole.
"It looks safe," he told us "But stay away until Joe checks it out."

"It looks safe to me," Joe agreed in amazement after a close inspection.
"A bit of gravel around the hole and you'd think it had always been
there."

"Maybe it was," Patricia smiled mysteriously. "The rock was never happy in
the old place. Now it's come to its true home."

"And it's all thanks to Mister Joe once again," Belle reminded us. "If he
hadn't remembered to move the piece of log, just like he did last time, it
might never have happened."

Not far away, hidden in a place where only those who know the magic,
Ariadne's smile tinkled amongst the woodland glade.
"The final resting place," she whispered.

"Now all is as it should be on our land." The tiny faerie Princess sent a silent
thank you to all the friends who had helped the magic happen and Belle,

in her own mysterious way, sent the reply.

"You're most welcome," she said.



Well, even though things didn't go exactly as planned, the rock was in place, but when the boys arrived from their swim not all of our little band were pleased.

"You could have told us before you dug the hole," Ness grumbled. "We could have helped to dig."

"And why is the trailer standing on its head?" Muffin asked in surprise.

"Did Mister Joe get chased by the rock again? We were waiting for that that to happen." Snowy chuckled.

But Rem, after studying the rock carefully, figured out exactly how we'd managed to finish the job so quickly. "They didn't bury it at all." he decided.

"They've just chopped the top off and planted it in the ground."

That gave us all a laugh, but for two men at least, the mystery would never be solved.

"I reckon the spring must have been seeping down the hill for a long time and somehow washed away the ground just at the right place" Joe surmised. "Then, when we put the new drains in place the water drained away leaving just the hole." Loren added.

Who am I to argue? I'm just an old wizard who happens to have seen many strange things on his travels. Whatever the cause, the result was as we wished, and what more could anyone ask for in life?

Well, maybe just one thing actually. Frisco fumbled in his nap sack and brought a bundle of small, carefully wrapped parcels.

"I think this is a time for celebration," he decided, "and how better than with one of these?"

Belle sniffed at the little gift and a smile lit up her face. "Chocolate," she beamed. "And filled with cream," she added as she nibbled daintily.

"Easter Eggs," Ness shouted. "Frisco remembered to bring Easter Eggs."

Well, how else could the celebration have ended ?

Frisco, in a way only he could know, had brought enough for everyone and we sat happily in the grass as we savoured the tasty treats.

"Another really special day," Belle smiled as she licked the last trace from her little paws.

We all agreed. What we had thought would be a task of huge proportions had eventually turned out to be, thanks mainly to Frisco, A real picnic.

So, it's that time again children. Have a happy,
dream filled night and a day full of fun.

The Wizard

The Way of the Wizard

June 2010



Hello once again my little friends.
Here we are again in our little valley and enjoying the cool mountain breezes that make this such a pleasant place to be in the hot days of summer.

All the excitement of our fun with the giant stone is still talked about in the evenings as we look across the river and watch its long shadow creep across the fields then fade into the distance as the sun drops behind the mountain.

But, as we all know, there is always work to be done, and, although I wasn't looking forward to the task, I had decided to take time away from our little patch of heaven and fly south to New Zealand where, as you may remember, we spend our time away from the snows of mountain home.

Often the weather in that part of the world is mild, and although winter in the southern hemisphere is almost upon us we can expect to find a fair amount of sun, but this time was the exception and when we arrived, as usual by the way of my favorite magic spell, we found howling gales and torrential rain. So with the heaters working overtime, Ness, Muffin and I shivered in our little cottage at the beach and considered what could be done.



The Tales of the Wizard

**These are my little stories taken from inside my
Magical Book of Ways**

Sailing Ships, Gales and Magical Carpet Rides

"I think we should go home," Muffin muttered miserably as he moved closer to the heater. "We could have been playing in the river or hunting rabbits in the forest instead of shivering in the rain."

At that moment a gust of wind shook the house and a flash of lightning lit the wild heaving sea across the harbour. Ness snuggled closer to his friend and looked at me hopefully.

"Can't we come back some other time when it's warmer?" he groaned.
"We will never get anything done in this weather."

I had to agree. We had been stuck indoors for two days and if anything the weather was getting worse. Cleaning and painting a boat is a hard task at the best of times. In a gale it would be impossible.

So, with a last long look at the raging sea I pulled the curtains, made myself comfortable and came to a decision.

"Tomorrow morning, if it doesn't improve we'll head home," I said. "But right now I'm going to make dinner."

That cheered up the boys up a little. Nothing improves the spirit so much as a hot meal, so while the storm raged over the cottage we made ourselves comfortable and forgot our cares.

"It's not much better," Ness grumbled as he looked out across the water early the next morning.



Heavy leaden skies promised another dismal day and, although the wind had dropped to a light breeze and the sea was settling down, it was obvious that we could do little more than take a quick look at the boat, check the mooring lines, and make sure that everything was secured before we would have to get back onshore.

"Alright; come on then before the rain arrives," I decided. "We'll make the boat shipshape and head back to the sunshine."

It didn't take long. A few unhappy seagulls flew off in a screech of anger as we pulled alongside and tied up the little dinghy. Ness and Muffin scrambled aboard and, with the thought of frolicking in the river or hunting with Rem and Snowy in the hills uppermost in their minds they busily rushed around to check that everything was battened down.

I made sure that the cabin was safe, lifted the floor boards and made certain there was no sign of a leak that could sink the boat should the weather worsen, and then I was ready to leave.

But just in that moment the storm struck with a vengeance that took me by surprise. With a searing flash of lightning and a deafening crash of thunder the heavens opened.

"AGHHH," Muffin shrieked as he tumbled through the hatch, closely followed by a terrified Ness and they clambered onto a bunk where they shivered in wet and cold.

I quickly fastened the hatch and peered through the window at the pouring rain. In a moment the harbour had become a maelstrom. It was plain and that we would be going nowhere until things improved, and judging by the darkening sky, that could be a long time coming.

"Looks like we are in for a bit of a blow," I laughed nervously. "It's lucky we made sure everything secure."

"I hope you brought food," Muffin said unhappily. "I'm getting hungry already."

That was one thing I hadn't thought of and I realized that I'd been totally unprepared for what I should have known might happen. The winter gales in that area could last for days, even weeks, and in a small dinghy trying to get ashore would be foolhardy if not downright dangerous.

It looked like it was time to use another magic spell, and quickly. But then

disaster struck. The boat, already reeling in the heavy seas was hit by a huge squall, the boat shuddered under the pressure of the huge squall, the mooring line groaned and stretched, then, with a crack like a gunshot, it gave way and we quickly began to drift.

Now there was nothing else to do but hang on and hope.

"Are we going to sink?" Muffin asked fearfully as I opened the hatch slightly to see what was happening. "We'll be alright," I assured them both.

"Just sit tight and hold on."

Outside the storm was raging, winds ripped against the boat and surging, white water rushed past the hull. The conditions looked grim, but at least we were heading out of the harbour, away from the rocky shoreline and towards open water. Our little boat is built solidly and so long as we kept away from land I knew we'd be safe. All we needed to do was batten down and stay calm.

"I'm cold." Ness grumbled. "And I'm hungry," Muffin joined in. "Are we going home yet?"

I looked through a small gap in the hatch. All around the sea boiled and rain lashed against cabin. I could see that we had now drifted past the cluster of small islands dotted around the harbour and were now in stormy, but comparatively safe water so, with another look around for the lights of any other vessels, I closed the hatch and settled on the bunk with the boys to wait.

"Why can you make a magic spell to take us home?" Muffin suggested hopefully. "I'm sure you could bring us back to the boat when the weather clears."

He was right of course. It would have been easy, just a few words and a wave of a finger and we'd be home and dry, but that could cause problems for others.

"If we left the boat abandoned it could cause an accident and people could get hurt," I explained. "So long as we stay put and don't panic we'll be quite safe."

Ness, snuggled under a cushion to get warmer, accepted my explanation, and with little else to do Muffin joined him. Despite the noise and discomfort, they slowly drifted off to sleep and I took stock of the situation.

The battery, unused for six months, was flat, so I had no way to start the small engine that might have taken us to safety. Likewise the radio, with no power call to the lifeguard station was out of the question.

That left me with only my one alternative, Muffin's suggestion of a magic spell, and to be really honest, I didn't think I had the power to carry us all to safety in these conditions; but all was not lost.

We were safely away from the jagged rocks and the turbulent gust of wind from the islands, in a place of comparative calm. The heavy breaking waves gave way to long rolling swells and soon patches of light began to show in the black clouds. We had, I assumed, passed the worst and would soon be able to put up a small sail and head for home.

How wrong I was.

It must have been around late afternoon when the storm abated. Black clouds gave way to white clouds scudding rapidly to the East as if to chase the bad weather away.

Ness crept from his hiding place in the cushions; peeped out of the window, and grinned from ear to ear. "Wake up Muff, "he yelled. "We're going home."

"Is it dinner time?" Muffin jumped up in confusion as he tried to figure out where he was. Then he saw the water rushing past the boat and dived back to his place of safety. "Call me when we get back to shore,"" he mumbled. "I've seen enough of the sea."

I opened the hatch and climbed into the cockpit. A careful check around the boat showed nothing appeared to be damaged, and although we'd drifted for many miles we were still in sight of land. It would be a long time before dinner, but we were safe.

With a shortened mainsail and a small headsail set the rocking motion ceased as the little yacht heeled into the breeze. The gales had pushed us away from home, but would just as speedily push us back again. I began to forget our worries started to enjoy the sail. But once again things were not to go our way.

"This is fun," Ness decided. And it was.

The brisk westerly breeze was perfect, driving the little yacht rapidly towards the harbour entrance. Then, without warning we were shaken by a

loud bang.

The boat shook and slewed into the wind almost throwing Ness onto the floor in the cabin. Muffin, who had been starting to enjoy the trip, once again rushed to safety as I grabbed the tiller to tighten up the flapping sails and bring the boat back into control as we wallowed in the swells.

"Did we have a crash?" Muffin howled. "I can see water in the boat."

He was right. Already water was gushing over the floorboards and the boat was settling sluggishly in the waves. A quick glance around showed the problem as a waterlogged tree floated past, bumping noisily against the hull. Now I had no choice in the matter.

Magic was our only hope.

"Ready boys, hold tightly onto my hands and we'll be on our way," I urged them as the water surged into the cabin.

Quickly I recited the well-worn spell, but nothing happened.

Once again I tried, louder and more urgently, but still the wind blew my words back in my face, as if taunting me in my efforts to fail against more powerful forces.

The water was now up the top of the cabin and I was thinking that our only hope would be the tiny dinghy, but if the weather worsened we would have little chance to reach safety.

With a forlorn hope I tried for the last time, shouting loudly against the mocking wind, hoping against hope that my powers had not forsaken me.

The lightning strike, instantly followed by a blast of thunder, shook us to the core.

Then, as we collected our scattered thoughts, the boat, now almost down to the water level, began to shake.

This was not what I was expecting.

My spell should have lifted us high into the air and taken us back home to safety, but instead it seemed that the boat, almost completely filled with water, was lifting.



In amazement we watched in awe as the power of magic fought against the force of Nature.

"I think we're going up in the air," Muffin gasped.

The huge weight of water spilled out as the boat rocked violently and we were thrown around in the cockpit and it was clear that we were in fact now above the waves and moving more quickly.

We were going to be saved.

Then, unbelievably, the sails began to fill, billowing out into the wind and moving the boat forward.

"It's an airship," Ness giggled nervously. "We're going to fly home to the mountains in a flying boat."

That's was indeed what it appeared was happening. But then the thought struck me. Where, with only a trickle of water in the river, could we land safely on a boat that needed at least six feet of depth?

As we lifted higher and higher into the clouds and as the two boys laughed in excitement I struggled for the answer.

Once above the clouds we moved at lightning speed. As we rapidly approached home, I still hadn't thought of a way out of our predicament.

Ness and Muffin together provided it, but they refused to tell me the answer. "You'll have to wait," Ness chuckled. "We know exactly where we are going."

As we raced high above the clouds I had to take their word for it. We'd been plucked from apparent disaster, so I knew we would be saved, no matter how it was achieved.

Snowy and Rem, happily enjoying their exploration of the riverbank, looked up in amazement as a strange craft floated across the hillside and hovered silently above the river.

From below no-one could be seen or heard, but the weird contraption, like nothing they'd ever seen before, seemed to be drifting past the house and heading towards the bridge over the river.

With a yell of delight they rushed to give chase, eager to be the first to discover the strange contraption that was invading their property.

"Here we are," Ness and Muffin shouted in glee. "This should be the perfect place to land an airship."

From above nothing seemed to be any different from the rest of the river, a pebble-strewn stream winding through the banks of red willow. But the boys knew better.

"Just here." Ness ordered. Put the tiller over to the left a bit.
Now, let the sails go."

Lower and lower, inch-by-inch, the boat descended through a curtain of overhanging Aspen trees until, with barely a splash, it settled into the water. Only then, as I spotted a scurry of frightened animals scampering onto the banks, did I see where we'd landed, probably the only patch of deep water in the valley.



"Ahoy there shipmates," Ness shouted as he expertly pulled the dingy alongside and scrambled aboard, then, "Permission to come ashore sir."
He giggled.

Rem and Snowy could only gasp in astonishment as the three of us headed to shore, but quickly recovered as Ness and Muffin scrambled to recount our adventures, and how they had figured out how we could get back home safely without wrecking the boat.

Within minutes we were back in our own little house where once again all our adventures were retold over and over again until finally, with all possible variations of the story exhausted and dinner on the table, the boys lapsed into silence.

"I want to go sailing," Belle demanded when all the fuss was over and the dishes cleared away.

"I don't," Muffin said firmly. "I will be happy if I never go on the ocean ever again."

"Oh, I don't know," Ness, murmured quietly as he stretched out happily on the rug "when the worst of the storm was over I think it was fun, especially when I got steer the boat through the clouds and we spotted you two looking up at us."

The two friends laughed. "Well, you have to admit it was a strange sight," Rem smiled. "A sailing boat up in the air isn't something you see often."

"Especially when it lands in a beaver dam," Snowy added. "I bet they were wondering what the world is happening in our little valley."

"Can we go on the boat when you go back, Mister Wizard?" Rem asked wistfully. "This sounds like more fun than chasing rabbits."

Patricia, Christy and I looked at each other and all shook our heads. "No more sailing for us," I said firmly.

"From now on all our boating will be spent right here in the valley."
"We've decided to clean and paint it then, when you boys get bored with camping out in a tent you can stay onboard and imagine you are sailing around the world."

We all agreed that was a good compromise, and as the evening slowly faded in the west, we enjoyed a cool drink and watched as the last glow of the sun shone brightly on the mast above the trees.

Well. The boys have had much fun in the last few weeks. Firstly, they helped with the cleaning and painting, much to Patricia's dismay as she tried without much success to clean up the mess they made.

Then, when all was tidy, they all spent their first night in the snug cabin where they could be heard shouting phrases like "Heave too, me hearties" and "all hands on deck" as they made up stories of pirates and shipwrecks.

So, now with every one happy, I can finish yet another of our little adventures on the magic land of our ranch. I hope you too have exciting ways

of passing your time.

Always remember. You don't need a wizard to help you to have fun.

All you require is a few friends and a little imagination. With those, you can do anything.

Enjoy your days until the next time we meet.

The Wizard.

The Way of the Wizard

July 2010



Hello once again my young friends. Here we are in our magical valley and mysterious mountains and as always we have a story for you. I'm going to tell a tale that started long, long ago.

It is summer time in the high country, a perfect time for campfires and story telling. Now tonight we are gathered around just such a spot down near the river. Belle, Rem and Snowy have been asking for some time now for me to tell them about the early days. The time before they were with us, when Ness and Muff were the apprentices. So as we settle down around the quiet campfire, I decided to regale them at long last with their request...Belle was so excited, she especially loves to hear the early stories....

In those far off days I, in the guise as Butler and Gardener, spent most my time looking after the affairs of the household.

Ness, or as he was referred to, Lord Ness, was in fact the Lord of the Manor and as such he held a very important role in the goings on in the small community.

Muffin, who was much younger, cared little about the problems involved in running a country estate. His was a life filled with fun, but at times

even he knew that things were not as they should be and one of Ness's tasks, keeping control of the wildlife population, was uppermost in their thoughts. Rabbits were a constant problem, roaming at will throughout the hills and forests and destroying gardens in their never ending search for food. This had become the main priority, but try as he might, Ness could think of no way in which he might solve this predicament. However, as is often the case with our little friends, the answer came in a most strange and mysterious way. However, this is an adventure of the two boys so I'll let them tell it in their own inimitable way.

The Tales of the Wizard
These are my little stories taken from inside
my magical "Book of Ways"

"Through the Garden Gate"





CHAPTER ONE

"Why are the gates always closed Ness?" Muffin ambled up behind Ness and looked inquisitively over his shoulder. "Is it to keep people out?"

"Not really old chap, more to keep the staff in." Ness shook his head as yet another car roared round the corner with a screech of tires and disappeared into the distance. "Look at the way they rush around" he grumbled. "You'd think the world was coming to an end. It's not safe for anyone to be out on the road nowadays."

"But didn't you tell me the gates never used to be closed?" Muffin asked. "What happened?"

"Well, it's a long story." Ness wriggled around until he was comfortable. Muffin sat down patiently waiting for the story he knew would come. Lord Ness was older, wiser and knew lots of the old tales from way back in the history of the Manor House. Tales of freedom and adventure, when the Lord of the Manor really was a lord and could do whatever he wanted and go wherever he pleased. Lord Ness finally found a position to his liking and began.

"Back in the old, old days, way before yours, and even my time, my great uncle Jasper ruled. All the land around here belonged to him."

"All of it?" Muffin gasped. Even the beach?"

"That's what I said," Ness said irritably. "Now if you want to hear the story, don't interrupt me."

"Sorry your Lordship" Muffin giggled. "Please carry on."

"Right, where was I. Ah yes, as I said, all of it. And he ruled it firmly but fairly. Nothing went on around here that he didn't know about. Cats lived in fear of him; rabbits packed their bags and rushed back to where they came from whenever he showed his face. The whole estate was a model for the way life should be."

"And he did all that by himself?..... Whoops... sorry. Shouldn't interrupt." Muffin apologized quickly before Ness got annoyed.

"Ness hadn't noticed, he was well into his story now and carried on. "No, no one. Not even old Jasper could have looked after the entire estate single-handed. When he moved into the Manor there was already a very competent gamekeeper; Anna, better at the job than old Jasper was. She taught him all he knew. Showed him all the hidden trails and rabbit burrows, taught him how to pick up hedgehogs without getting pricked, all the things you need to know when you're running a big estate." Ness shuffled around, stretched his legs and made himself more comfortable.

"Did you ever notice that part of the fence that looks like it's been patched, way down at the bottom of the garden Muffin?"

"You mean where the old tree stump is?" Muffin nodded. "Yes, I've seen it. Often wondered why there'd been a hole there. Did Jasper make it?"

"The two of them. Jasper and Anna. That was their hidden way out of the garden. On a hot summer's day they'd go through there, down their secret path into the bush and onto the beach for a swim."

"Wow!!!" Muffin exclaimed. "Great uncle could swim?"

"Of course he could. Nothing he couldn't do really. Except maybe climb trees," he added hastily. "Only cats can do that and he certainly wouldn't want to be a copycat."

"What happened then?" Muffin asked. "Why did everything change?"

"Well it didn't happen overnight." Old Jasper and Anna kept control for many years, but, as will happen to all of us, age caught up with them.

Firstly, things started to get a bit run down, rabbits appeared where they weren't wanted and with nobody trained to keep them in hand they over ran the place, burrowing in gardens, eating cabbages and digging up carrots. Before anyone realized how bad it was they were all over the estate. People started to complain that the Lord of the Manor couldn't keep up. He was getting too old for the job. Worse than that, they said he should retire." Ness shook his head sadly. "All the work he'd put in was for nothing. The same people who'd welcomed him into their gardens were now saying he was past his prime and should be pensioned off."

"Then what? He didn't have to leave the Manor did he?"

"No, he stayed on until the end, but he never had the same freedom again. Newcomers moved into the village. City dogs, with no idea about country living and its rules, roamed wild. Before long rangers were out catching them, and, had he been caught outside the gate, old Jasper wouldn't have been spared the indignity. His era of control was over. He still sneaked out the back way to the beach but with Anna also getting old his heart was no longer in it."

