

Squiggledy & Wriggledy

by

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Squiggledy & Wriggledy

Go to the Zoo

‘Cockledy-Coo!’ – the rooster was making a racket again. Squiggledy and Wriggledy opened their eyes and looked out of the window. As usual, when the crowing started, it was early in the morning. The sun was rising, and its first rays shone down into their little house. They knew instantly, it was going to be another ordinary day: perfectly normal, perfectly nice, but today – it seemed – also perfectly boring. And so, Squiggledy and Wriggledy stayed in their beds, wondering if they could think of any reason to get up.

Then, Squiggledy had an idea. ‘I know what we’ll do today: today, we’re going on an adventure!’

Wriggledy glanced at him lazily. ‘You know any adventures then?’

And Squiggledy realised that he didn’t. Because it is difficult, isn’t it, if all your life you lived on a farm – a perfectly nice farm, of course – and you had always been very happy there, but then one day you decide to go on an adventure, to see more than just the same animals, the same fields and meadows, and the same pond at the edge of the forest. When that is all you know, where do you go to find an adventure?

So, Squiggledy and Wriggledy continued to doze, while all other inhabitants of the farm got up and had breakfast. Cockledy-Coo stopped crowing, thinking that everyone was awake now, and went to get breakfast himself.

Suddenly, Wriggledy sat up in his bed. ‘Squiggledy, listen:

that time the farmer's family had been away all day – do you remember? In the evening, when they came home, the children were skipping, so excited were they.'

Yes, Squiggledy did remember that. The children had talked about seeing all kinds of animals that Squiggledy and Wriggledy had never even heard of before, with names that sounded like hippophants and crocomobiles. The children had mentioned the place where all these strange animals lived, and it was called ... what was it again? It had not been another farm, Squiggledy and Wriggledy were quite sure about that. It had been ... a zoo! That was what the children had said – a zoo!

Squiggledy and Wriggledy looked at one another, and they both had the same idea. 'Today, we are going to the zoo!'

All laziness was forgotten. They jumped out of bed, brushed their teeth – very quickly – rushed out of the door, across the farmyard, out through the main gate, down the path leading to the big road ...

But wait, Squiggledy and Wriggledy! You cannot run off like that! If you want to go on an adventure, you need to be prepared. Because adventure means surprises, and surprises mean that you don't know what is going to happen. And so, to be prepared for an adventure, you need to be prepared for everything.

Squiggledy and Wriggledy noticed that perhaps their departure had been a bit rash. Therefore, they ran back into their house and got their rucksacks out of the wardrobe. To go on an adventure, they would have to take along much more than on their usual camping trips to the pond. Enough to eat and to drink – naturally. But also ... what if suddenly it began to rain, or it got very cold and began to snow? Then they would need warm clothes. Or what if the adventure took longer than expected? What if suddenly it got dark again, and they had to

find a place to sleep? Then they would need a tent.

Soon, the two rucksacks were packed, and Squiggledy and Wriggledy once more walked down the path to the road that led into the Big City – a lot slower this time, because of their heavy luggage.

But then, they spotted the red double decker bus that already came trundling down the road. They started running, as fast as they could, and managed to get to the bus stop without a second to spare. They piled into the bus, completely out of breath, told the driver where they wanted to go, and then took their seats on the top deck, where they had the best view.

For a while, they drove through the countryside, with fields and other farms on either side of the road. But gradually, more and more houses passed by, with more and more cars on the road. The one road became many roads. The roads became wider, with many different lanes. They had arrived in the Big City.

Now, Squiggledy and Wriggledy had to pay attention and look out for the stop signs, to find the right one for the zoo. Many bus stops passed, until they drove along a high stone wall. It was a very nice old wall, covered in ivy. In the middle of the wall was a big iron gate with a sign above it. And on the sign were two words with many letters. Slowly and carefully, Squiggledy and Wriggledy read: “Zo-o-log-i-cal Gar-den.” What a garden was, Squiggledy and Wriggledy knew, of course. But what was a Zo-o-log ...

A zoo! Quick, Squiggledy and Wriggledy, it's the zoo! You need to get off the bus!

Just in time, they rang the bell for the bus to stop. Then, clutching their rucksacks, they tumbled out onto the pavement, right in front of the big gate. They had arrived.