'The secret path they'd used for so long became overgrown, the gardener patched up the hole in the fence and the adventures were just something to reminisce about."

"I wonder why people are like that," Muffin said thoughtfully. "Why do they forget so quickly all the good things done for them"?

"Not all of them do" Ness explained. "Some of the older ones in the village still remember what they call the 'good times'. It's just that new ones, who never knew old Jasper, moved in and brought with them all the modern ideas. Everything had to be done in a hurry, neither time nor respect for the old ways."

Ness grimaced. "Now they use poison and traps to keep the rabbits down; sprays to kill off the insects that birds used to eat; and guns to kill the possums. Nothing's safe anymore."

"I wonder if your great great uncle left any maps," Muffin murmured. maybe we could chase all the rabbits away and make it like it was in his day."

Ness shook his head. "I don't think they'd use maps, he wouldn't need them with Anna around. She kept it all locked up in her head. When she

passed on it was all lost."

"Oh well." Muffin looked glumly through the bars of the gate and thought about all the adventures they were missing. Suddenly his eyes lit up. "I've got it, he cried. "The Butler will know. He's ancient. He must have been around when old Jasper was here."

"Could be" Ness began to show interest. Muffin's idea had some merit after all. "Muffin, you're a genius," he grinned. "Dinner should be just about ready. We'll ask him after we've eaten."

"It's no good," Ness grumbled. "I can't make him understand anything I say. You try Muffin."



"Not much point in that," Muffin chuckled. "I can't shout as loud as you. He must be really deaf if he can't hear the racket you're making."

"Oh well, what are we going to do then?" Ness mumbled. "We're getting nowhere here." He looked at Muffin expectantly. "It was your idea, you come up with something."

Muffin thought for a moment. "We could go down the garden and take a look at old Jaspers secret escape hole." He suggested. "Maybe we could make a way through; it doesn't look like a very strong repair job."

Ness nodded. "Ok, lead the way Muffin old chap. Still a couple of hours of daylight left. We might as well make use of them."

Muffin was right about the repair job. A few rusted nails was all that held the flimsy mesh in place. Ness gave it a hard pull and it was clear, leaving nothing more than a few weeds and twigs between them and freedom.



"Well, that was easy enough." Ness laughed as he pulled a dead twig out of Muffins ear.

"Now what do we do?"

Suddenly, faced with the rather frightening prospect of leaving the safety of the garden
Muffin was unsure of himself.



"Well, I suppose we could take a quick look out there," he said hesitantly.
"You go first Ness and tell me if it's safe, I'll watch from here and make sure you're alright."

Ness laughed. "You're not frightened are you Muffin," He wriggled awkwardly through the hole and stopped, uncertain of what to do next. The old track was dark, overgrown with strange plants that shook in the breeze. From the trees came a strange creaking noise and Ness had a weird feeling that he was being watched from the undergrowth. "Err..... I think I'll come back now," he muttered nervously. "We can try again tomorrow when it's daylight".

Muffin however had regained a little of his courage and was already squirming through behind Ness. He shook the twigs out of his coat and looked around.

"WOW! He gasped, it's eerie, look at all those shadows." He pushed his way past Ness and moved slowly along the path for a short distance. "Come on Ness," he urged. "There's nothing here to worry about. I can see where old Jaspers track was." With that he pushed through a mass of ferns and disappeared from Ness's view. "Come back Muffin" Ness yelled. "You can't go without me."



There was no response, only an ominous silence.



Ness gathered all his courage and made a dash in Muff's wake, pushing aside spiky branches that pulled at his coat as if they were trying to hold him back. Suddenly, without warning he was through the scrub and in a grassy clearing, birds were chirping and Muffin, with a broad smile on his face was sitting on a log. Ness stopped in surprise and grinned self-consciously. "Ah, there you are, I had to stop to take a thorn out of my foot," he mumbled.

"Thanks for waiting."

He looked around in amazement. It was like being in a different world. The Manor and garden were out of sight. Evening sunlight flickered on the waves out in the bay and the only sounds were those of nature. But Ness still had the feeling there was someone else around. He shivered and turned to Muffin. "Don't you think we'd better get back now old chap?" he said. "Don't want the butler worrying about us."

"Oh, he won't be missing us yet," Muffin, replied cheerfully. "He's busy cooking dinner for the staff. We have lots of time." With that he jumped off the log and made his way through another gap at the edge of the clearing. Ness wasn't going to be left behind again. He raced off in pursuit.

Muffin bounded through the long waving grass in a field that ended in tree-clad slopes. Ness wasn't far behind; his fear was gone, replaced by an exhilarating feeling of freedom. No fences or gates to hold him back, no one to tell him to go home. Nothing but space, and he was loving it. He caught Muffin at the edge of the forest.

"Yippee!" he yelled. "This is fun. Let's go into those trees and see what's there."

"Ok." Muffin panted, "I'll race you. One, two, three GO."

Ness, with his longer legs and greater strength took the lead, twisting and winding his way through the bush of the lower slopes and into the dark interior of the woodland. Immediately the mood changed. Once again he had the ominous feeling he was being watched. And this time the feeling was stronger. He stopped under a massive oak tree and looked around. Nothing moved, only Muffin scrambling through the undergrowth in the distance broke the silence. Ness sat on a gnarled tree root to wait.

"So you finally made it then".

Ness almost jumped out of his skin. "Don't do that Muffin," he said angrily.

"You almost scared me to death."

"That wasn't Muffin. That was me."

Ness leaped up and looked around nervously. "Who's there?"

He quavered.

"Come on out where I can see you."

"Oh... you can't see me," The voice seemed to come out of the air. Ness backed away from the tree and looked up into the branches. An owl stared back, its wide eyes unblinking. "Birds don't talk" Ness muttered to himself. "There has to be someone else around."

"There is... me. Now sit down and stop shaking. I'm not going to hurt you."

Ness unwillingly did as he was told, but was ready to run at a moments notice.

"That's better," said the voice. Now we can talk."

"I can't talk to a nothing," Ness retorted with a show of bravery he didn't feel. "Who are you?"

"Sorry, I forgot to introduce myself. I'm your great uncle Jasper"

"Rubbish." Ness gasped. "Old Jasper died years ago and I don't believe in ghosts, so whoever you are, come on out and stop fooling around."

"Well, I'm a ghost and you'll just have to take my word for it." the voice said petulantly. "I want to give you some advice before you go blundering off again and get hurt."

At the mention of getting hurt Ness began to take notice. "What sort of advice?" he asked curiously, "and how could I get hurt?"

"I'll show you. Just follow me. Oh, sorry, I forgot, you can't see me. Never mind. Just walk slowly towards that old dead tree and stop immediately when I tell you."

Ness did as he was told, stopping just short of the tree.

"Now..... look down, what do you see?"

Ness stared hard for a moment then noticed something hidden in the grass. "It's a chain! he exclaimed. And it's fastened to a metal thing.

What's it there for?"

"That, young man is a trap, nasty dangerous things. Stand on that and it could take your leg off. That's what could hurt you."

Ness shuddered at the thought. Then he remembered. "Muffin's still out there somewhere" he gasped." He might get trapped."

"Don't worry, he's safe. He'll be here in a minute", Jasper assured him, "then I'll show you how to spring this trap and it'll be one less to worry about. Find a stick, as big as you can carry and bring it here."

Ness searched around in the undergrowth and emerged dragging a long branch.

"Will this do?" he panted.

"Yes, that'll do, and here comes Muffin, right on time" If I were you I'd keep quiet about me for a while. He's not going to believe you anyway."

Muffin flopped down beside Ness, breathing heavily from the exertion.

"Got stuck" he puffed, "in a prickly vine thing..... I had a devil of a job getting out. What's the big stick for Ness? And why do you look like you've seen a ghost?"



"Seen a ghost!! Ha ha," Ness laughed. "I told you there aren't any ghosts Muffin old chap." A loud chuckle made him look around in alarm but

Muffin didn't react.

"It's all right. Only members of my family can hear me," the voice explained. "Just don't start chattering to me and he won't suspect a thing."

"Ok, what do I do with the stick?" Ness hissed.

"What was that Ness, did you say something?"

"Just talking to myself," Ness said hastily. "You asked what the stick was for and now I'm going to show you. What's next?" he whispered.

"Pick up the stick, one at each end. That's right. Now carry it forward over the top of the trap." Ness repeated the instructions to Muffin as he heard them. "Now drop it." There was a crash of metal as the heavy stick triggered the evil looking jaws. Muffin jumped back in alarm.

"What was that?" he yelped. "Something bit the stick and broke it in two."

Ness stared, unable to believe the power of those metal teeth. The thought of getting his leg caught in it made his stomach churn. "I think it's time we went home Muffin," he said quietly.
One scare a day is enough."

"Stick to the path and you'll be safe," old Jasper called as they left. "And come back tomorrow. We'll clear the rest of the traps and move on to the next lesson."



Loud laughter seemed to fill the air as the two adventurers walked carefully along the beaten track and in the distance Ness heard excited barking. "That'll be Anna" he said absentmindedly.
"She's probably chasing a rabbit."

Muffin looked at him strangely and shook his head. "Talking to yourself again Ness." He chuckled. "All the excitement's been too much. You need a good nights sleep."

"Mmmm, that'll be it," Ness agreed. "And I'll probably wake up and find it was all a dream," he murmured to himself. "After all, nobody believes in ghosts."

**To be continued....
The Wizard
Lord Ness & Muffin**

The Way of the Wizard **September 2010**



Hello my young friends. Here we are once again and, as promised, we have more of our story, "Through the Garden Gate".

Much happened in our first chapter; Ness and Muffin decided to explore outside the confines of the garden and in doing so Ness learned more about his ancestor, - in ghost form-Uncle Jasper, who informed him that he could not only speak, but he could, with Anna's assistance, also help with the problems of running the country estate; mainly the annoying rabbit population that promised to cause havoc for the gardens of the local community.

Muffin, happily enjoying the unaccustomed freedom of the world outside the garden, knew nothing of Jasper and Ness's secret, but he was beginning to suspect something was amiss, and he intended to find out what it was.

We'll start this part of the story where we left off, sitting around a campfire in the Valley with Belle, Remedy and Snowy eager to find out just how Ness would get out of his predicament.



**Through the Garden Gate
Chapter 2
& Chapter 3**

**These are my little stories taken from inside my
Magical Book of Ways**

Lord Ness rarely slept late, unlike Muffin, who would have breakfast in bed if it were possible. Today was no different, even though he'd tossed and turned all night going over and over in his mind the extraordinary experience of the previous evening.

He decided he must go again, alone this time, and prove to himself that it wasn't just a strange dream. Muffin was sleeping soundly as he crept out of the bedroom.

The Butler was up and about doing whatever Butlers do at that time of day and the outer door was open. Ness looked around carefully; made sure no-one was watching, and dashed off down the garden, through the hole in the fence and away into the bush.

Within minutes he was back under the old oak tree. "Now we'll see if it was true or not," he muttered as he settled down to wait.

"Good morning your lordship. You're an early riser."

Once again Ness got the shock of his life. He turned, half expecting to see old Jasper behind him.

"I wish you'd stop doing that," he said peevishly. "You could at least whistle when you're coming ,then it wouldn't be so much of a shock."

"Ha-ha, I was here before you" the mystery voice laughed.
"You walked right through me."

"You mean I can just walk into you and out the other side?"
Ness shivered at the thought.



I SUPPOSE I'LL NEVER SEE YOU

"Of course you can. I'm only a voice when I'm in this mode.
It's easier to keep my coat clean."

"I suppose that means I'll never see you. I thought maybe you could
make yourself visible." Ness said glumly.

"Well I can, but it's not easy" the voice replied. "I save that trick for special
occasions, if anyone saw me wandering around at night it wouldn't be
long before the ranger came calling at the Manor, because
you and I are like two peas in a pod."

"They'd reckon it was you and want to know why you weren't tucked up
in bed, anyway, you haven't told me why you're here so early."

"Well, to tell the truth I came to make sure you were real and last night
wasn't a dream," Ness admitted. "I don't meet ghosts every day so I
thought I may have eaten too much cheese or something."

"A real ghost.

Now there's a new idea. I suppose I must be as real as a ghost can be."

Once again ole Jasper laughed, but it wasn't a happy laugh, more of a
sad and wistful sound. "Wish I could be real again," he murmured, "and
Anna too." "We'd soon have the estate back to what it used to be."

"Muffin had an idea that we could do that," Ness suggested hopefully.
"We were hoping you'd made maps and things so we would know
what to look for and where to find it."

"Maps!, what on earth do you want a map for?" Jasper scoffed.

"We never had one, never had a reason to." "All you need is the will to
do the job and sure as night follows day it'll all fall into place."

He paused for a while and Ness held his breath waiting for him to continue
and hoping he hadn't left in a huff.

"Tell you what" ...now he sounded to be up in the tree and
Ness craned his neck to hear him.

"You both seem keen enough." "We'll make a deal. Anna and I will help
you and in return you will be helping us."

"Sounds alright," Ness said doubtfully, "but how can we help you?" He sounded shocked, "we can't even see you."

"I'll explain that later, right now it's time to show you where the rest of the traps are." "You can bring Muffin along later and spring them all."



HOW CAN WE HELP?

Ness followed the voice eagerly around the woodland. He marked every trap and memorized its position, made sure he remembered all the hidden trails they followed, and finally they were back where they'd started.

"Right, that's all for now." "You get home for your breakfast before they come looking for you," Jasper instructed. "And don't tell Muffin what we're planning just let him think it's all your idea."

Ness arrived home just as Muffin, bleary eyed, shuffled from the bedroom. "Ah, there you are Ness," he mumbled sleepily. "I noticed you weren't in bed, but then I fell asleep again. "Where did you go?"

"Oh, not far, just a walk around the garden, listened to the birds and that sort of stuff."

"Sounds good." Muffin yawned and staggered into the kitchen,
"Maybe I should join you tomorrow."

"No, wouldn't interest you a bit", Ness said hurriedly. "You stay in bed and catch up on your sleep, it'll do you more good."

Muffin looked at him suspiciously. "Didn't you say just yesterday that I spent too much time in bed?" "You're not hiding something are you?"

"Me! Hide something from you." Ness looked downcast. "Surely you know I wouldn't do that." "I was only thinking that we could go to the woods tonight and have another look around." "We both need extra sleep or we'll be worn out before we get there."

"Oh,,, sorry. We'll have a nap after dinner then, that should be enough."
Ness breathed a sigh of relief. "Good idea Muffin, now let's get something to eat. I'm starving."

The afternoon seemed to drag by. Ness and Muffin stretched out their nap as much as they could, but even Muffin got bored after two hours.

"What time is it Ness?" he asked for the third time in a few minutes.
Ness rolled over and sniffed the air. "Too early," he decided.
"The Butler isn't cooking our dinner yet."

"Maybe he's forgotten. I'll go and remind him." Muffin dashed into the kitchen just in time to see a couple of pork chops going into the oven. He settled down to wait in his favourite place by the kitchen door.
Ness, finally left in peace, drifted into a deep sleep.

"Dinner time."

Ness was woken from his reverie by Muffin's shout. He rubbed his eyes, stretched and yawned, then, suddenly remembering their important business, dashed into the kitchen. He polished off his dinner in record time and they were out of the door at top speed.



I THOUGHT WE CAME TO PLAY

Ness glanced around the shady place under the oak tree fully expecting to hear Jasper. There was nothing. The twilight birdsong was over and the woodland was settling down for the night.

"Right, let's get to work, it'll be dark soon." He said finally.

"What sort of work Ness?" Muffin looked puzzled.

"I thought we came here to play."

"Plenty of time to play later." Ness snapped. "Right now we've got a little job to do. Follow me Muffin and keep to the path." Ness had a good memory. He led them unerringly to the place where he'd marked the first trap. "Here we are Muffin, you grab that big stick and bring it here."

Muffin pulled the stick and dropped it at Ness's feet.

"Now what?" he asked.

"Same as last night." "Spring this nasty trap thing now grab hold of the stick and let's get it done."

Muffin kept his eyes tight shut as the jaws clashed together. "I hate that noise," he complained. "It makes my ears ring."

"It would do a lot worse if you got your feet in it," Ness assured him.

"Come on, there's a few more yet."

"Something's bothering me." Muffin sat under the oak tree and looked up at Ness. "How did you know where to find all those traps?" "You went straight to them without looking."

Ness looked flustered. In his enthusiasm to get the job done he hadn't thought of that.

"Just guesswork I guess," he mumbled, "plus a bit of bush craft."

"Pretty good guesswork," Muffin said dryly.
"And where did you learn your bush-craft?"

Ness was stumped. He hadn't reckoned on Muffin questioning him and he had no ready answers.

"Must be in the blood I suppose. Probably from ole Jaspers side of the family." That was the best he could do at a pinch. If Muffin asked any more awkward questions he'd be stumped.

Luckily Muffin seemed satisfied.. "Right, what do we do next, look for rabbits or", he added with a grin, "another display of bush-craft."

Ness flushed, not sure whether Muffin was pulling his leg or being sarcastic. He decided to ignore the remark.

"You decide," he suggested. "After all it was your idea to escape from the garden in the first place."

"Well, remember you said Anna and Jasper used to go to a secret beach lets go find that." "It shouldn't be hard for a man of your talents," he giggled.

"OK mister funny man," Ness laughed. "Let's go."

He looked around desperately, hoping for some word from Jasper. Just as he was about to give up he heard a whisper. "Back down to the main footpath and turn right, it's not far."

"Thanks uncle", Ness replied without thinking.

This time Muffin heard him plainly.



UNCLE WHO???

"Thanks uncle," he echoed. "Uncle who? Where is he? and what are you thanking him for?"

Well young friends, the story gets more curious by the minute. As we missed our story last month, and Belle, Muffin, Remedy, and Snowy have been waiting impatiently for Ness to continue his adventure in New Zealand, Ness has happily agreed to add another chapter of his strange tale, after all, it isn't often that he gets to have the stage to himself and he was enjoying the experience. Even Belle, usually a chatterbox, is quietly fascinated as the story unfolds.

Wrapped snugly in their blankets, with the campfire's flickering firelight casting shadows on our little band, we sat quietly on the riverbank as Ness cleared his throat and continued.

Through the Garden Gate

Chapter Three

There were few times when Ness was stuck for an answer.

This was one of them, and try as he might, he couldn't come up with a believable story to explain his new found talents.

He mumbled something about having to concentrate on finding the path to the secret beach and set off, seemingly uncertain, down the narrow twisting track. His only hope now was to convince Muffin that he wasn't infallible and the only way to do that was to get lost, well not really lost, but to appear to be so.

They arrived safely back at the main path where Ness knew, thanks to Jasper, he should turn right. Instead he appeared unsure.



WE SHOULD TRY THAT WAY

"I think we should try that way," he mumbled, pointing to his left. "What do you think?"

"You're in charge", Muffin answered "but isn't that the way we came? I don't remember passing a beach."

"Neither do I" "Ness said glibly, "but there maybe a path we missed."
"We'd better go and check it out."

They trotted along the path, carefully looking on either side, poking their heads through the tight tangle of ferns that lined the path to check for hidden trails.

Eventually they were back in the open, the field of long grass was ahead of them, but there'd been no sign of a way to the beach.

"We'll have to go back and start again," Muffin grumbled. "I told you this was the wrong way."

"Alright," Ness agreed, thankful that Muffin was beginning to doubt his prowess as a bushman. "This time you can lead." "You may have more luck than I did."

They were soon back where they'd started. The sun was beginning to set and daylight was fading.

"We'd better hurry" Muffin warned. "You know the Butler worries if we're out after dark."

"We'll just try down this way quickly and then we'll have to head back home."

Ness was happy to follow, knowing full well what lay ahead.

"There seems to be a trace of a track here," Muffin stopped at the edge of an overgrown clearing and pointed excitedly at the vague outline of a long disused path. "Shall we explore it?"

"Doesn't look very promising," Ness remarked without enthusiasm "but you're leading the way. It's up to you."

"Right. I vote we do," Muffin dived headlong into the mass of grass and brambles that were blocking their progress and disappeared from view. Ness smiled with relief. His plan appeared to be working. Muffin was beginning to doubt his ability. With a satisfied chuckle he followed.

"This is it, I found it." Muffin's excited shout reached Ness long before he reached the grassy bank where Muffin was prancing with delight. He pushed his way with difficulty through the last blackberry bush and looked in amazement.