The zoo was very large, with many different places to visit. But where to begin? Squiggledy suggested that he could close his eyes, hold out one arm, pointing straight ahead, and start turning round and round, while counting to one hundred. He would then stop, and they would simply walk off into whichever direction he ended up pointing to.

But Wriggledy was somewhat surprised. ‘You know how to count to one hundred then?’

Squiggledy realised that it was possible that he might not remember all the numbers, after spinning for some time and getting a little dizzy. So, they agreed that he could count to three instead.

Squiggledy closed his eyes, held out one arm and started spinning, while counting one ... two ... three. Then he stopped. His outstretched arm was now pointing exactly down one of the many paths that led away from the entrance.

Squiggledy and Wriggledy looked at one another and nodded. ‘Let’s go,’ they said together.

As they walked down the path, very soon it began to get cold and windy. Squiggledy and Wriggledy were glad that they had brought their warm jumpers. But the longer they walked, the colder it got, until their jumpers were not warm enough anymore, and they had to put on their winter jackets as well – then their hats, their gloves, and their shawls.

Then it got so cold, there appeared snow on ground, snow as far as they could see in all ... no, *not* in all directions. Over there, glinting blue in the morning sun – was that the sea?

Squiggledy and Wriggledy had always wanted to go to the sea, and they started running towards it. After a while, they saw something moving up ahead. Someone apparently was living in this icy world. They were strange animals indeed, who could

change their colour from one instance to the other: sometimes they were black, sometimes white.

But as Squiggledy and Wriggledy got closer, they could see that these animals did not change their colour at all. They were black *and* white at the same time. They had black backs and white bellies. They looked like big birds, with beaks and wings. But instead of flying, they waddled along on their two feet, or glided on their bellies.

They were penguins, and they lived on top of a tall cliff of ice, directly above the sea. From that cliff, one line of penguins glided down a long slide into the water to go swimming, while another line of penguins climbed back up a long flight of stairs. They were all very busy.

Squiggledy and Wriggledy watched the penguins for a while and thought that it would be fun to go swimming with them. Therefore, they put down their rucksacks and got in line, moving closer and closer to the edge of the icy cliff. Wriggledy, who was in front, could already see the water far below him. He got ready to glide down on his belly, just as the penguins had done, when ...

‘Wait!’ Squiggledy grabbed Wriggledy by the ankle. ‘What if we can’t swim well enough?’

That was a good question indeed. What if they were not as good at swimming as the penguins, who were flying through the water like other birds flew through the air? Squiggledy and Wriggledy had only ever bathed in the small pond on their farm, which was shallow enough along the edges to put their feet on the ground, when they got tired of swimming and needed a break. Now they could see that the water beneath them was very deep. There were also small pieces of ice floating on the waves. It looked very cold. And so, Squiggledy and Wriggledy decided

it was probably best not to go swimming after all.

As they stood at the edge of the tall cliff, they were so busy watching the penguins, that they did not notice how, behind them, a crack began to appear in the ice. It got longer and wider until – *crack!* – a whole mountain of ice broke off from the cliff and was now drifting freely in the sea, with Squiggledy and Wriggledy still standing at its top and being very surprised.

Soon, they were far away from the cold world of the penguins, pushed along by the wind. The sun was now high in the sky, and it got very warm. Squiggledy and Wriggledy took off their jackets and put them on the ice as blankets. Then they laid themselves down onto them and looked up to the few small clouds that passed by high above.

The mountain of ice continued floating across the sea, rocking gently in the waves. And with the gentle rocking, Squiggledy and Wriggledy felt very comfortable lying there in the sun, starting to drift away into sleep, when suddenly – *wobble!*

What had happened? In an instant, they were both wide awake again and sat up. They looked around. There was the sea, as before, but much closer now. They were not nearly as high above the waves as they had been when they had left the penguins.

The big mountain of ice was not *so* big anymore. In the warm light of the sun, it had begun to melt. Squiggledy and Wriggledy were drifting in the middle of the open sea, and their boat was disappearing underneath them. They had to get back to land and quickly! But where was it?

There was water everywhere except ... way ahead of them, they could see a thin yellow line between the blue of the sea and the blue of the sky. It had to be land, but it was still very far

away, and they were drifting towards it much too slowly. They would not make it there before their boat of ice disappeared completely. They had to go faster! But how do you get a boat to go faster?

You need a sail, of course! And if you haven't got a sail, you can use a ...