I FOUND IT!!

Before them was an idyllic scene. Wavelets, tinged pink by the setting sun lapped on a shell covered beach, an ancient tree bending its limbs down to the shore, appeared to be resting on its elbows.

But, and by far the best feature of all, there was no sign that anyone ever came there. No footprints, no garbage. Not a sign of civilization.

Ness patted Muffin on the shoulder. "Looks like you're better than me at this tracking lark, I'd never have found this," Ness said happily. Now we can do as Jasper and Anna did on those hot summer days."

He paddled out into the warm clear water, shook himself vigorously and sighed. "Perfect," he said. "When we have more time, I'm going to learn to swim, but right now we'd better be heading home."



NESS SHOOK HIMSELF VIGOROUSLY



TIME TO HEAD HOME

And so as night falls and Belle and the Boys pick up their blankets and head back to the cabin, it's time for all you young ones to tuck yourselves into bed to dream about the day ahead and all the adventures that will come your way. Sweet dreams until we meet again.

**The Wizard, Lord Ness, Muffin and their ghostly friends
Jasper and Anna**

The Way of the Wizard **October 2010**



Well children, it seems that more than a few of you have been a bit puzzled about Ness and Muff's story and want to know why those cuddly little bunnies have to be chased out of the woodlands and away from their cosy warrens of New Zealand.

So I thought I would take a minute to explain.

Many of you, especially in those countries where rabbits are not often seen in the wild, will have pet rabbits, and like all pets you keep them clean, feed them with the best food, and make sure they are kept in a secure pen where they can enjoy life. However, those "pesky critters" as Ness jokingly calls them, have found that New Zealand is a perfect place to live. No wild animals to chase and eat them, and vast areas where they can bring up their little ones in safety. Unfortunately that causes a big problem for the humans who have to live alongside those little animals, for the huge numbers of rabbits need food, and they can find that most easily in the farmlands and gardens.

It is estimated that 75 million rabbits make their home in our little country, and left to their own devices they would eventually eat everything and we humans would have to live elsewhere. Obviously something has to be

done. Our two adventurous friends would seem to be just chasing them into another area where they will continue to eat the gardeners carefully tended crops, but the truth is that when our wild friends find it hard to find enough to feed their young they compensate by producing fewer offspring. So, eventually the balance will be restored and we can all live together in harmony.

Now I'd better get a move on or Ness will start without me.



"Mister Wizard. Hurry up we're waiting for you." Belle's clear cheerful voice echoed from the hills as I trotted along the track to the riverside.

I hurriedly made a place by the campfire and made myself comfortable.

Yes, children, it's me, the Wizard, along with our little band and once again it's time to continue Ness's tale of mystery, and our friends were impatient to hear the next episode. The tripping of the vicious traps and Muffin's discovery of the secret beach had been exciting, but still they hadn't seen a sign of their main reason for being there; the rabbits. As the sun set behind the hills Belle, Muffin, Rem and Snowy settled down to listen and Ness cleared his throat.

The Tales of the Wizard Chapter Four Through the Garden Gate

**These are my little stories taken from inside my
Magical Book of Ways**

They talked well into the night, long after the rest of the household had gone to bed. Muffin was too excited to sleep. His discovery of the secret beach and the fact that Ness had been wrong about its whereabouts ran endlessly through his mind.

"You know Ness," he whispered. "For a while I really thought you were in touch with old Jasper and he was telling you what to do."

Across the room, where moonlight filtering through the curtains vaguely showed him curled up in bed, Ness grinned. "Come on Muffin old chap. You don't really believe that do you?
Ghosts, only exist, in peoples imagination."

"Well,,,,,,you have to admit you were acting strangely." Muffin retorted crossly. "All that talking to yourself and the way you found those traps without even having to look for them, It was almost as though there was someone there giving you instructions."

"But I didn't find the beach," Ness reminded him. "You did that. Was there somebody telling you where to look?"

"Of course not, I found it all by myself," Muffin laughed. "Oh, I see what you mean. If Jasper was telling you where to look you'd have found it."

"That's right," Ness sighed. "But I didn't and you did, and it was the best discovery of the day so go to sleep now. We can stay in bed late tomorrow, nothing important to do."



THE OWL STARED BACK

Muffin was sleeping soundly with a smile on his face when once more, at the point of sunrise, Ness crept out of the house for his meeting with Jasper. As usual the grassy clearing beneath the oak was quiet and still.

From his perch in the tree the owl stared back as he looked up.

"Good morning young man."

This time Ness was ready and didn't jump when he heard the cheerful greeting. "Good morning to you too," he answered politely.

"I hope you slept well."

"Sleep!!! Haven't done that in years," the disembodied voice chuckled.

"No need for it when you don't really exist."

"Don't exist." Ness suddenly remembered his conversation of the night before. "You weren't in our bedroom last night were you?"

"Of course I was. I usually manage to call in at least once a week to make sure everything's running smoothly." Jasper laughed. "You really had

Muffin fooled with that little deception of yours. Quick thinking, just what's needed to run the estate properly."

Ness looked guilty. Maybe," he muttered sheepishly "but I don't like telling lies. Muffin is a good friend."

"In my book that wasn't a lie, it was just an explanation for something he wouldn't understand anyway." Jasper reassured him. "What matters is, your actions made Muffin feel good, and there's nothing wrong in that. So stop feeling guilty about it and let's get on with today's business. Sit down and make yourself comfortable. There's a hard day in front of you".

"Can you hear Anna barking?" Jasper asked.
Why do you think she does that?"

"Ness looked puzzled. "I'm not sure," he said.
"I suppose she's chasing rabbits."

"That's right, but she's got a problem, as I have. You see the problem with being a ghost is nothing can see or hear you, apart from yourself of course. No matter how much she barks and chases around the rabbits don't know she's there. Now do you see how you can help?"

"Ah,,,,you mean you want us to do the barking and chasing." Ness quickly grasped the idea. "In exchange for that you and Anna are going to show us how to get rid of the rabbits."

"That's right. And believe me; with the way the estate's been run down over the last few years it's going to be a tough job."

"Nothing we can't handle Ness said confidently. "Just wait till you hear the racket Muffin and I can come up with.
There won't be a rabbit left within miles."

"I know, I've heard you before, but now you'll be doing it for a reason.
Now get off home and I'll see you again after dinner."
With that he was gone.

Muffin was still fast asleep when Ness returned home so Ness hopped back into bed. The previous night's late talking followed by an early morning jaunt into the woods had left him tired. He too was soon asleep.



TIME TO GET UP

"It's time to get up Ness." Muffin's cheerful voice woke him suddenly.
He sat up and looked around.

"What time is it?" he asked sleepily. "I could have stayed in bed all day."
"Breakfast time of course, can't miss that."

Muffin measured his days in mealtimes. There was breakfast time when he had to get out of bed. Lunch time just before his afternoon nap; but the best time of all was dinnertime, when he could eat his fill of the delicious chops; roast meat; or chicken that the Butler served up.

"I'll be with you in a minute," Ness said wearily. "Just give me time to wake up properly."

Muffin pranced out of the bedroom leaving Ness to gather his thoughts and plan the day ahead.

The day passed slowly. Ness spent the morning chasing the pheasants that cheekily returned and ate the peas in the vegetable garden as soon as his back was turned. Muffin lazily watched the Butler, now in his gardener's guise, slowly pushing the lawn mower across the huge lawns.

After lunch they both started to feel impatient.

"Are we going to the secret beach after dinner," Muffin asked eagerly, "I

want to cool my feet in the water."
"Other things to do," Ness panted. "Better have a nap;
I've got some hard work planned."

"Work. But what about learning to swim?" Muffin sounded disappointed,
which of course he was. The thought of visiting the beach,,,, his beach,
had been on his mind all day.

"There's plenty of time for that. I've got an estate to get back on track
and right now the biggest problem is rabbits. I thought we could make a
start getting rid of the ones in the woods."

Muffin liked chasing rabbits. His only experience had been with the ones
that ventured into the garden to sample the lettuces so the idea of
chasing them around the trees sounded good

"OK," he agreed. "When do we start?"

"After dinner, and there'll be a lot of running around so don't
eat too much," Ness warned

"There's always a catch," Muffin moaned. "Why did you have to spoil it?"

"How are we going to chase all the rabbits away Ness? The ones we
chase out of the garden always come back and there must be hundreds
of them in the woods"

"Not sure yet but I'll think of something when we get there," Ness
answered. "I reckon if we keep at them they'll get the message
eventually and move somewhere quieter."

"So we'll have to keep going back to chase them every night."
"Yes, until we get rid of the lot of them." Ness was adamant. "If we're
going to do this job we're going to do it right."

Muffin couldn't argue with that. It had been his idea to return the estate
to its former ways. He'd have to put up with whatever methods Ness
thought fit. They completed the rest of the trip in silence.

"What are we waiting for Ness?" Muffin sat under the tree
and watched as Ness stalked around, apparently deep in thought.

"Just thinking up a plan of attack," Ness replied lamely.
Don't want to get it wrong."

"How can you get chasing rabbits wrong?" Muffin mocked. "All you have to do is run after them and they run away. It's simple."

"There's more to it than that," Ness retorted. "We have to make sure they get the fright of their lives, and then next time they see us they'll be thinking seriously about leaving." He looked around anxiously. Surely Jasper couldn't have forgotten their meeting.



WE NEED A PLAN

Muffin was getting impatient. Thinking of all the running ahead of him he'd only eaten half his dinner and now his stomach was beginning to rumble. "I don't think you know what to do," he said unhappily. "We're going to sit here till it gets dark and all those rabbits will be laughing at us." Suddenly Ness perked up. A whisper in his ear heralded the return of the voice and he listened carefully.

"Sorry I'm late," Jasper apologized. "Anna saw a cat up a tree and I had a hard time convincing her to leave it. She still thinks they're frightened of her even though she's invisible."

Ness turned his back on Muffin and walked to the edge of the clearing. "What do we have to do?" he asked quietly. "We don't have much time." "Don't worry," Jasper chuckled. "you'll soon get the knack. Just follow the

sound of Anna's barking and do as I say."

"Come on Muffin. I think I know how to do it," Ness called to his bored friend. "First we'll find where most of the rabbits congregate then we'll sort them out."

Muffin cheered up, his hunger pangs forgotten as they tramped into the thickest part of the woodland. It wasn't hard to find Anna. Ness might not be able to see her but he could certainly hear her sharp, urgent yapping. He peered carefully into the half darkness of the scrub and slowly shapes began to materialise, living shapes with white tails and long ears. He felt a tingle of excitement as Jasper's voice whispered to him. With a finger to his lips he motioned Muffin to join him as he carefully listened to and passed on the instructions.

"Here's what we do," he said quietly. "When the rabbits see us they'll bolt into the thicker bushes thinking we can't follow. You're the smallest so your job is to creep under the bushes and frighten them out. While you're doing that I'm going to race around the bushes making as much noise as I can. That way they'll panic and not know which way to run. A few minutes of that and they'll start to consider moving."



MUFFIN INCHED FORWARD

Muffin, shaking with excitement, nodded to show he understood. He lowered himself to the ground and began to inch forward, almost like a snake. The rabbits didn't see him until the last moment, then there was pandemonium, Ness started his part of the plan with a noise that sounded like a whole pack of hunting dogs as he raced around. The rabbits bolted as planned but had nowhere to go as Ness seemed to appear wherever they were heading. Muffin joined in with all the power his lungs could muster and between them they herded the whole quivering pack into one small area.

"That worked well," Ness commented happily. "Now we have to show them which way they need to go. You keep barking and move forward slowly Muffin. I'll do the same down this side then they can only head that way, out of the woods. We'll keep on their tails so they can't run back." Together, like cowboys in a western film they herded the luckless rabbits away from the warren and into unfamiliar territory. Then Ness gave the final instruction. "OK Muffin. As much noise as you can,,,, NOW." The resultant cacophony would have raised the dead. The rabbits, probably for the first time in their lives were up against a real enemy and acted accordingly. They ran as though their lives depended on it and kept going until they were out of sight. Ness gave a whoop of satisfaction as the last white tail disappeared. "That'll teach 'em" he gloated. "They'll soon learn who's the boss around here."



THAT WAS A GOOD NIGHT'S WORK

"Heheheeee, did you see them go Ness?" Muffin almost choked with laughter as he rolled around in the leaves.

"Bet they never come back here again."

"Some won't," Ness agreed "but there'll be a few that do. A few more scares like tonight's should convince them."

"Anyway, time to go home I reckon. We've done a good nights work." As they hurried out of the woods Ness heard a loud thank you and, probably for the first time in years, Anna had no reason to bark.

Well children. Now the story is moving along quickly, but as Ness said, there was still much to be done before the woodland would be finally cleared of those pesky rabbits, but now the chilly breezes are blowing from the hills and it's time to return indoors for milk and cookies. But we'll be back soon, so until then,

Sleep well and be ready to enjoy your own adventures.

Good night and sweet dreams from our little band,

Lord Ness, Muffin, Snowy and Rem.

The Ancestor Jasper and Anna

The Wizard

The Way of the Wizard November 2010



Well children, here we are once again and Ness's is just about to begin telling the next episode of our intrepid adventure story.

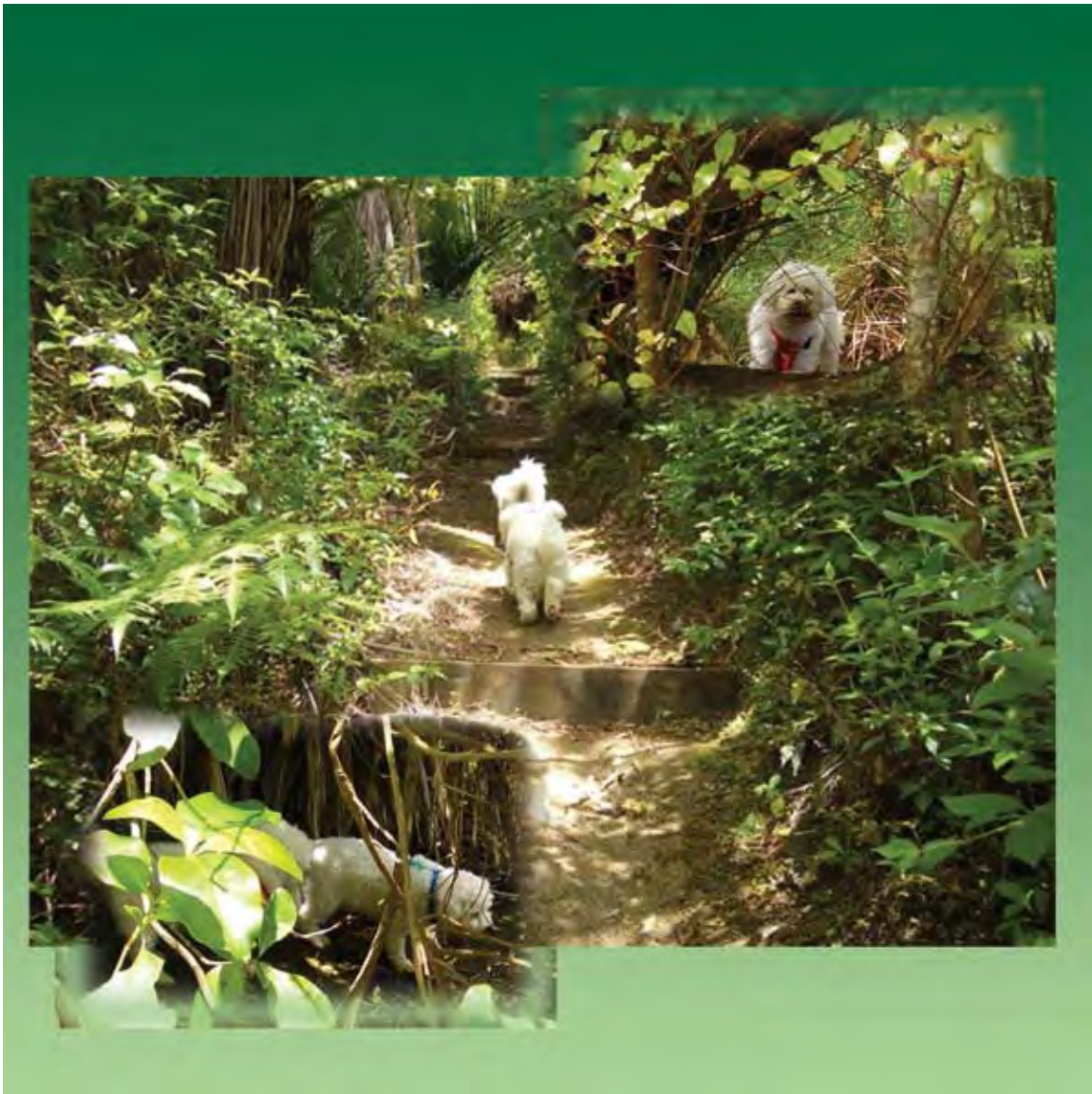
As you will remember, their plan to send the rabbits packing, was hugely successful and they were looking forward to a time in the near future when those little furry bunnies would soon be under control and they could relax a little.

This evening is much cooler; the autumn chills have a feel of frost in the air, so while Patricia and Christy bring out hot chocolate to keep us warm, we all begin to settle onto the porch. I was sitting in my old chair, trying my best not to let the rockers creak, as Ness began to speak.

Every one got quiet as a mouse as he cleared his throat and began to tell the story, starting right where he had left off.....

The Tales of the Wizard and "Ness"
These are the little stories taken from inside my
magical "Book of Ways"

Chapter 5 Through the Garden Gate



The next few days were a turmoil of activity for Lord Ness and Muffin. Together they combed the woodland and gradually they began to see a difference. The rabbits, so numerous on their first jaunt were becoming difficult to find and Ness could see victory in sight.

"What do you think Jasper?" Ness asked as he settled under the tree for the usual early morning talk. "Have we done a good job?"

"Excellent, couldn't have done it better myself"
came the reply from the undergrowth.

Ness jumped up in alarm. That wasn't Jaspers voice he'd heard. He looked around warily. "Who are you?" he asked when he was sure there was no-one hiding in the bushes and making fun of him.

"I'm Anna of course. Who else could it be," the newcomer laughed.

"But where's Jasper, why didn't he come?" Ness queried nervously.
"Nothing's happened to him I hope."

He heard a giggle from the undergrowth. "Nothing can happen to him," Anna answered. "He's a ghost, remember. He decided to go to the beach for a change so I thought I'd come and say thank you for all your help."

Ness blushed self consciously. "It was nothing really," he stammered. "We couldn't have done it without you."

"All the same it was a nice thing to do," Anna assured him. "I was getting really frustrated with those pesky rabbits." "It's not nice being ignored."

Ness was beginning to like his new acquaintance and gained a little courage. "There is a favour I want to ask," he said quickly.

"Can you explain how you can pick up hedgehogs without getting prickled?"

Anna laughed out loud. "You can't," she spluttered." ask Jasper. I couldn't tell you how many times I've pulled spines out of his mouth.
Why do you want to know?"

"Well, I heard that you used to do it so I thought it must be something you needed to know to be a gamekeeper," Ness explained.

"Good heavens no," Anna chuckled. "We did that just for a game." "We used to roll them down the hill." "It doesn't hurt them; they just curl up into a ball." "Oh, I see, but why didn't you chase them away like we did the rabbits?"

"Because they're harmless of course and great to have in the garden, they eat slugs and snails." Anna told him.
"Anyway, they can't run so it wouldn't be much fun."



Ness looked disappointed. He'd been hoping to have something new to show Muffin. Anna must have noticed his downcast look.

"Tell you what," she offered. "There's one in that clump of ferns if you'd like to try, but don't say I didn't warn you."

Ness approached the hedgehog cautiously, nudging it with his nose but not brave enough to pick it up. "Open your mouth really wide," Anna instructed him. "That's right. Now, the spines fold back so if you grab him from behind before he has time to roll up you won't get prickled too much, but don't bite hard."

Ness summoned all his courage and lunged forward, mouth wide open.
"Ouch!" he yelled. "That hurt."

"Told you so," Anna giggled. "You've got one spine in there but I can't pull it out. You'd better go home and ask Muffin to help."

"What's wrong Ness?" Muffin watched his friend rubbing his mouth. "You look like you've got toothache."

"Worse than that," Ness mumbled. "It's a hedgehog spine and it's painful."



"How on earth did it get in your mouth?" Muffin asked in amazement.
"Did the hedgehog attack you?"

"No, I tried to pick it up," Ness grumbled, but with a hint of pride.
"Now will you stop asking questions and pull it out?"

Muffin did as he was asked, carefully holding the spine in his teeth and easing it out gently. Ness gave a sigh of relief. "That's better," he said happily.
"Thanks Muffin."

"Good, now will you please explain why you picked it up?
Really Ness, you do some silly things."

"Well, I just wondered how Anna and Jasper could do it. It didn't look dangerous," Ness grinned. "Anyway it's out now and no harm done. I'll just have to be more careful next time."

"Next time?" Muffin groaned. "Don't you ever learn?"

The episode with the hedgehog was quickly forgotten. That evening, Ness

and Muffin were just about to turn off the track and into the trees when Ness heard the now familiar voice. "Hello again, we have a new plan for tonight."

Ness paused and pretended to pull a thorn from his foot as Jasper spoke. "New plan, what is it?" he whispered as Muffin trotted further along the track.

"Swimming..... Thought that would please you," he added as Ness's face broke into a wide grin.

"This way Muffin" he yelled. "We're giving the rabbits a rest tonight and going to your beach instead."

"!!Yippee!! Muffin shouted. "At last, I was beginning to think we'd never get there." He rushed back and eagerly pushed Ness out of the way. "My beach, I will lead," he insisted. "Just follow me."

Nothing had changed. The wavelets still swished on the shells, way out on the harbour boats lay unmoving on their moorings and only the faint sound of a distant boat motor broke the silence. Ness didn't waste time.

With a whoop of joy he raced across the short stretch of shingle and launched himself into the water.



"Come on Muffin," he urged. "It's great."
Muffin was less enthusiastic, "I'll stay here and cool my toes," he said warily. "You can teach me to swim later."

"You're a natural," Jasper complimented him as he confidently paddled around. "But don't go too far out. That's where it gets dangerous."

Ness flushed with pride. Compliments from the famous Jasper were praise indeed. He turned and struck out for the shore, pausing for breath when he reached the shallows.

"Stay here for a while," Jasper told him.
"We've got a small problem I want to discuss."

"A problem! That sounds serious." Ness turned back to face out to sea when he noticed Muffin watching him closely.

"Not really serious but we'll have to sort it out quickly," Jasper told him.
"Something I heard at the local residents meeting last night."

"You go to residents meetings! Is that part of the job?" Ness asked in dismay. He'd been to one with the Butler and found all the talk boring.

"No, not really part of the job but sometimes you learn something, as I did last night, something that might make life difficult."

Ness had a feeling of impending doom, something that was going to put a stop to all his plans. "What did you hear?" he asked dismally.
"Don't look so downcast," Jasper urged. "If we can work together as we have over the last few days we can beat it."

"Ok, you can count on us," Ness assured him.
"What do we have to do this time?"

"Well, basically the problem's this," said Jasper grimly. "Some of the residents are complaining about all the noise from the bush in the evenings. They reckon there's a pack of dogs running wild,"

"But we're making things better for them," Ness protested. "When the rabbits are gone their gardens will be safe."

"That's right, but they don't know that. They'll be bringing in the rangers to help catch you. That's where the problem lies."

"Agh, that's easily solved," Ness said scornfully,
"We'll just stay home until they've gone."

"I don't think they'll give up so easily. They'll be back every time they hear a noise and you'll never get anything done. It'll be better if we sort it out once and for all. Here's what I want you to do."

Ness listened wide-eyed to Jasper's proposal.

It included something he never thought he'd see. And, suddenly he realized, Muffin was going to find out his big secret..... He said goodnight to Jasper and walked slowly out of the water, shivering, not from the cool evening air,
but from anticipation.

His life was about to change drastically, and he wasn't sure he was ready for it.

Well, it would seem, my little friends that the boys have been a little enthusiastic in their endeavours and if the butler finds out what they've been up to,
all their efforts would be in vain.



Will Lord Jasper have a plan to save the day, or will all the hard work have been for nothing?

Find out in the final episode when we meet next month.

Right now we're all ready for bed as I suppose you all are, so until the next meeting, enjoy every moment while you are awake, and dream only the best of dreams when you are asleep.

Good night from Ness, Muff, Belle, Rem and Snowy, and not forgetting,
Patricia, Christy,

and myself. The Wizard.

The Way of the Wizard December 2010



Hellooooo my young friends, here I am again and as always Ness is about to tell what will be the last part of his story.

As you will remember, Lord Jasper was about to reveal his plan to foil the dog rangers and make sure that Ness and Muffin could finish their task of clearing up the rabbit problem. Only he knows the full story, and so Muffin, Rem. Snowy, Belle, Patricia, Christy and I are waiting impatiently to know the outcome. We are sitting quietly on the front porch, hot milk and cookies in hand.

Ness smilingly kept us in suspense as he pretended to re-arrange his blanket and slowly sipped his drink, but when he thought we were all beginning to get impatient he gave a loud cough to clear his throat.

At last, we were going to hear the final chapter, so snuggle into your blankets and make yourselves comfortable!!!



The Tales of the Wizard

**These are my little stories taken from
Inside my Magical
Book of Ways**

**Through the Garden Gate
Chapter 6**



Ness spent another restless night.

Jasper's news turned over and over in his mind as he tossed and turned, unable to find a comfortable position in a bed that seemed to have suddenly become lumpy and uncomfortable.

Muffin slept like a log, blissfully unaware of the changes about to be made to his hitherto uncomplicated life.

It was the early hours of the morning before Ness drifted into a disturbed sleep. He was rudely awakened when Muffin shook him roughly

"Come on sleepyhead, breakfast time." The cheerful walk-up call brought Ness back to consciousness abruptly. He rubbed the sleep from his eyes and blinked as Muffin hauled back the curtains and the morning sun streamed into the room, then he realized with dismay that he'd missed his morning meeting with Jasper.

"That's torn it," he moaned as Muffin disappeared through the door. "Now I won't know what's going on until we get there tonight." He slid off the bed and was about to join his friend in the kitchen when he was interrupted.

"So, here you are," Jasper boomed, "we got tired of waiting and decided

to call on you for a change." Ness closed the door hurriedly. "Sorry," he said quietly. "I had a bad night and overslept."

"That's alright; we just wanted to warn you that the rangers are coming tonight so we'd better get our plan sorted out."

Ness's shoulders slumped. "Tonight," he gasped. "I wasn't expecting them so soon." Suddenly he felt very apprehensive and a little frightened.

"What if it goes wrong?" he asked glumly. "What if we get caught and taken away to the pound?"

"Stop worrying," Anna said cheerfully. "Nothing's going to go wrong, and even if it did the Butler will sort it out."

The very mention of the Butler sent Ness into a panic. "I don't want him to find out," he wailed. "He's very strict about us leaving the grounds. He'll probably lock us in for ever then we'll never finish the job."

"Then we'd better make sure he doesn't find out," Jasper chuckled. "And when we've finished tonight nobody's going to know who's who or what's what."

"Except us," Anna chirped, "And we're going to have more fun than we've had in years, and don't worry about the Butler," she added. "He's going to be there and he'll be as baffled as anyone."

Ness sat on the bed and listened carefully as Jasper and Anna outlined the plan. Slowly his apprehension turned to a smile. It was brilliant. If all went right they'd never be bothered again, and they'd have complete freedom to do, as they liked in the woods.

"Well, what do you think? Can you handle it?" Jasper asked when he was sure Ness understood what was required of himself and Muffin.

"I can," Ness said confidently. "I'm not sure about Muffin though, I'll need to explain it to him carefully and I'm not certain he's going to understand when I tell him about you two."

"I've spent the last few days assuring him there's no such thing as ghosts. Now I have to convince him, not only that there is, but also that he's going to see two." He smiled ruefully. "Maybe it would have been better to tell him the truth right at the start."

"He'll be alright," Jasper growled. "Just make sure he knows what to expect then he won't run away when the action starts."

Ness spent the whole day explaining the plan. At first Muffin didn't believe a word of it but slowly and patiently Ness impressed on him the truth of the matter and the important part he was going to play.

When they finally went inside for dinner Muffin was so agog with excitement that he couldn't eat it all and was dithering at the door while Ness calmly finished it off for him.

"Come on," Muffin pleaded. "Hurry up Ness.
We don't want to miss the fun."

"We won't," Ness promised. "It can't start until we get there and we have to wait for the Butler to leave. We'll hop on the bed and pretend to be asleep then he won't worry about what we're up to when he's out."



HAS HE GONE YET?

It seemed to take forever, but finally they heard the bolt slam shut as the Butler locked the gate. Shaking with excitement they jumped down from the bed and peered out of the window.

"Right, he's gone," Ness rushed to the back door to make sure it was open. "Come on Muffin," he shouted. "We've got to be in the woods and well hidden before they get there."

Once again the irrepressible pair dashed down the garden, through the hole and down to the woods. This time their usual chatter was forgotten and they completed the journey in silence.

Jasper and Anna were ready and waiting when they arrived at their usual meeting place.

"Ah, here you are," Jasper laughed, "Ready for the fun?"
"We're ready," Ness spoke loudly, relieved that Muffin was in on the secret. "When do we start?"

"Not long now." Anna's voice came from a tree at the edge of the clearing. "I can see them from up here, just entering the woods."

Ness shook his head in amazement. After all the surprises of the past week he was still in awe of the capabilities of Jasper and Anna, but tree climbing dogs were something he'd never expected.

"Quiet now." Jasper warned. You two go over there and hide, make sure Anna and I are between you and the rangers, and whatever happens don't let them see you. I'll let you know when to start barking."

Ness passed on the instructions to Muffin who was still waiting quietly to play his part in the proceedings and they crept off into the dark undergrowth.

"What's happening?" Muffin whispered. "I can't see a thing."

"Ness raised his head slightly and peered through a gap in the ferns.
"Nothing yet, oho,,,,, hang on. Somebody's coming." He ducked back under cover as heavy boots crashed through the dry scrub and the sound of voices reached them.

"That's the Butler," Muffin gasped in alarm. "Let's get out of here."
"Stay down," Ness hissed. "He can't see us."

Muffin shivered as he wormed his way back under the shrubs. Ness took another hasty look. "It's ok. They're not coming this way.
I wonder what Jasper's waiting for?"

The minutes seemed to drag by as they lay there, not daring even to scratch when ants crawled over their faces.

Then things began to happen. More voices, more people in the clearing.
Then Jasper's voice rang out clearly.

"NOW!" He shouted. "Make as much noise as you can."

The tumult of noise seemed out of proportion to their size as Ness and Muffin gave their best impression of a pack of wild dogs.



THERE'S ONE!!

"Over there," somebody shouted. "I saw one." Ness held Muffin down as he took a cautious look. "It's alright," he whispered, "they're going the other way. Come on, it's time to move."

They crept from the safety of their cover and slid silently to their next assigned spot. "Ready?" this time it was Anna's voice at their shoulder.

Ness nodded.

"Ok, GO"

Once again the racket filled the woodland and once again there was a shout from the group. "There's one."



AND ANOTHER

This time the whole gang of hopeful dogcatchers dashed to scene of the last sighting. "It was here," one man insisted. "I saw it." Another backed up his story. "I saw it too," he lashed at the close packed ferns with the leash he carried in readiness. Nothing moved.

"One over here, and another over there by the tree," the call went up again and again. Suddenly the sightings were everywhere and the rangers were in a panic. "There must be dozens of them," someone shouted. "We'll never catch them all."



THEY ARE EVERYWHERE

Ness took another look and smiled in satisfaction. The plan was working perfectly. "We seem to have got them worried" he chortled.

"Look at the way they're dashing around."

"I can't see a thing," Muffin complained. "Why do they keep saying they've seen us and then run the other way?"

"I guess you didn't explain our party trick Ness." Jasper laughed.

"Tell him to keep his eyes on the bushes over there. I'll get Anna to give him a demonstration. Ready Anna?"

Muffin stared intently to where Ness pointed, not daring to blink. For a few seconds nothing happened, then,,,,,,,,, "I saw something," Muffin gasped.
"Another dog, now it's gone again."

He wasn't the only one to see it. The whole group of men dashed towards the apparition only to find that once again there was nothing there.

"Time for me to make another entrance," Jasper growled. "Move around a bit, stay out of sight and keep up the noise.
We'll get them really flummoxed."

Ness and Muffin were now enjoying themselves immensely, dashing from one hiding place to another, barking loudly then off again. The men, angry and frustrated rushed from one will of the wisp to the next, only to find themselves grasping at empty space.

Jasper and Anna's laughter echoed around the woodland as they led the luckless group on a wild goose chase.

As a finale they both trotted meekly into the middle of the clearing. Unable to believe their luck the men approached slowly, leashes at the ready. Completely surrounded, there could be no escape.
"GOTCHA." All the men dived at once.

Ness and Muffin watched anxiously as their two co-conspirators disappeared from view. It seemed the game was over. Then Ness looked up. "There they are" he chuckled. "Up in the tree." Just above the heads of the struggling men a white Bichon and a brown and white terrier sat on a branch laughing loudly.



YOU CAN GO HOME NOW NESS

"You can head off home now," Jasper shouted. "This lot won't be looking for us again for a long time."

When the Butler arrived home Ness and Muffin were tucked up safely in bed. He stared at them suspiciously. "I could have sworn it was you two rascals I heard barking," he muttered. "And those two phantom dogs sure looked familiar."

Ness awoke unusually refreshed. He stretched and gazed out of the window at a perfect summer morning. Behind him, Muffin stirred and sat up in bed.

"Hey Ness," he smiled, "I've just had the strangest dream; all about hidden beaches and ghosts. It was really weird."

Ness looked at him curiously. "You don't remember?" he said.

"Not really," Muffin murmured. "I can never remember dreams, just bits of them. I remember we'd found a way out of the garden and were running in the woods, and you went for a swim." He thought hard for a moment, "Then there were lots of men running around and falling over."

"Sounds like fun," Ness laughed as they trotted into the kitchen for breakfast, "but I'm not sure about the ghost bit. That would be scary."



THAT'S JASPER AND ANNA

Muffin stopped suddenly. "Who are those two?" he asked, pointing at the picture hanging above the door.

"That's old Jasper and Anna," Ness replied with a grin. "I thought you knew about them."

Muffin looked again and shrugged his shoulders. "Only what you told me, but I'm almost sure they were in my dream."

Ness smiled. Muffin, it seemed, had no memory of the events of the past few days. That would make life a lot easier, "I'll tell you more stories about them someday," he grinned.

He glanced at the picture again and it appeared that Anna gave him a big wink. As he started breakfast Jaspers voice whispered in his ear.
"Thanks for your help. We'll start work on the Island next."

Ness didn't know what the Island was, but it sounded like a good place for another great adventure.

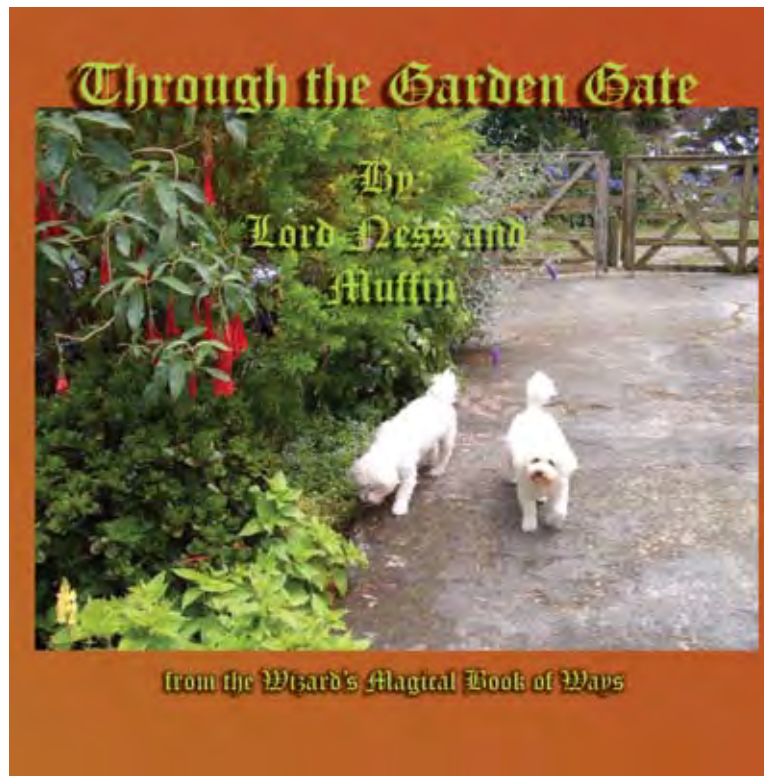
Oblivious to everything, Muffin tucked in to his food.

The Butler frowned as he tried to figure out how his boots got muddy when he hadn't worn them.

Outside the sun was shining, and for Lord Ness, life at the Manor was looking a lot more interesting.

"See you on the Island," he murmured happily





Well children, what a strange and mysterious tale.

No matter how hard I try I can't remember any of the happenings when the rangers and I tried helplessly to catch those elusive phantoms.

Muffin is still at a loss as to how he could not know when he was involved so completely in the hilarious escapade. But, strange as it may seem, Ness insists that it was true, and the truth is, the rabbits did move away and it wasn't long before the local people began to realize that their vegetables were growing bigger and better than they could ever remember, but of course they had no idea why.

Ness was happy with that. As he says, "Getting the credit for something you've done isn't important. What is important, is the fact that you've enjoyed doing something for others."

So, as the stars begin to twinkle in the evening sky we picked up our blankets and prepared for bed.

But what did Jasper mean about the "Island."

That is something only Ness knows, but I'm sure he could be convinced to tell, at some later date.

Christmas will be over before we meet again, so from all of my friends,
Ness, Muffin, Belle, Rem, Snowy, Patricia, Christy and I,

**Have a very Merry Christmas
and a Happy New Year**

The Wizard



**The Way of the Wizard
January 2011**

**A Happy New Year to all our readers from
Ness, Muffin, Belle, Snowy, Rem, Christy, Trish,
and of Course myself,**

The Wizard



Well, here we are again young ones.

Once again Christmas is over and we are beginning the New Year. No doubt you will already have decided which of the exciting gifts your favourites are and which will be placed on one side for later.

Aunty Jean's socks will be confined to the drawer and the warm woolly jumper from aunt Ethel will only be worn when the snow arrives.

Books, are always on top of the list for enjoyment, but only for those miserable days when the rain pours down in buckets and the toys have become boring or maybe those annoying batteries need to be changed.

For many the choice is limited, some will have little choice, maybe one toy, or even none at all, with which to spend your time when the outside

world looks black and depressing, but for all, without exception, there are ways of filling those times, and the best part is, it costs nothing.

Imagination is a wonderful invention.

Anyone can use it; it costs nothing, and is completely free of restrictions or constraints. No more than a thought or an idea is needed and your minds can travel into a world of wonder and excitement.

Ness and Muffin, my irrepressible friends, never had the need for toys. They grew up on the beaches, woodlands and garden of our home in New Zealand they lived a life of imagination and adventure, turning their whole world upside down as they discovered new ways of having fun, and usually I was unwittingly included in their exploits.

So, as this is the time of the year when the nights are cold and dark, I thought it would be a good time to sit back, get the milk and cookies, and enjoy a giggle as they wandered through a life of laughter.



The Tales of the Wizard
These are my little stories taken from inside
My Magical Book of Ways

A Walk On the Wild Side



"Looks like the beginning of a good day Ness. Got anything planned?" Muffin asked as he lay back in the sunshine, eyes closed nibbling on a biscuit. Ness, sprawled under the sun shade and half asleep, yawned.

"Not really old chap. I was going to have forty winks before lunch." He rolled over and stretched his legs. "Why" he asked.
"Got something in mind?"

"Well.....I've been thinking," Muffin said thoughtfully. "Since the Butler got the motorcycle he hasn't been getting the exercise he needs." He sat up and smiled. "Why don't we give him a special treat?"

"He's not having chocolates," Ness growled.
"Not good for him old chap."

Muffin laughed. "I know, they make him hyper-active, but that's not what I had in mind."

"Come on then. Out with it." Ness said grumpily.
"I'm missing my beauty sleep."

"Why don't we take him for a walk?" Muffin suggested.

"A walk!!!. He gets a walk every day," Ness snapped. "What's new about that?" He turned over and closed his eyes, but Muffin wouldn't be put off.

"I thought we could take him into the woods," he explained, "and let him off the leash. You know, see if we can get him to follow us."

Ness sat up. The idea had some merit he had to agree. "Mmm," he murmured. "You could be right old chap. There's nothing worse than a badly trained Butler." He struggled to his feet and shook the grass clippings from his coat "Come on then," he chuckled. "Give him a call. No time like the present."

It didn't take long to entice the Butler out of the garage. He loved his walks. One glimpse of the leash and he was eager to be off. "Look at him go," Muffin laughed. "If we didn't hang on tight he'd run all the way."

"Yes, he's a handful alright," Ness gasped as they reached the track leading into the woods. "Another couple of minutes and we'll let him go."

"Right, let's see how well he does." Ness unfastened the leashes and stood back. "Here Jeeves," he called. "This way."

"Good so far," Muffin said approvingly. "We'll see how he goes off the beaten track. Come on Ness. Run."



They took off at top speed leaving the Butler floundering in their wake.

"Not much idea," Ness growled. "Come on man. Get down on all fours. You'll never get through the bushes standing up."

"Wow!! Look at that," Muffin said admiringly. "He's found an easy way round. You know, he's quite bright for a human."

"Not bad," Ness agreed. "Let's make it a bit harder. We'll see how well he goes down this hill. Ready Muff. Let's go."



They raced down the hill, sliding under bushes and swerving around trees until they came to a slithering halt at the edge of a bramble patch.

"Better wait for him," Ness wheezed. "Don't want him to get lost." In the distance they could hear the crashing and complaining as the Butler approached.

"Here he comes," Muffin giggled. "I say Ness, he's gone all red in the face and there's water dripping off his chin. Do you think he's alright?"

"Nothing to worry about," Ness assured him. "I've seen that look before when he's trying to start the lawnmower."

"Let him sit down for a few minutes and he'll come right."

"Thank goodness for that." Muffin looked relieved. "I thought he was melting." I say, "look Ness, he's eating those black berry things." "Isn't he clever?"

"He's just copying me old chap," Ness muttered. "Better put the leashes back on before he makes himself ill." "Come on Jeeves."



"Time to go home"



Hunting Tigers

"Wake up Muffin." Ness shook his friend urgently.
Muffin yawned, rolled over and peered bleary eyed as he struggled to rise. "What's wrong Ness?" he asked sleepily. "Having nightmares?"
"Nothing wrong, got things to do," Ness answered briskly. "Come on, move yourself."

"Not till you tell me what it is that's so urgent." "It's still dark," Muffin complained as he pulled the pillow over his head,
"can't it wait?"

"No it can't. It has to be done now when they're not expecting us."
Ness gave Muffin's tail a tug and pulled him off the bed.

"Ouch!! That hurt," Muffin bleated. He gave Ness a sharp nip on the leg.
"See how you like it."

Ness ignored him and looked out of the window. "Perfect," he murmured.
"A full moon. Now we'll catch the blighters."

"Catch who?" "Oh no, not that again." "Tell me we're not tiger hunting again.....Please," Muffin begged. "We've never even seen one."

"That's because we're keeping on top of them." Ness snapped irritably.
"Now follow me and for heaven's sake, keep quiet."
"We don't want to wake the Butler."



"We might frighten the tigers too," Muffin said loudly. "Wouldn't want to do that," he yelled!!!

'Shhh..' Ness shook his head in annoyance. "Anyone would think you're frightened of them."

"What do they look like Ness?"

"Nothing I'd be scared of old boy." Ness grinned. "They're sort of brown coloured, long ears, a little white tail, oh, and they hop," He explained. "Nothing frightening in that is there?"

"Don't suppose so," Muffin muttered doubtfully. "It depends. How big are they?"

"Well, I've only seen pictures" Ness explained, "but I don't think they are as big as us."

Muffin brightened considerably, then a thought struck him. "Cats are smaller than us," he wailed, "and they scratch and bite."

"Not if you bite them first they don't. Now stop complaining and hide behind that tree." Ness pushed his shaking companion under the bushes and settled down to watch. Muffin covered his eyes with his paws and wished he was still in bed.



"There's one." Ness almost fell over with excitement. "Look Muff, down the lawn, under that tree."

"Don't want to see it, it's your tiger," Muffin yelped as he made a dash for the house. "If you catch it take it to the cook. We'll have it for dinner." He dived through the door and slammed it behind him.

"Drat" Ness grumbled, though somewhat relieved.
"I reckon the two of us could have caught it, but never mind." "Now I know what a real tiger looks like."



Well little friends, once again it's time to turn out the lights and drift into your own dreamland. We'll be back as always at the end of next month, so until then, make the most of every moment in your happy lives.

**Sweet dreams,
The Wizard**



Now he was beginning to think the whole episode was a figment of his imagination. "Two weeks, and not a sign of them," he murmured, "Surely it couldn't have been a dream."



A flutter of wings in the branches above scattered a shower of crystal dewdrops. An owl hooted softly as Ness looked up.

"I don't suppose you know where they are?" he sighed. The owl stared back, its big eyes unblinking, and, or so it seemed to Ness, shook its head.

"Oh well, might as well go home." Ness decided. He took one last look around the clearing before heading sadly along the secret track that led back to the Manor.

"Where have you been?" "We've looked everywhere for you," cried Muffin.

Muffin, who was rarely out of bed at that time of the morning, was wide awake and cheerful when he met Ness at the door.

"Just the usual morning walk," Ness answered quietly. "I thought I'd work up an appetite before breakfast."

"

I've already had mine" Muffin warned. "You'd better be quick, the butler's in a hurry and he wasn't pleased about you not being here."
"Why? What's the rush?" Nothing important to do," Ness said grumpily.
"Just another day watching him pottering around in the garden."

"Aha, that's where you're wrong," Muffin smiled. "Today we're going to do something completely different. Something we've never done before."

Ness's glum look was quickly replaced by a smile. "Different!!!...What?... Where? When?" he barked impatiently.
"Come on Muff, don't keep me in suspense."

"Ok, calm down." Muffin waited until Ness stopped hopping around, and then whispered.

"We're going fishing."

Ness's smile slowly faded. "Oh no, not that again," he grumbled.
"Remember the last time. We walked miles to get to his favourite fishing spot and then you ate all the bait and we didn't catch anything."

"Ah, yes," Muffin chuckled, "but at least I had fish for lunch, even if I was sick afterwards. But you haven't heard the best part yet," he added. "We won't be walking anywhere. We're going,,,,,,,,, on the Yacht!!!!!!!"

Chapter two

Suddenly Jasper was forgotten.

Fishing on the yacht, Whoopee!!. What an adventure, Ness thought as he hurriedly munched his food.

Jeeves, the butler had often talked about sailing across the clear waters of the gulf with Lord Jasper and Anna. He told stories of dolphins and orcas swimming around the yacht, and moonlit nights fishing from the deck with fresh fish sizzling in the pan. But the yacht hadn't been used since Ness had become Lord of the Manor.

"Now what would make him decide to go sailing again," he wondered.

"Not so fast. You'll make yourself sick."

Ness jumped and looked around in alarm, almost choking on a mouthful of biscuit. "Is that you Jasper?" he spluttered.

"Who else would it be?"

Ness's eyes settled on a picture of his ancestor. A smile seemed to form on the stern face and he was sure he saw a twinkle in the brown eyes.

"Where have you been?" Ness asked peevishly. "I've been looking for you for two weeks and now you turn up just as we're going fishing."

"I know, it was my idea," the disembodied voice chuckled. "Anna and I are going with you."

Ness was mystified. "Your idea, but how?
Nobody else can see or hear you."

Jasper chuckled again. "It's one of the things we can do if we set our mind to it. We just have to concentrate on something we want to do, look them in the eye, and our human friends soon get the idea."

Ness thought for a moment about this new and interesting information.

"You mean that when I want to go to the beach I just have to think hard about it and stare at the butler and he'll do what I want?" He smiled mischievously. The idea opened up a whole new world of possibilities.

"Whoa!!?" Jasper exclaimed hurriedly. "It's not always that easy. Better to

take your time and learn how to do it properly. It's a gift that should be used sparingly, not just to satisfy your own ends."

"I suppose you're right," Ness agreed, but his mind was already working on a plan to get an extra biscuit at breakfast time.

"Hurry up Ness," Muffin shouted from the kitchen.
"We're almost ready to go."

Ness hurriedly cleaned up the last morsels of food and took a quick drink.
"Got to go," he gasped. "Will I see you on the boat?"

"You won't see us, but we'll be there before you are," Jasper promised.
"Maybe I can give you some sailing lessons."

With a last hint of a smile and a flicker of the eyes, Jasper's portrait returned to normal.



Chapter Three

The butler dragged the dinghy to the water's edge, carefully loaded all the provisions, and then turned his attention to the boys.

"Right, before we do anything else you have to put these on." He carefully strapped a strange looking orange coat around Muffin then turned to Ness. "This one belonged to your great uncle Jasper," he said, holding up a rather battered life jacket.

"He was a real sea dog, as much at home on a boat as he was on land. You could have learned a lot about sailing from him."

"And I still can," Ness thought, "just as soon as we get aboard."

The tiny dinghy was crammed with essentials for the trip leaving barely enough space for Ness and Muffin to squash together on the stern seat.

The butler pulled hard on the oars and slowly they made their way past the power boats and luxury launches.

Eventually a solitary boat remained in front of them, a neglected looking sloop with fading paint and weed growing along the waterline.

Seagulls perched on the sail cover squawked angrily as they approached.



"It doesn't look very tidy," Ness muttered doubtfully. "Maybe he's gone past ours."

"Well, he should look where he's going," Muff giggled.

"How can he see when he's going backwards?"

Ness couldn't answer; boating was as new and mysterious to him as it was to Muffin.

Slowly Jeeves eased the small dinghy alongside and made the rope fast on a cleat.

"Up you go your lordship," he said cheerfully, giving Ness a helping hand.
"Now you Muffin."

The two adventurers scrambled onto the gently rolling deck, staggered to the handrail and hung on grimly as the butler stowed the supplies in the cabin.

"Right, that's the lot." The butler reappeared, red faced, through the hatch.

"Now you two, into the cockpit, I'll get the sails up and we're on our way."

"WOW!!! Look at that Muff, it's huge" Ness stared in awe at the vast white mainsail that seemed to be touching the clouds.

They held on tightly to the rail as the yacht shuddered, heeled over, and, pushed by the gentle breeze began to creep forward.

The butler cast off the mooring and returned to the cockpit with a big smile on his face.

"This is it boys," he laughed. "Your first sea voyage."

Well children, once again our intrepid pair are on their way to start a new adventure. It looks like it's going to be fun, so don't forget to be with us for the next part of our story in June. In the meantime, remember that your whole life is an adventure. Enjoy it!

Good night from our friends, Trish, Christy, Belle, Ness and Muffin, Rem and Snowy, and myself...

The Wizard





The Way of the Wizard Februrary 2011

Heloooo once again my young friends.

Here we are, back in New Zealand for our holiday in the sun, and as always, Ness and Muffin are making the most of the good weather and inventing new and imaginative ideas to pass the time in those hot summer days.

Today the sparkling droplets of a welcome shower of warm rain are washing the dust from the vegetables and bringing back to life the dazzling colours in my garden. Ness, never at a loss for a new way to pass the time, is trying to convince Muffin that his latest idea is just what they need to get in touch with their local friends. Muffin is not so sure, but these are their stories, so while I relax and watch the rain, I'll let them tell it.

**The Tales of the Wizard
These are my little stories taken from inside
My Magical Book of Ways**



NESS'S ACADEMY OF DANCING

Muffin old chap", Lord Ness said as he neatly folded his newspaper and lifted his glasses. "I've just been reading something interesting.

"It seems there's a shortage of ballroom dance teachers nowadays."

"I wouldn't call that interesting." Muffin sniffed as he stuffed another piece of chicken in his mouth. "Anyway, what's it got to do with us?"
He spluttered.

"You know the old dining hall, the one we never use?" Ness went on.
"Well, I was thinking, we could start giving dancing lessons in there.
What do you think old chap?"



"Dancing lessons?" Muffin giggled. "Us giving dancing lessons?"
He choked on a bone and had to take a long drink.

"Ness, dear fellow, you fall over your own feet and I prefer sitting down.
Neither of us can dance a step."

"Rubbish!!" Ness snorted. "I'm light on my feet,
and I've seen the cook dancing with the housemaid. Nothing to it,"

Muffin shook his head. "Sounds like another of your hare-brained ideas,"
he laughed. "You'd never get anyone to come." His jibes fell on deaf
ears. Ness's mind was made up and already he was making plans.

"Got to advertise," he muttered to himself.
"Word of mouth first, then the local papers when it gets off the ground.
We'll be famous Muffin old boy!" he exclaimed. "Household names."

Muffin didn't hear. He was fast asleep.

Ness wasted no time. As Muffin snored blissfully he trotted off to
spread the word.

"This is going well," he chortled as he left his first prospective student, a monster of a dog with doubtful ancestry. "I'll get that young poodle, Nina, next. She could use a bit of discipline."

He arrived home tired but happy. "Well, I got two students" he chuckled to a yawning Muffin. "Not bad for the first day, Eh, old boy?"

"Maybe." Muffin sounded worried. "I'll wait and see."
His friend's good ideas had a habit of going sadly wrong, and this didn't even sound like a good one.



"Here they are." Ness jumped from the chair and eagerly rushed to the door. "Come in, wipe your feet and take your coats off," he cried jovially "everything's ready."

"Psst." Muffin sidled up and nudged him in the ribs
"Haven't you forgotten something Ness?" he whispered. "The music Ness.
We don't have any music."

Ness smiled knowingly. "No I haven't forgotten old chap", he grinned.
"We don't need it. I'm going to sing."



“

I'll have the laaast waaaltz with yooo

“You!!... Sing!!” Muffin gasped in alarm. “Now I know it's going to fail.”
He flopped into a chair and covered his ears.

“Listen and learn” Ness growled. “Nina and I will show you how it's done.” He grabbed Nina by the collar and marched her to the middle of the room.

“I'll have the laaast waaaltz with yooo,” he warbled “Two lonely people together.” Then it started to go wrong.

“Get off my foot you silly man,” Nina snapped as she pushed him over. “Don't you know how to dance?” She gave Ness a sharp nip on the nose and walked out of the door in a huff.

Ness was unperturbed. “She would never have made a dancer,” he said knowingly. “Four left feet old chap.”

“Now, what about you?” He turned expectantly to the monstrous object sprawled on the carpet. “Ready for your first lesson?” He asked cheerfully.



WANNA DANCE?

"Lesson?" the oversized mongrel rumbled. "What lesson? I only came for the free biscuits, but all that howling has put me off." He lumbered to his feet. "I'm going home."

Well, that wasn't too bad for the first time Muffin," Ness said happily as he closed the door. "Wait till you hear what I have in store for the next lesson."

"Next lesson!!!" Muffin sat up in alarm. "Haven't you had enough?"

"Enough? I've barely started old chap. I'll teach you the basics and you'll be able to help me."



I'VE LEARNED ENOUGH FOR ONE NIGHT

Muffin didn't want to know. "No thanks, I've listened and learned enough for one night," he said sleepily. "Good night Ness."

KING OF THE ROAD

EASY RIDER

"Ness, Ness!!" Muffin tumbled out of bed in his haste, "Ness!" He shrieked, "What's that terrible noise??"

Lord Ness looked up from his morning tea "Sounds like somebody shouting for me" he joked. "Why, it's you Muffin old chap."
"What's all the fuss about?"

"Can't you hear it?" Muffin gasped. "I think a helicopter's landed on the roof." He dived under the table and peered out nervously.

Ness grinned and shook his head. "That's not a helicopter," he scoffed.
"That's the Butler."

"I've never heard the Butler make a racket like that," Muffin muttered doubtfully. "What's wrong, is he ill?"

"No, He's not ill, he's got himself a motorcycle," Ness explained patiently. "He's probably tinkering with it in the garage. Come on Muff, let's go and take a look."

Muffin grabbed the last biscuit and followed reluctantly as Ness fearlessly led the way.

"There you are Muffin, a motorcycle. Nothing to be scared of." Ness walked round the gleaming monster, inspecting it minutely. "What do you think of it old fellow?"

Muffin didn't know what to think. "It might be all right when he puts the other wheels and the doors on," he said cautiously, "but where are we going to sit?"



KING OF THE ROAD

"Up here old chap." Ness deftly leaped up on the seat and checked the instruments. "I say old boy," he exclaimed. "This thing does over a hundred miles an hour.... Wow!!!"

Muffin didn't know what a hundred miles an hour was but it sounded dangerous. "Come down Ness," he pleaded. "It might start growling again. You know I don't like loud noises."

"Nonsense." Ness laughed, "You're too timid Muffin. You should be more adventurous like me. I'm the king of the road".

Muffin wasn't impressed by Ness's jibes. "I'm just as brave as you," he snapped. "Move over, I'm coming up." He hopped onto a box and clambered onto a seat that seemed perilously small. "There, nothing to it," he said shakily. "Now can we get down and go for lunch before the Butler catches us?"



But Ness wasn't listening. He was studying the controls intently. "That's the ignition key," he muttered "and I think that one's the brake, so that must be the clutch. It looks easy enough." He turned the key and the engine roared in to life.

"What are you doing?" Muffin yelped. "You've woken it up!!!"

"Shut up, put your helmet on and hang on tight," Ness ordered. "We're going for a spin."

Muffin looked around wildly for something to hang on to then clamp his teeth firmly on to Ness's tail.

"O.k." he mumbled shakily, "I'm ready."

Ness twisted the throttle and the engine howled... but nothing happened. The motorcycle didn't move.

"Oho, we have a problem," Ness moaned. "My legs are too short. I can't reach the gear thingy."

Muffin didn't think it was a problem;
He was relieved the escapade was over.

"Never mind Ness," he said consolingly. "If you ask the Butler nicely maybe he'll change it for an automatic."



"Mmmm, or one of those scooter things." Ness's smile came back.

"You know Muffin, I reckon I could ride one of those," he said cheerfully.
"I'll get Jeeves to drive us to the motorcycle shop. We should be able to find something suitable. What do you think?"

"I think we should go for lunch," Muffin grinned. "Then have a long sleep. And with any luck you'll forget about it," he added under his breath.



"I'm happy with the Mercedes."

Well, they certainly made the most of the shower, and with Ness's dancing already forgotten we can only guess what the irrepressible pair will be up to next.

Don't forget to be with us with us again for the next story, who knows what might happen.

**Sweet dreams from all of our friends.
The Wizard**

The Way of the Wizard March 2011

Do any of you like parties? Thought so, with music, games and lots of fun things to eat and no one telling you that too much ice cream is bad for you, who could not enjoy them?

My two little rascals, Ness and Muffin always manage to have good luck in – that means really diving into the food trays- whenever children are around, and even though I try hard to make sure they don't eat too much and make themselves ill, they always seem to sneak in a few extras when I'm not watching, and that was just what happened when we attended a party just a few days ago; but it didn't go exactly as they planned.

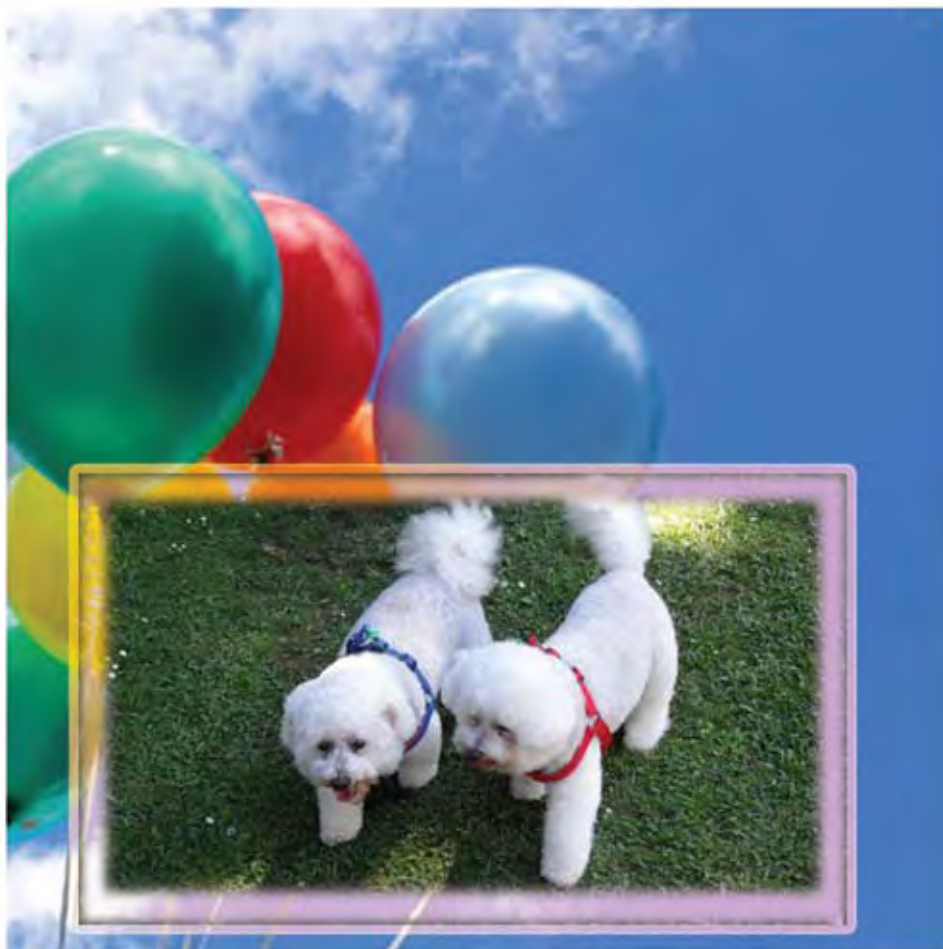


Helloooo again Children.

This is the Wizard and here I am once again with a couple of little stories from Ness and Muffin's collection of tales of mischief and fun.

Get you milk and cookies and make yourselves comfortable while they tell you just how it went when Ness came face to face with a cat, and how they got much more food than they bargained for.

The Tales of the Wizard
These are my little stories taken from inside
my Magical Book of Ways
Let's Party



"I'm singing in the rain," Ness burred. "Just singing in the rain."

"What's all the noise about Ness?" Muffin poked his head round the bathroom door, "You got stomach ache?"

"What a glorious feeling," Ness squawked. "I'm happy again."

"More shampoo under my arms please Jeeves,"

"NESS" Muffin bellowed. "What's happening?"



"Ah! There you are Muff old chap. Come on in. Just having a bath."

"I walk down the lane," he screeched. "To a happy refrain."
"Your turn next old boy, Ness carried on in perfect tonal form. "Pass the towel, Jeeves."

I'm singingJust singing.....in.... the.... r a i n."

"What's the big occasion?" Muff asked. "You don't usually bathe on Sunday mornings."

"Birthday party, didn't I tell you?" Ness rubbed himself vigorously with the towel. "Jeeve's grand-daughter. Come on Muffin. Your turn."

"Do I have to?" Muffin moaned. "I had a bath last week."

"Of course you have to." Ness snapped. "If we look good everybody will give us treats, cakes, biscuits and things." He didn't have to say more.

Muffin hopped into the bath without another word.

"Feeling better? Here, wrap this around you." Ness threw Muffin a towel.

"Don't want you catching a chill."

They jumped onto the sofa where the sun streamed through the window.

"Right," Ness said. "We've got to have a plan or we'll get nothing. You know what Jeeves is like about our diet."

Muffin nodded. At the last party they were only allowed chicken with vegetables and not even a taste of cake or ice cream.

"What's the plan?' He asked eagerly. "Can we send him home early?"

"No, much simpler than that," Ness smiled slyly.

"I'll explain when we get there."



RIGHT, WE'VE GOT TO HAVE A PLAN

"I'm not enjoying this," Muffin complained. "Everybody's eating but us." The party was in full swing, loud music, children stuffing themselves with

cakes and biscuits and dropping crumbs all over the floor. "When are you going to put your plan into action Ness?" he asked miserably.

"Soon," Ness promised. "Jeeves will be taking photographs before long and he'll have to take his leashes off," he grinned. "Then he won't have time to watch what we're doing. Start practicing that whimpering noise you make when you want something Muffin. It never fails."

"Like this." Muffin made a pathetic squeaky wail and wagged his tail furiously, pleased to be part of the master plan.

"That's it, it's working already." Ness said happily as one of the children dropped a biscuit at his feet. "Keep it up old chap. I feel a feast coming on."

"Ness, what's Jeeves doing?" Muffin asked. "Why is he down there?"

They both watched curiously as the Butler fumbled under the table.

"Oh no"!! Ness gasped. "He's let go of his leash but it's tangled around the table leg."

They watched in horror as Jeeves walked away leaving them struggling to get free.

"How are we going to beg now?" Muffin whimpered. "Nobody can see us under here." Ness wasn't listening. Something had appeared in the doorway and it took his mind off food completely.

"A CAT"!!!! He yelled. He took off at top speed, Muffin close on his heels. The table wasn't very big, certainly not big enough to stop two determined Bichons.

With an almighty crash it toppled to the floor, and with it went the birthday cake.

The cat hopped up onto the chair with a self-satisfied smirk as Ness and Muffin stopped in horror.

"I think we're in for it now," Ness groaned. "What a mess."

"Mess?" Muffin licked his paws appreciatively. "Tastes like chocolate cake to me old boy; with icing too," he added.



"Be my guest."

In the holiday season fishing is one of our favorite pastimes. The warm clear water around New Zealand is home to a multitude of species and most are good to eat, so when I take the fishing rod the boys are always happy to go along for the afternoon, but their idea of fishing isn't always the same as mine, and, as happened this time they were the only ones who got a bite.



HOOK, LINE AND SINKER.

"Hello!! Something new." Muffin stared curiously at the long pole the cook was carrying. "What's that he's got Ness?"

"That's a fishing rod," Ness answered knowledgeably. "We're going fishing."

Muffin was puzzled. "Why does he need a stick?" he asked. "Won't the shopkeeper sell him some?"

"We're going to try to catch some," Ness explained patiently. "He ties a piece of string on the end of the rod, puts a hook on it and throws it in the water."

"That's all?" Muffin asked dubiously. "Does it work?"

"Never" Ness laughed, "but it keeps him amused for a while."

"Doesn't sound amusing to me," Muffin grumbled, as the thought of fried

fish for dinner faded into the distance. "Can't we stay here and sleep?"

"Sleep!!!" Ness gasped. "And miss a chance to explore while he's busy not catching anything. Not I old chap. I'm going."

"Alright, alright," Muffin eased himself off the sofa reluctantly. "Suppose I'd better come then."



" Mmmm, OYSTERS. MY FAVORITE FOOD"

"Told you it would be fun," Ness jumped into a rock pool and laughed as the water splashed over Muffin. "Come on in old boy and have a swim."

"Don't think so." Muffin looked at the cook sitting dolefully on a rock. "He won't be pleased when you wet the car seats."

Ness wasn't listening; he was busily trying to pull an oyster off the rocks.

"Yum! These are delicious," he murmured. "Try one Muffin."

But Muffin wasn't there; he was slyly creeping up behind the cook.

"Where are you Ness?" Muffin yelled gleefully. "Look what I've got."

Ness poked his head out of the cave he was exploring. "What is it?" he asked impatiently. "Can't you see I'm busy?"



"It's fish Ness," Muffin gloated. "A real fish, and I found it."

"Found it where?" Ness asked suspiciously. "Fish don't swim on rocks."

"Behind the cook. He was putting it on the string and throwing it in the water." Muffin took a large bite from the rather smelly fish fillet.

"It's good Ness," he grinned. "Much too good to throw away."

Ness tasted it warily. "Mmmm, not bad," he agreed, "but not as good as my oysters," he added hastily. "I had to catch them myself."

"But I won't be in trouble for getting wet," Muffin retorted primly.

"Anyway, my fish was a lot bigger than those skinny little oysters."

Ness didn't argue, he was watching the cook. "What's wrong with him?" he muttered "whatever is he doing?"

"He's shouting at the seagulls," Muffin giggled, "and look, now he's

throwing stones at them. I wonder what they did wrong."

Ness was quick to figure out what had happened....

"He thinks they stole his bait." Ness grinned wickedly. "Maybe he'll forget about me getting wet if he learns who really took it."

He shook his head sadly. "Come on Muff, better take him home before he finds out. Bait stealing is a very serious offence. You could be on bread and water for the rest of the week. In the future you'd better follow my lead and catch some oysters; they won't get you into trouble."

Well, once again our little story time is over. Time passes much too quickly when we have fun, but it passes equally quickly when we are asleep, and when that happens you know it won't be long before you are having more fun.

So I'll bid you all good night with sweet dreams and we'll meet again next month.

The Wizard.

The Way of the Wizard April 2011



Hello again my young friends. Once again it's time for Ness and Muffin's stories of life at the Manor, and as always it's a time of fun and laughter as they wander happily through the woodlands and gardens of New Zealand.

As all young people know, nowhere in the world is free of rain, unless you live in the desert, and with rain the inevitable result is mud, and our little friends can make even that look like fun.

Unfortunately little dogs can get very dirty in a short time, but getting their white fluffy coats clean isn't so easy, as they found out in their next adventure; but I'll let them tell the story while I sit back and chuckle.



The Tales of the Wizard
These are my little stories taken from inside
my **Magical Book of Ways**
April 2011

The Mudlarks



"Wheeeeeeeee!!!!" Muffin skidded through the mud on his bottom and tumbled to a halt in the shrubbery. "Come on Ness" he yelled, "this is fun."

Lord Ness smiled haughtily. "Sorry old chap; we aristocrats can't be seen cavorting in the mud. It's just not done old fellow."

"Oh, come on Ness," Muffin wheedled. "Forget you're the lord of the Manor for a few minutes. No-one's going to see you."

Ness looked around carefully. Muffin was right, nobody ever came to this part of the garden. He tested the slimy mud warily with a front paw. It felt good, like soft custard between his toes.

"All right. But only once," he agreed. "Just to show you how it should be done." With a wild yell he raced to the mud patch and launched himself headlong. "Yippeeeee!!" he gasped as he somersaulted into the compost heap, "let's see you do that Muffin."

"What about this." Muffin skated along on his back and landed in a heap alongside his friend.

"Easy," Ness grinned as he scrambled his way up the slope, "Let's make it more slippery. Grab the hosepipe and I'll turn the water on."

"That should be enough" Muffin giggled. "It looks like black soup."

As he took a cautious step onto the goo his legs shot out from under him and he slithered down the hill. Ness pirouetted out of control behind him and they ended up in a tangle of legs and tails

"I say Muff old chap," Ness chuckled, "you look a bit of a mess. You're covered in twigs and things."

"And you," Muffin laughed. "How are we going to get clean?"

"Easy just roll around in the grass. That should do it." Ness did a quick roll and shook himself vigorously. "See, most of it's gone."

"Some of it," Muffin agreed, "but not the mud. Stay there a minute and I'll hose you down." He grabbed the hosepipe and sprayed Ness liberally. "That's better," he laughed. "My turn now, then if we roll in those dead leaves we should get dry."



Stay there, I'll Hose you down

Rolling in the leaves was fun, almost as good as the mudslide, but it didn't have the desired effect.

"I say Muffin old fellow," Ness muttered, "I don't think it's working, these leaves are sticking to my coat."

"You look like a hedgehog" Muffin tittered, "Now you need a bath and a brush down. What's the butler going to say when he sees us?"

"Nothing," Ness answered with a grin, "because he's gone to the shop, he won't be back for ages. Come on, let's go and find a towel."

Towels seemed to be in short supply; the only ones in sight were on the clothes line. "They'll have to do," Ness decided, "grab a corner and tug."

"Like this?" Muffin bounced up and hung on with his teeth. Ness did the same. Suddenly there was a crack, the line snapped and the pair of them dropped under a pile of washing.

Muffin struggled out and looked at the mess with horror. "Now we're in

for it," he groaned. I think I can hear the Butlers motor cycle." He looked around in desperation. "Where are we going to hide?" he wailed dismally.



Whoops!! I broke it!!

Ness wasn't worried at all. "No problem, follow me." He dashed into the house and into the bedroom. "Quick, on the bed and under the covers," he ordered "and don't make a sound. With a bit of luck he'll never find us."

"I think he might this time," Muffin said glumly. "Look at that." He pointed miserably at the dirty paw marks leading straight to their hiding place and the mud and leaves all over the sheets. "How do we explain all that?"



How do we explain this???

Ness thought for a moment, and then had a brilliant idea. "Quick, pull the sheets off the bed," he growled. "Right, now follow me." He led the way outside again each of them dragging a muddy sheet.

"Now, tangle it up with the others," he snapped.
"He'll think they were on the line."

"But what about the mud on the floor?" Muffin wailed.
"He's sure to see that."

"Mud? Where?? I see no mud." Ness smiled. "We wiped it up when we dragged the sheets out. No sign that we were ever in there."

"Another lucky escape," Muffin thought happily, 'but one day we'll get caught,'. "Come on Ness, let's go and get a bath."

Keeping in Touch

Imagine a world without telephones and computers. How on earth did people pass on messages, or have a chat when they wanted to keep in touch.

Writing letters used to be the only way, but sending a letter took a long time, and Ness, despite his undoubted ability to let everyone know what he thinks, still hasn't master the art of writing with a pen. But, as always, he thinks he's found a way to let the world know of his existence, and now he's confident that everyone knows about him as he enters into the mysterious world of computers, but as always, Muffin isn't so sure.



"I'm bored."

Ness lay on the couch and gazed forlornly at the rain streaming down the windows. "Nothing to do but eat and sleep."

At the mention of his two favourite pastimes Muffin perked up. "I like bored," he said with a sleepy smile. "Nothing wrong with bored."

"It's all right for you," Ness grumbled. "As Lord of the manor I have a position to uphold. I have to get out and meet people. I can't do anything in this weather."

"You could invite them all here," Muffin suggested, "throw a dinner party."

"A dinner party! Here!!" Ness shuddered at the thought. "There wouldn't be a scrap of food or a bone left in the place."

Now it was Muffin's turn to shudder. "Not a good idea," he agreed hastily. "Let's wait till the rain stops then you can go down to the village."

Ness wasn't listening. He was staring hard at the butler tapping away on the computer keyboard. "Maybe I don't have to go out," he whispered. "Maybe I can stay right here and get in touch with everybody!"

Muffin was mystified. "You're not going to do anything silly are you?" he asked, "Like standing on the roof and shouting."

Ness put a paw to his lips. "Shhh. I'll tell you later when the Butler's gone, pretend to be asleep."

Muffin thought that was a good idea. He didn't need to pretend. Within seconds he was snoring blissfully. Ness closed one eye, but kept a close watch on the Butler with the other.

"He's going." Ness gave Muffin a nudge in the ribs. "Now I can get started." He hopped off the sofa and onto the chair at the computer. "Now, where I start," he muttered.

Muffin was aghast, "You can't use the Butlers pomcooter." He yelped. He won't let anybody touch that."

"He's not going to know," Ness snapped. "Go and see what he's doing then stand by the door and tell me if he's coming back."

Muffin dashed off and was back in a second. "He's cooking dinner," he gasped. "Grilled pork I think." He stood in rapture at the door savouring the delicious aroma drifting past as Ness got to work.



NESS GETS TO WORK

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"There, that should do it," Ness sat back and surveyed his handiwork cheerfully "A work of art."

"Do you know what you're doing?" Muffin hopped up behind Ness on the chair and took a peep. "It doesn't look like the butlers letters," he added doubtfully.

"Of course it doesn't old chap," Ness smiled. "He doesn't know how to spell all these big words." He tapped his forehead wisely.

"Superior education, that's what it is. That's why he's the Butler and I'm the Lord of the manor. Now, if I move that little arrow thingy up to there and press this whatchamacallit like this."

"See, nothing to it," Ness gloated. "I told you I could make it work."

He rubbed his paws together with glee. "I'm on the internet," he chortled.
"Now everyone will know about me."

Muffin looked on with admiration. His friend could do anything.

One thing puzzled him though. "How do you know where it's gone to Ness?" he asked. "You didn't put an address and a stamp on it."

Ness had no answer. For all he knew it could be floating around in space, but it didn't matter, it was an e-mail and he'd sent it. He was in touch with the outside world at last.



"WHERE DID IT GO NESS?"

Mistaken Identity

As Ness and Muffin began to explore the world around them many mysterious animals appeared in and around the garden. With no way to learn what those strange beings were Ness had to guess, and sometimes the names he knew were a little different to what he thought. But, as Ness well knows, with a little imagination, things can be what you want them to be, and that's the secret of having fun; for he and Muffin, and for all children wherever and whenever they get together.



"What's that you've got Ness?" Muffin slithered down the bank and came to rest in a bed of dry leaves.

"Rabbit" said Ness with certainty. "No!!, don't tou....."

"Ouch!" Muffin jumped back with yelp of alarm. "It pricked me," he moaned. "It's covered in prickly things."

Ness collapsed on the leaves and roared with laughter. "I was, ha ha, just about to warn you, hee--hee about that," he chortled.
"It did the same to me,"

Muffin inspected the strange animal from a safe distance. "I think it needs a bath and a brush," he decided. "Its hair's gone all stiff." He inched closer and gave the 'rabbit' a careful nudge with his paw, "Is it alive?"

"Think so. It's hard to tell when it's curled in a ball," Ness answered thoughtfully. "Maybe we should unroll it."

"Or leave it alone." Muffin interrupted quickly. "It looks dangerous. "Let's find one that's not spiky."

"Hello! What are you two up to?" A familiar voice interrupted their thoughts. "Found something interesting?"

"Oh no! Not him again," Ness groaned as the fox terrier bounded into view. "That's ruined our hunting."

"Come on, move over." The lively terrier jostled his way past Ness and stared at the motionless bundle in the leaves.



"It's a rabbit," Muffin advised him seriously. "And it prickles."

"A rabbit you say." He rubbed his chin. "Now fancy that, a rabbit." A hint of a smile twitched the corners of his mouth.

"Now who told you that?"

"Ness did," Muffin answered eagerly. "He knows about these things."

"Does he now," the terrier murmured. "Maybe I'd better come along with you. I might learn something."

"Did you have to encourage him?" Ness muttered as their unwelcome companion trotted behind. "He's going to spoil the whole day." He glanced behind fiercely. "You don't have to come," he snapped. "Go and find your own animals."

The terrier ignored him, he didn't usually have company on his walks and he was enjoying himself. "Just act like I'm not here," he said. "I'll try not to get in the way." He stopped suddenly. "Get down," he whispered, "Here, behind this log."

"What is it?" Muffin cowered behind the log and peeped out warily. He could see nothing unusual.

"Over there." The terrier pointed towards a patch of long grass. "Keep watching."

Muffin stared hard. Then he saw something move. "!!AAgghh!!, it's a tiger," he screamed and tried to climb a tree. "Give me a push up here Ness." Ness didn't hear. He was frantically scrambling under a blackberry bush. The terrier was bouncing with delight.

"It's alright," he gurgled. "It's not a tiger, it's a rabbit; completely harmless."

"You told me they were tigers," Muffin said crossly as they made their way home. "You made me look really silly."

"Not my fault," Ness retorted, equally angrily. "It was dark when I saw the one in the garden. Anyone would have made the same mistake."

"Not me," the terrier chuckled. "I know there are no tigers around here, except in a zoo maybe," he added.

"Know-it-all," Ness growled. "There used to be lots until we chased them away. But that was before your time." he said smugly. "You're too young to remember."

"Maybe," his antagonist grinned. "But there's something else you need to know if you're going to be a successful hunter."

"What's that?" Muffin asked eagerly. Now he knew there were no tigers he didn't mind being a hunter.

"Well, you know the spiky rabbit you caught," the terrier answered slowly. "That wasn't a rabbit at all. That was a hedgehog. And they," he added mischievously, "can grow as big as elephants."

"Never mind Ness," Muffin consoled his subdued friend as the terrier, still giggling, left them. "I think I preferred hunting when there were still some tigers around".

"Ness cheered up considerably, Muffin still had faith in his superior wisdom. "Tell you what old chap," he smiled. "Tomorrow we'll go hunting elephants. That'll wipe the smile off his face."

"Muffin agreed. "Sure will.....er....Ness,,,,,What do effalants look like?????"



WHAT DO EFFALANTS LOOK LIKE NESS?

Well, that's all the stories we have for today, children. Next time we meet Ness has promised to begin the story of the mysterious Island where he and Muffin, aided with the ghostly Lord Jasper and Anna, had a truly amazing adventure, so don't forget to get an extra stock of cookies and milk. Until then, whatever you do, enjoy it, and have fun.

From our friends, Belle, Patricia, Christy, Ness, Muffin, and myself.

The Wizard



The Way of the Wizard May 2011



Hello my young friends. Once again it's time for a story from our happy pair, Lord Ness and Muffin And as promised, Ness has agreed to tell the tale of how he and Muffin saw their first dolphin, caught a huge fish, chased away a large annoying dog and finally, went swimming with the whales.

That's quite a lot to fit into one bed time story so he's decided, so that you don't have to stay up all night, he will tell a little each time we meet. So, without more ado, get yourselves into bed and we'll get started.



The Tales of the Wizard
These are my little stories taken from inside
my Magical Book of Ways

Adventure Island
with Lord Ness and Muffin

Chapter One

Every morning at dawn, while the rest of the household were still sleeping, Ness waited patiently under the old oak tree, hoping for a sign that would prove that the ghosts of Jasper and Anna were real.

"Well," he mused, "as real as ghosts can be."

Jasper, Ness's great uncle, was the previous Lord of the Manor. Anna was his lifelong friend and gamekeeper on the estate. With their guidance Ness and his friend Muffin had worked together to clear the woods of a plague of rabbits, an adventure only Ness could remember.



Now he was beginning to think the whole episode was a figment of his imagination. "Two weeks, and not a sign of them," he murmured, "Surely it couldn't have been a dream."



A flutter of wings in the branches above scattered a shower of crystal dewdrops. An owl hooted softly as Ness looked up.

"I don't suppose you know where they are?" he sighed. The owl stared back, its big eyes unblinking, and, or so it seemed to Ness, shook its head.

"Oh well, might as well go home." Ness decided. He took one last look around the clearing before heading sadly along the secret track that led back to the Manor.

"Where have you been?" "We've looked everywhere for you," cried Muffin.

Muffin, who was rarely out of bed at that time of the morning, was wide awake and cheerful when he met Ness at the door.

"Just the usual morning walk," Ness answered quietly. "I thought I'd work up an appetite before breakfast."

"

I've already had mine" Muffin warned. "You'd better be quick, the butler's in a hurry and he wasn't pleased about you not being here."
"Why? What's the rush?" Nothing important to do," Ness said grumpily.
"Just another day watching him pottering around in the garden."

"Aha, that's where you're wrong," Muffin smiled. "Today we're going to do something completely different. Something we've never done before."

Ness's glum look was quickly replaced by a smile. "Different!!!...What?... Where? When?" he barked impatiently.
"Come on Muff, don't keep me in suspense."

"Ok, calm down." Muffin waited until Ness stopped hopping around, and then whispered.

"We're going fishing."

Ness's smile slowly faded. "Oh no, not that again," he grumbled.
"Remember the last time. We walked miles to get to his favourite fishing spot and then you ate all the bait and we didn't catch anything."

"Ah, yes," Muffin chuckled, "but at least I had fish for lunch, even if I was sick afterwards. But you haven't heard the best part yet," he added. "We won't be walking anywhere. We're going,,,,,,,,, on the Yacht!!!!!!!"

Chapter two

Suddenly Jasper was forgotten.

Fishing on the yacht, Whoopee!!. What an adventure, Ness thought as he hurriedly munched his food.

Jeeves, the butler had often talked about sailing across the clear waters of the gulf with Lord Jasper and Anna. He told stories of dolphins and orcas swimming around the yacht, and moonlit nights fishing from the deck with fresh fish sizzling in the pan. But the yacht hadn't been used since Ness had become Lord of the Manor.

"Now what would make him decide to go sailing again," he wondered.

"Not so fast. You'll make yourself sick."

Ness jumped and looked around in alarm, almost choking on a mouthful of biscuit. "Is that you Jasper?" he spluttered.

"Who else would it be?"

Ness's eyes settled on a picture of his ancestor. A smile seemed to form on the stern face and he was sure he saw a twinkle in the brown eyes.

"Where have you been?" Ness asked peevishly. "I've been looking for you for two weeks and now you turn up just as we're going fishing."

"I know, it was my idea," the disembodied voice chuckled. "Anna and I are going with you."

Ness was mystified. "Your idea, but how?
Nobody else can see or hear you."

Jasper chuckled again. "It's one of the things we can do if we set our mind to it. We just have to concentrate on something we want to do, look them in the eye, and our human friends soon get the idea."

Ness thought for a moment about this new and interesting information.

"You mean that when I want to go to the beach I just have to think hard about it and stare at the butler and he'll do what I want?" He smiled mischievously. The idea opened up a whole new world of possibilities.

"Whoa!!?" Jasper exclaimed hurriedly. "It's not always that easy. Better to

take your time and learn how to do it properly. It's a gift that should be used sparingly, not just to satisfy your own ends."

"I suppose you're right," Ness agreed, but his mind was already working on a plan to get an extra biscuit at breakfast time.

"Hurry up Ness," Muffin shouted from the kitchen.
"We're almost ready to go."

Ness hurriedly cleaned up the last morsels of food and took a quick drink.
"Got to go," he gasped. "Will I see you on the boat?"

"You won't see us, but we'll be there before you are," Jasper promised.
"Maybe I can give you some sailing lessons."

With a last hint of a smile and a flicker of the eyes, Jasper's portrait returned to normal.



Chapter Three

The butler dragged the dinghy to the water's edge, carefully loaded all the provisions, and then turned his attention to the boys.

"Right, before we do anything else you have to put these on." He carefully strapped a strange looking orange coat around Muffin then turned to Ness. "This one belonged to your great uncle Jasper," he said, holding up a rather battered life jacket.

"He was a real sea dog, as much at home on a boat as he was on land. You could have learned a lot about sailing from him."

"And I still can," Ness thought, "just as soon as we get aboard."

The tiny dinghy was crammed with essentials for the trip leaving barely enough space for Ness and Muffin to squash together on the stern seat.

The butler pulled hard on the oars and slowly they made their way past the power boats and luxury launches.

Eventually a solitary boat remained in front of them, a neglected looking sloop with fading paint and weed growing along the waterline.

Seagulls perched on the sail cover squawked angrily as they approached.



"It doesn't look very tidy," Ness muttered doubtfully. "Maybe he's gone past ours."

"Well, he should look where he's going," Muff giggled.

"How can he see when he's going backwards?"

Ness couldn't answer; boating was as new and mysterious to him as it was to Muffin.

Slowly Jeeves eased the small dinghy alongside and made the rope fast on a cleat.

"Up you go your lordship," he said cheerfully, giving Ness a helping hand.
"Now you Muffin."

The two adventurers scrambled onto the gently rolling deck, staggered to the handrail and hung on grimly as the butler stowed the supplies in the cabin.

"Right, that's the lot." The butler reappeared, red faced, through the hatch.

"Now you two, into the cockpit, I'll get the sails up and we're on our way."

"WOW!!! Look at that Muff, it's huge" Ness stared in awe at the vast white mainsail that seemed to be touching the clouds.

They held on tightly to the rail as the yacht shuddered, heeled over, and, pushed by the gentle breeze began to creep forward.

The butler cast off the mooring and returned to the cockpit with a big smile on his face.

"This is it boys," he laughed. "Your first sea voyage."

Well children, once again our intrepid pair are on their way to start a new adventure. It looks like it's going to be fun, so don't forget to be with us for the next part of our story in June. In the meantime, remember that your whole life is an adventure. Enjoy it!

Good night from our friends, Trish, Christy, Belle, Ness and Muffin, Rem and Snowy, and myself...

The Wizard





The Way of the Wizard **June 2011**

Hello children.

Time again to continue Ness and Muffin's adventure, and it looks like our two boys are about to embark on a fishing trip to remember. In New Zealand sailing is almost as commonplace as motoring, but much more fun. And with its rocky coastline and numerable islands with safe harbours, fishing comes naturally to children at an early age. But of course, Ness and Muffin knew nothing of that as they scrambled onto the yacht and learned the first lesson on a boat; how to keep their balance while bouncing around in the waves. However, they soon got the hang of it and the fun got better and better as the yacht gathered speed.

But I forgot, this is their story and Ness is waiting to tell it so I'll sit back and leave him to it.



Chapter Four The Island Adventure The Tales of the Wizard

**These are my little stories taken from inside
my Magical Book of Ways**

When the headsail was hoisted the yacht seemed to take on a life of its own, lifting high into the waves, then crashing down into the troughs with spray showering the deck. After their first misgivings Ness and Muff soon got used to the constant motion and were enjoying every minute. The butler sat quietly, hand on the tiller, his eyes constantly scanning the horizon until they left the harbour behind and sailed swiftly into the open waters of the gulf.

"Well, clear water ahead now, time for a cuppa," he decided. He carefully trimmed the sails and adjusted the self steering gear until the yacht sailed smoothly in a straight line without his hand on the tiller.

"Now Lord Ness, it's time to start earning your keep," he said with mock severity. "I'm the captain. You can be the lookout, and you Muffin can be the first mate. Watch where we're going and let me know if anything's in the way. Oh yes, and try not to run us onto the rocks,"
he added with a grin

Ness and Muff jumped up onto the cockpit seat eagerly. At last they were members of the crew with a real job to do.

Together they watched every inch of the ocean ahead. Nothing would escape their combined attention.



Chapter Five

"Eeeek, what's that?" Muffin yelped in alarm. In a flash Ness was beside him closely followed by the butler.

"There's nothing there," Ness scoffed. "You must be seeing things."
"I was seeing things," Muff protested. "Big black things with eyes. Right there in front of us."

"Well, whatever it was, it's not there now." Ness laughed. He was just about to turn away when he heard the ghostly voice in his ear. "Keep watching or you'll miss it," the voice whispered."

"Miss what?" Ness asked quietly.

"Just wait for it," Jasper chuckled. "You're in for a big surprise."



At that moment, in a shower of spray something huge leapt into the air alongside the yacht." Ness jumped back in alarm and landed in a heap on the cockpit floor." "What was that?" he howled. "It looked like a shark."

For a moment there was no answer, just the sound of Jasper and Anna laughing. "My, you do look silly down there," Anna said eventually. "That wasn't a shark; it was a Dolphin, quite harmless and very friendly."

"Well it didn't look harmless," Ness said haughtily. "Anything with so many teeth looks dangerous to me."

"Are you alright Ness?" Muffin gave Ness a strange look.
"You were talking to yourself."

Ness thought quickly, he didn't want Muff to suspect there were others aboard, especially when the others were ghosts. "Just thinking aloud Muffin," he lied glibly. "I was trying to remember what that creature was."

Muffin wasn't totally convinced "But you said it was a shark. What was it really?" he asked suspiciously.

"A dolphin of course," Ness answered with a superior smile. "Quite harmless old chap. It was nothing to be frightened of." He climbed back onto the seat and gazed nonchalantly over the side. "Wish it would come back and jump again," he said bravely.
"If I hadn't slipped and fallen I would have given it a biscuit".

"Right boys, excitement's over. It's time to go about," The butler unhitched one rope as he hauled on another.

Ness and Muffin watched mystified.

"Go where about what? What's he doing Ness?" Muffin quickly hopped out of the way as the rope snaked into the cockpit.

"Er, Mmm, he's er," Ness mumbled

"Tacking, turning the boat." Once again Jasper helped Ness out as the yacht heeled over and headed in a new direction.

"Just going a different way old chap," Ness said casually.

"It's called tacking by us seafarers."

"You, a seafarer!, hahaha' Muffin hooted. "You've never been on a boat before. You're pulling my leg."

"Well, I may not have been on a boat," Ness replied with a sly grin, "but uncle Jasper knew a thing or two. You could say he's passed some of his knowledge on to me."

"Oh, I see," Muffin said thoughtfully, though the explanation made no sense to him "Then maybe you know what that is." He pointed to a tree covered hill seemingly growing out of the water directly ahead.

"An island,"

the ghostly response came from somewhere down in the cabin.

"That's easy," Ness laughed. "It's an island of course," then suddenly it all came back to him. After their escapade with the rabbits Lord Jasper had

mysteriously said.
"See you on the island."

That's it,!!! That's the Island!! he exclaimed excitedly. That's where we're meeting,,,,,,,,,,,,," He stopped himself in the nick of time. Muffin remembered nothing about what had happened before and it was best he didn't find out. Not yet anyway.



Well young ones, now the story is getting exciting. An Island, Pirates, galleons and hidden treasure; all the things that young ones of all ages dream about, but Lord Jasper had made no mention of any of these; so we'll have to wait for the next part of the story. Don't forget to be here, complete with milk and cookies, when our two intrepid explorers continue with the story.

Until then, take a leaf from Ness and Muffin's book; enjoy every day as if it's a part of your own adventure.

From Ness, Muffin, Rem and Snowy, Belle, Trish and Christy, and



**The Wizard we wish you all a good night and
pleasant dreams**

The Way of the Wizard **July 2011**



Hellooooo once again my young friends.

We are, sitting on the banks of the river and waiting for Ness to continue his adventures on an island off the coast of New Zealand.

Here, beside the quiet rippling waters of the river and thousands of miles away from the mighty Pacific Ocean, it is hard to imagine that such a special place could exist.

As we anchored in a small bay Ness and Muffin wondered how they could possibly climb those steep, tree clad cliffs, and what mysteries they might find if they could get to the top.

But, before they did anything else, the most important subject on their mind was food, and as the sun was already low on the horizon they would have no time to explore before bedtime.

I see that Ness is now ready to continue his story so get your milk and cookies and make yourselves comfortable.



**The Tales of the Wizard
Chapter 6 and Chapter 7
The Island Adventure**

**These are my little stories taken from inside
My Magical Book of Ways**

Chapter 6

As the yacht glided quietly into the tiny bay the butler quickly let go the ropes, which, he explained, were correctly called 'sheets', and turned the boat around to head into the breeze.

Then, with the sails hanging loosely they came to a stop and he dropped the anchor.

"Right boys," he said as he lowered and stowed the sails. "Time for something to eat and then we'll get down to some serious fishing."

"Fishing first," Ness and Muff shouted in unison,
"and then we can have fish for tea."



The butler, who must have been very deaf not to hear their protestations, busied himself at the stove. As the aroma of sizzling steak and sausages drifted from the cabin, dissent gave way to hunger and the boys settled down to wait.

"That was good." Ness licked his lips happily then sprawled on the bunk and closed his eyes.

"Time for a nap I think." From the cupboard beside his head Jasper snorted in annoyance.

"Nap!" he barked. "You get no time for naps on my ship. Get back on duty at the double. You came here to fish, not to sleep."

Ness jumped; all thought of sleep forgotten and with one bound he was back on deck where Muffin was watching the butler set up the fishing rods.

"What's wrong? I thought you were asleep then you came out of there like you'd seen a ghost," Muffin joked.

"No such thing as ghosts," Ness muttered, looking over his shoulder nervously, "and if there was I wouldn't be frightened of them."

"BOO!!" Anna shouted loudly in his ear then laughed uncontrollably as he once again fell off the seat.

"This is boring," Muffin whispered. "We've been here for ages and we haven't caught anything."

The butler, who had baited the hooks, lowered them deep into the water, and told them; "keep your eyes on these," was now snoozing peacefully in the cabin.



"What are we supposed to be watching for?" he grumbled.

"Ness shook his head. "I'm not sure," he said unhappily.
"I've never seen him catch anything."

"And you never will if he doesn't put some more bait on the hooks," the
now familiar voice hissed.

"Just give the rod a shake, bark a couple of times and watch what happens."

Ness did as he was told and to his and Muffs amazement the butler appeared immediately and reeled in all three lines,

"Drat, it got away," he said with a yawn. "Never mind, we'll try again."

This time things started to look more interesting.

"I think something's happening Ness." Muffin watched in surprise
as the tip of his rod twitched then bent over.

"I've got something," he yapped excitedly. "Look Ness, I think it must be a fish." He danced a jig around the deck as the butler grabbed the rod and slowly began to reel it in.

The fish didn't give up without a fight, it twisted and wriggled all the way to the surface, but there was no escape.

"That," said the butler "is a fine snapper. By far the biggest I've ever caught."

Muffin swelled with pride. "Did you hear that Ness?" he boasted.
"I helped him catch the biggest one."

"Not yet you didn't," Ness chuckled happily.

"Wait till you see what's on my line."

Whatever it was it had no intention of giving up easily. The line was screaming off the reel before the butler could check it and he had to use all his strength to stop the fish in its headlong rush for freedom.

Then the battle began in earnest. Time after time the fish came into view,

only to make another determined dive into the depths, but the butler's combination of patience, luck, and a fair proportion of skill was beginning to pay off.

Slowly the fish gave up the fight, flapping limply as it finally rose to the surface. Ness and Muffin gazed in awe as the monster lay gasping in the water alongside the boat.

Then Ness made a momentous decision.



"We should let it go," he said sadly. "Your fish is big enough for a good feed. There's no reason to kill this one."

"Muffin nodded, he too was beginning to feel a pang of regret that such a magnificent creature should lose its life just for sport. "Yes, let it go," he agreed. "But how do we do that?"

"I could bite through the line," Ness suggested
"but the butler might not be pleased."

"Maybe now's the time to use your power."

Jasper once again spoke softly into Ness ear.

"Remember what I told you. Concentrate on what you want and see what happens, and, if that doesn't work, bite the line."

There was no time to lose. Already the butler was reaching for the landing net. Ness closed his eyes and channeled all his thoughts.
The fish had to live.

The butler grunted as he heaved the massive weight aboard.
"This won't hurt a bit" he said quietly."

With a quick twist he pulled the hook free. Ness and Muffin turned away, not wishing to see the end result of their sport.



Suddenly there was a loud splash.

"You've just learned the first rule of fishing" the butler said as he wiped his hands.

"Only take as much as you need for food. If everybody does that there'll always be more when we need it."

Ness and Muffin watched with relief as, with a flick of its tail the fish disappeared back into the depths.

That was the end of fishing for that night. The butler quickly filleted Muffin's fish and washed the knife.

"Bed time now" he decided. "Fish for breakfast and then we'll go ashore for a walk around the island."

"Did I really make him throw it back," Ness wondered sleepily as he snuggled under the blanket."

He heard a soft chuckle in the darkness. "That's something you'll never know" Jasper whispered.

"What matters is that you did the right thing. Now move over and stop hogging all the bed, it's chilly out here."

Chapter 7

As usual Ness was awake long before Muffin and the butler. The sun was just rising as he climbed out of the cabin and stretched his legs.

"Good morning Lord Ness." Anna greeted him cheerfully.
"We have a busy day ahead."

Ness knew she would be invisible so he didn't bother to look around.
"Good morning Anna," he replied quietly, so as not to wake the others.

"Are we chasing rabbits again?"

"No, not rabbits this time, it's something much bigger." Anna replied mysteriously. "I'll let Jasper tell you the details, if he can drag himself out of bed that is."

"I heard that," Jasper grumbled from the cabin.

"He wriggled and snored so much I couldn't get to sleep.
Anyway, what details?"

"Anna said we have work to do," Ness answered.

"I was just asking what it was."

"Oh that," Jasper said grumpily. "Can't start that until you get ashore, and by the look of those two it could be after lunch."

Wake 'em up young fella, we'll meet you on top of the hill."

"What's all the noise about?" The butler poked his head out of the cabin, rubbed his eyes and looked around.

"Be quiet Ness, there's nothing to shout about," he moaned "It's too early to get up. I'm off back to bed."

"No you're not," Ness barked. "Wakey, wakey, rise and shine,
it's time to get up."

"What's happening?" Muffin added his voice to the racket.
"Is breakfast ready?"

"It soon will be," Ness yapped "if we can stop him going back to sleep."

The butler held up his hands in submission. "I wish I could understand your language," he muttered as he put the pan on the stove.



Well little ones, the evening breeze from the mountains is getting a bit chilly and we too are ready for something warm to eat, so once again, on behalf of Ness, Muffin, Belle, Snowy, Rem, Christy and Trish,



Good night and pleasant dreams, and don't forget to be with us for the next part of the Adventure Island adventure.

The Wizard

The Way of the Wizard **September 2011**



Well, Ness's story is really getting interesting.

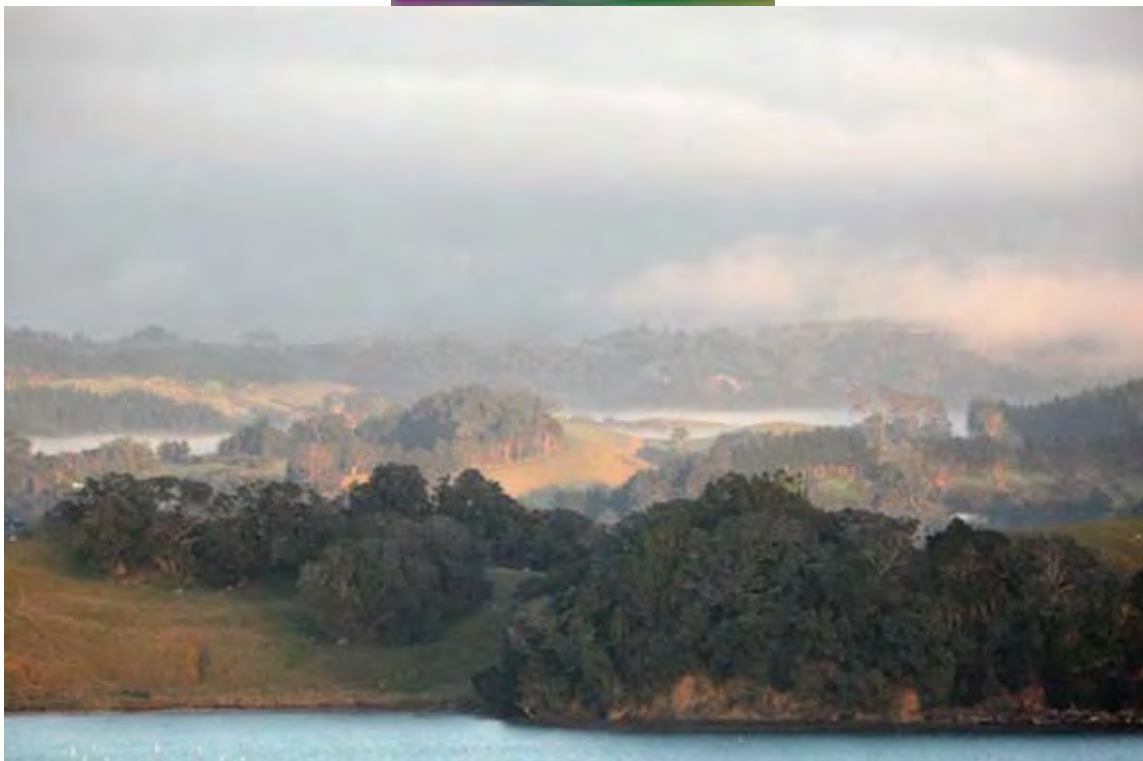
After the fun with the evening's fishing, Ness was ready for the real adventure, but what that would be was still a secret that only the ghostly pair, Lord Jasper, and his friend, Anna, knew.

Agog with excitement Ness and Muffin jumped quickly from the dinghy the moment it scraped against the shingle and without waiting for the Butler to tie the little boat to a nearby tree they set off on their adventure; and it wasn't long before they got their first clue.

But Ness is ready and waiting to begin so without more ado I'll make myself comfortable and let him tell what happened next.

The Tales of the Wizard
These are my little stories taken from inside
my Magical Book of Ways

The Island Adventure
Chapter Eight
(as told by Lord Ness himself)



There were no paths; at least none that Ness and Muffin could see. A narrow strip of sand at the base of a low cliff encircled the island. Leaving Jeeves to tie the dinghy securely to a rock, Ness and Muffin trotted along, inspecting every inch of the shoreline.

Muffin, who had eaten far too much and was not used to so much exertion at that early hour puffed and panted as he tried to keep up. Soon the butler was left far behind. Suddenly Ness stopped and stared intently at a patch of mud.



"Hello, what's this?" he murmured.

"A paw print" Muffin decided after a quick inspection,
"probably one of yours."

"No, definitely not mine," Ness said thoughtfully, "and far too big for yours.
I think we might have company."

Muffin looked around nervously. There was nowhere to hide along the shore so whatever it was that had made the print must be up on the island. "Let's go back and find the butler," he suggested.

"Not yet, I want to know where it's gone," Ness, said firmly. He scouted around and found another print, then a few more.

"I've got it!" he exclaimed triumphantly. An old tree hanging over the cliff concealed a narrow path leading up into the bushes. "Come on Muffin," he urged. "That's where he went."

Without another word he clawed his way up the slippery slope. Muffin hesitated, and then, with a sigh of resignation, reluctantly followed.



"Wow, this is hard," Ness, gasped. He stopped for the umpteenth time and tugged at the vines tangled in his fur. They had crawled and scrambled almost to the top of the hill. Now, just ahead of them the bush ended abruptly at a grassy clearing. Wearily they struggled through the last few bushes and flopped down in the grass.

"You stay here Muffin," Ness ordered. "I'm going to make sure the coast is clear. " Quickly he wormed his way through the long grass until he judged he was far enough away for Muffin not to hear. "Are you there, Jasper?" he called softly.



"You took your time," Jasper grumbled.
"We thought you weren't coming."

"We came as quickly as we could," Ness retorted peevishly, "climbing that hill wasn't easy."

"That's because you're not in fit shape," Anna growled. "Anyway, that was an impressive bit of detective work. Not many would have spotted those paw prints."

Ness beamed. Praise from the old gamekeeper was praise indeed.

Island Adventure Chapter 9

"Right, I suppose you want to know why you're here," Jasper said, "or have you figured it out?"

Something to do with the paw prints," Ness guessed.
"A stray dog perhaps."

"Almost right, but it's not a stray," Jasper said angrily. "It lives on a boat anchored round the other side of the island. The owners put it ashore every morning and let it run free while they laze around doing nothing. Some people have no idea how much damage an untrained dog can do."

"Damage, what sort of damage?" Ness asked.
"I thought nobody lived here."

"There are other things that are just as important as people," Anna snapped. "Birdlife, some species that are dying out on the mainland still live and breed on the islands."

Ness was puzzled. "But surely they can fly away," he said. "How can a dog catch them?"

"Penguins can't fly, and other birds nest on the ground. That's where the biggest problem is," Jasper explained. "This particular dog has a liking for raw eggs and he's already cleaned out two nests. We have to stop him quickly before he destroys any more."

Ness nodded thoughtfully. "Ok" he agreed. "What do we have to do?"

Ness was bubbling with excitement as he made his way back to Muffin.

Jasper and Anna had explained that the dog, although much bigger than them, was still a puppy and, like all young animals, would be easily scared.

All they had to do was give it the fright of its life and it would run away, hopefully never to return. Ness wasn't too sure about that and was working on another plan, one that would entail education rather than fear.

He couldn't wait to put his idea into practise.

Muffin, happily curled up in a patch of long grass under the warm mid-day sun awoke with a start when Ness returned.

"Oh, it's you." He said with relief. "Is it time to go back now?"
"Not yet, we have a little job to do first," Ness answered cheerfully.

Muffin looked worried. "I hope it's nothing to do with those paw marks," he said nervously.

"Yes it is as a matter of fact, but don't worry, it's nothing dangerous," Ness assured his reluctant friend. "Come on, we've got to go and find the owner of those big feet."



They didn't have far to look. With a little help from Ness's ghostly accomplices they spotted the ungainly long legged animal happily loping around in the scrub.

As it approached and began to nose around in the grass they hid in the bushes until Jasper whispered in Ness's ear.

"It's getting close to a hawk's nest. It's time to start moving."

Ness silently motioned for Muffin to follow and together they crept forward.....



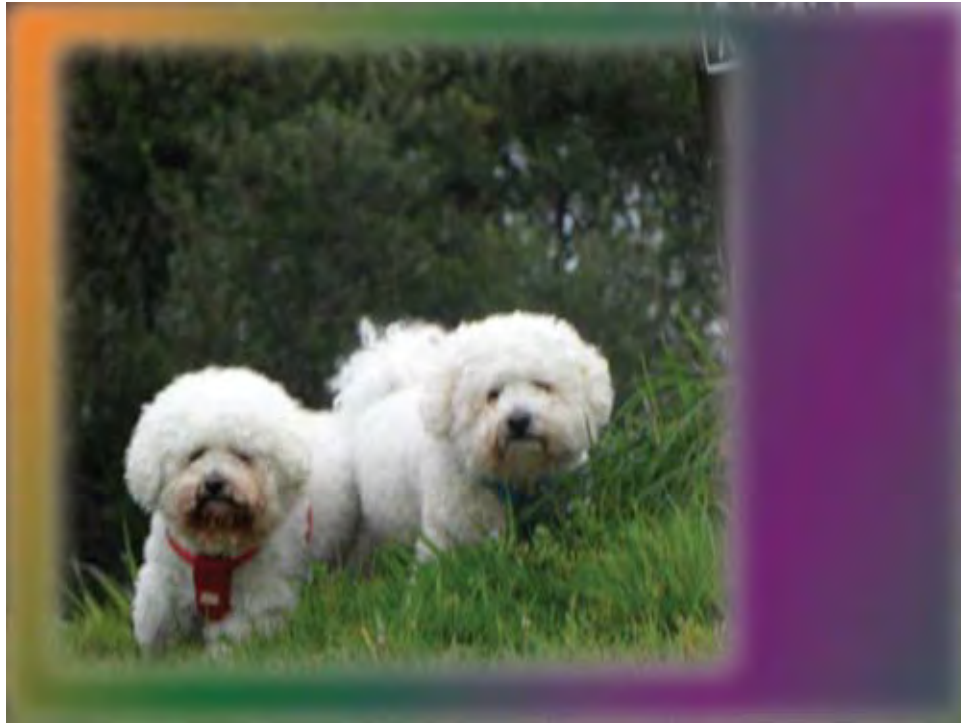
Now it's getting really exciting. I wonder what plan Ness could be cooking up. Whatever it is you can guarantee it'll give us all a surprise.

Don't forget to be here, with milk and cookies at the ready when we meet you next month. Until then, never forget that you too can have your own adventures. All you need is a little imagination and a few friends, and who knows what will happen.



Happy dreams little ones from Ness, Muffin, Rem
and Snowy, Belle, Patricia and Christy, and myself.

The Wizard





The Way of the Wizard October 2011

Hello once again my young friends, and all ready for the final chapters of Ness and Muffin's Island Adventure.

As I'm sure you remember, the irrepressible pair have spotted the mysterious animal that Ness knew was responsible for breaking the eggs of some of the rare birds which live on the Island. Now they have to find a way to stop the damage being done, but the "harmless puppy, as Jasper described it, looked more of a challenge than Ness was expecting. But, true to form, Ness wasn't one to give up easily. Make yourselves comfortable and let him tell you in his inimitable way just how the problem was solved, with a bit of help from Anna.



The Tales of the Wizard
These are my little stories taken from inside my
Magical Book of Ways



Ness the Storyteller
Chapter 10

"Now!" Jasper yelled. "Chase it away. It's found the nest."
Ness did no such thing. Instead he stood up and said politely. "I say young
fellow. You weren't by any chance thinking

of stealing those eggs were you?"

The strange animal leaped back in surprise then stopped and inspected Ness carefully before answering cheekily. "Why? Are they yours?" "No, they're not mine, they belong to the bird up there," Ness answered patiently pointing to the hawk screeching in distress as it circled above.

"Do you know what it is?"

The gangly pup stared hard at the bird. "It's a hen," he answered confidently. "Everybody knows that hens lay eggs."

"No it's not a hen," Ness said testily. "It's a hawk. A very rare species and you were about to kill its family."

The pup laughed out loud. "Family," he guffawed. "Don't be silly, these are eggs, not birds. Eggs can't fly."

Ness had to think quickly. His education program was going to be more difficult than he thought.

"That's right, eggs can't fly," Ness sighed "but eggs hatch into chicks and they grow up to be hawks, which then lay more eggs," he said sternly. That's the only way they can survive."

His young protagonist sat back on his haunches and studied the problem. "And if I don't eat the eggs we'll soon have more of those noisy creatures flapping around," he decided eventually.

"But it wouldn't be noisy if you weren't stealing the eggs," Ness insisted. He was getting worried but he had one last card to play and he hoped Jasper and Anna were listening. "These birds are protected" he said desperately.

"You'll be in real trouble if you harm them."

The cheeky pup looked around suspiciously. "Protected are they. I don't see any guards."

"You will," Ness promised "if you as much as lay a paw on those eggs." A long moment passed as they stared into each others eyes. Then the pup advanced slowly. Ness stood with his planted feet firmly astride the eggs.

For a second the pup paused, undecided, and then lunged forward.



"Aarrggg." With a loud scream he leapt back as Anna, teeth bared and glaring in anger appeared from nowhere and inched towards him. With a howl of terror the pup turned tail and fled. Ness wiped his brow in relief and turned to thank her, but he was too late, she was gone as quickly as she'd appeared.

"Wow! Ness, what did you do? Did you bite him?" Muffin leapt out from behind the bush where he'd been hiding since the confrontation started to go wrong.



Muffin the Fearless Explorer

"You didn't see what happened?" Ness asked hopefully.



"I didn't see anything until that silly dog screamed and ran away," Muffin giggled. "You must have given him a real fright."

"Well, not really. I just gave him some good advice and he took it," Ness lied. "Don't know why he made such a fuss. Anyway, we're finished here. It's time to find Jeeves, I'm getting hungry."

Unlike Muffin and Jeeves, who were sleeping soundly after a excellent dinner, Ness couldn't settle down. He tossed and turned, wondering what Jasper and Anna thought about his failed efforts to educate the nest robber.

"So, you decided to do it your way did you?"
Jasper said sternly as Ness pulled the blanket over his head and tried once again to get to sleep.

"Sorry," Ness apologised. "I thought if I explained why he shouldn't take the eggs he might pass the message on. I should have listened to you."

"Nonsense," Jasper said gruffly. "It was worth a try and you did a good job. It's a pity Anna had to step in and help, but the end result was the same. Now he has two reasons not to do it again."

"Well, I suppose I should thank Anna then"
Ness murmured as his eyelids drooped.

"No need for that," Anna's voice echoed in the darkness. "It's my job."

Chapter 11

Ness and Muffin awoke late. The delicious aroma of a fried breakfast filled the cabin as they tumbled out of bed.

"We have half a day left before we head home," the butler informed them as they tucked into a breakfast of eggs and crispy bacon. "What do you want to do? Go for a swim or more fishing?"

"Swimming," Jasper growled in Ness's ear.
"We've got a treat planned for you."
"Swimming," Ness echoed instantly.

Muffin agreed. "We can't get into trouble having a dip, unless we see a catfish."

"Or a big dogfish," Ness added with a laugh. Once again he stared at the butler and thought hard. To his delight and amazement it worked.

"Ok, that's settled, swimming it is," said the butler with a puzzled look.
"That's strange; I think I'm beginning to understand you."

Ness and Muffin splashed happily around the yacht. The water was much warmer than they'd expected and they soon became more adventurous.

"Watch this." Ness yelled. He took a deep breath, put a paw over his nose and lowered his head into the water. "I can see fish," he hollered excitedly as he came up spluttering. "Try it Muff, it's fun."

Muffin did, and found that with a kick of his legs he could go deeper, until only the tip of his tail remained on the surface. "Whoopee," he shouted.
"I can swim underwater Ness."

Hidden from their sight in the dark haze of the depths far below, something moved, gliding silently over the sea floor while Ness and Muffin, blissfully unaware, played happily far above.

Jasper and Anna, sitting on a rock on the seabed
watched closely as their plan unfolded.

"This should be fun," Anna said with a ghostly laugh.

"Mmm, but remember what a shock we got when we first saw them,"

Jasper answered thoughtfully.

Anna nodded. "We were scared out of our wits. Maybe we should warn
Ness what to expect."

Jasper agreed, and in a flash they were back on the surface.

"We're almost ready," Jasper whispered in Ness's ear. "Stay close together
and don't panic. You may never get another chance."

Muffin abandoned his attempts to swim the backstroke and
swam slowly alongside Ness.



"But how do you know?" he asked again and again. "You say there's
something new to see but if you haven't seen it, who told you?"

"Just be patient," Ness answered evasively. I just have a feeling
something's going happen."

"Well if it doesn't happen soon I'm going to starve," Muffin grumbled. "The
only feeling I ever get is hunger."

"Get ready," Jasper hissed. "Take a deep breath when I tell you, then put your heads under."

Ness passed the message on to Muffin and together, on the shout of "Now" they ducked under the water.

"I didn't see anything," Muffin protested as he spluttered and gasped for breath."

"Nor me," Ness complained."

Never mind, try again," Jasper urged. "Look below you, it's a bit murky but they are there."

Another deep breath and down they went again. This time there was no mistake. They got a brief view of a pod of dolphins but below them two huge and sinister shadows lurked, and they were coming closer. Ness and Muffin surfaced in a hurry, Muffin quickly headed for the safety of the boat, but Ness held him back.

"One more look," he begged. "They're not going to hurt us." Muffin reluctantly agreed. "Alright," he said, "but if they eat us I'll tell the butler it was your fault."

Together they submerged once again. Now the 'things' were ahead of them and swimming away. Ness gave chase with Muffin close behind as they tried to get a better look but all too soon they had to come up for air.

"WOW!! That was really something" Muffin gasped.
"What were they Ness?"

Thanks once again to Jasper, Ness had the answer in an instant. "Whales, the biggest creatures on the planet, and dolphins," he murmured in awe.

"Well I'm glad they weren't around last night, the butler would have had a real problem throwing one of those back," Muffin chortled, and as he turned to swim back to the boat he added,
"And I'm pretty sure he wouldn't have got it in the pan."



Chapter 12

The butler put his hands over his ears. For half an hour his two charges had jabbered constantly about their adventure but he couldn't understand a word they were saying, except for perhaps two. He was almost certain he'd heard the words whales and dolphins more than once. He shook his head in disbelief as he hoisted the sail. "No, It's not possible," he muttered. "There hasn't been a whale seen in these parts since Jasper was here.

" Had he been watching he would have seen a huge tail rise out of the water in the mouth of the bay. As it slipped out of sight it seemed to wave. Ness and Muffin waved back with a smile, but with a twinge of regret.



"That's it I suppose," Ness said glumly. "The end of another adventure, it's going to be hard to beat this one. Even with Jasper's help," he added quietly.

For the last time on the trip he heard the laughter of his ghostly friends and then Jasper's voice.

"Don't you believe it young man. We've only just started," and with another loud laugh they were gone.

Ness hopped up onto the seat. There was work to do. With a smile on his face he turned to Muffin.

"All hands on deck," he bellowed. "Cast off Jeeves. We're going home."



"Tell me something Jasper. How did you know the whales would be there just at the right time?" Ness asked. It was early, the morning after they arrived home and once again he was sitting under the old oak tree.

"We didn't," Jasper answered with a laugh. "Yesterday was the anniversary of the time Anna and I saw them so we thought maybe it was an annual event."

"And luckily for you we got the date right," Anna added mysteriously with a wry chuckle.

"Lucky. Why's that?" Ness asked.

Jasper's hollow laugh echoed through the trees. Because usually the bay's full of sharks," he answered. "The whales and dolphins frightened them away."

Ness shivered. "Then in future I'll stick to adventures on dry land," he decided.

The ghostly pair were still laughing as Ness made his way back home.

So, there it was, yet another problem solved. Ness and Muffin once again proved that anything's possible in their magical world and once again they returned to their quiet corner of New Zealand, but be sure, they'll soon be off on another adventure. Unfortunately we will have to find a way of passing their stories on to you, but be sure, the Wizard will find a way.



With love from Patricia, Christy, Belle, Rem and Snowy, and all the rest of our little band.

Enjoy life to the fullest and explore all its mysteries.

The Wizard.

ADVENTURE ISLAND

WITH LORD NESS AND MUFFIN

MOUNTAIN ADVENTURE
LORD NESS AND MUFFIN
WITH
SNOWY AND REMEDY

as told by:
Tony Bullock







The Wizard's Tale

"An Immortal's Tale of a Dragon and the Star-Children"

My story started a long long time ago, so long in fact that time no longer has a meaning for me. I was but one in a band of wizards placed on earth with one task, and that task had no time limits or restraints. I was to be the Guardian of one of those secret, special places, charged with the duty of keeping that place invisible to all those not chosen, those with no magic in their souls. For these places were to be the realms of the people of the stars.





EDGAR
Equalens Dragonis Graffias Asellus Borealis Ragulus
but.....you can call me EDGAR

The Tales of the Wizard

**These are my little stories taken from inside my
MAGICAL BOOK OF WAYS**

An Eggstra Special Day



Goodbye for now