Squiggledy and Wriggledy thought very hard about it for some time. Then they knew what they had to do. It was true, they did not have a sail, but they had – their tent!

Quickly, they tied all the tent poles together into one strong mast, and then they fastened the tent to it. The wind blew into the tent and drove them along at a great pace. Squiggledy and Wriggledy had to hold on tightly to the mast, not to get thrown off; and that was getting more and more difficult, as the mountain of ice got smaller and smaller.

Faster and faster they flew along, and still their boat melted away. But all the while, the land was getting closer. They could already see it quite clearly now: a wide sandy beach stretched out at the horizon.

Finally – *crunch!* – the small remainder of the formerly big mountain of ice ran up the beach, and – *splash!* – Squiggledy and Wriggledy fell headfirst into the water, as their boat toppled over and threw them off. But the water wasn't deep, and it was quite warm. So, they dragged their wet rucksacks and the tent out of the water and spread everything out on the warm beach to dry. Then, they watched their boat break up into smaller and smaller pieces, which floated on the waves for a little while ... until they disappeared.

Now, Squiggledy and Wriggledy were stranded on the beach. They looked around to find out where they were. There was nothing but sand as far as they could see – no grass, no flowers,

no trees. They had arrived in a desert.

Therefore, they packed up their tent, took their rucksacks, and began walking to see what they would find in this sandy world.

They had gone a good distance – the sea behind them had long disappeared – when they noticed the wind getting stronger. It picked up the sand and blew it everywhere, into their eyes, their ears, and their noses.

It got so strong that they could barely see one step ahead. They held each other tightly by their hands, not to get separated, and continued walking into the thick cloud of sand until – *bump!* – Squiggledy walked into something solid. What was that? It had felt like a tree trunk, but only a moment later, it was gone. He reached out for it in the swirling sand, but couldn't find it again.

So, they carried on for a few more steps until – *bump!* – Wriggledy walked into something solid. This too felt like a tree trunk, but as before, it disappeared in an instant. It seemed as if they had walked into a forest of wandering trees.

Then, Squiggledy looked up, curious if perhaps he might be able to see the crowns of these wandering trees, and his eyes got very wide. 'Watch out!' he cried and pulled Wriggledy off to one side. It was just in time. A moment later – *thump!* – a wide leg with wrinkled grey skin, not unlike the bark of a tree, came down exactly where they had been standing.

But they could not stay for long at the new spot either. Another wide leg already came down towards them. They darted back and forth, pulling each other this way and that, to avoid being trodden on by the many legs stomping all around them.

Squiggledy and Wriggledy shouted at the top of their voices,

but it took a long time for these strange animals to hear them. Finally, a gigantic head with a very long nose, big floppy ears, and two long curved teeth descended from the cloud of sand above them. At first, it was a little frightening. But then they noticed that the gigantic head had two small friendly eyes. It was the head of an elephant.

The elephant himself was very surprised to see them. In his whole life, he had never seen Squiggledies and Wriggledies before. He picked them up very carefully with his long trunk, lifted them out of the swirling sand, and sat them comfortably on top of his head.

Now, Squiggledy and Wriggledy could see that they were in the middle of a long line of elephants. The oldest and wisest were at the front. They had walked this path for many years. They knew exactly where they were going, and they were not concerned about the sandstorm at all. At the end of the line were the youngest elephants, all wide-eyed and shaky-legged. They had no idea about what was happening, or where they were going. But every year, they will learn a little more. And as they get to know their world better, they move up the line, until, when they are old themselves, they will be at the very front, able to show their young descendants the right way. But for now, they were just bobbing along in the wake of the long caravan, holding on to their older brothers and sisters ahead of them.

After a while, the wind calmed down, and the sand settled again. They arrived at a spring and a little lake with a few palm trees growing by its bank. The elephants started bathing and splashing one another with water. But Squiggledy and Wriggledy were a little worried about going bathing among all the big animals. So, they said good-bye to the elephants and continued the journey on their own.

Gradually, more and more trees began to appear along the path, very tall trees, with long lianas winding around them, and many colourful flowers growing among them – flowers so big that their heads swung above those of Squiggledy and Wriggledy. It became difficult to walk with all these plants, and difficult to see where they were going.

In every direction and in the trees above, they could hear animals slithering, jumping, crawling, and fluttering. But every time they turned around, or looked up, there was no one to be seen. The animals that lived in this jungle kept themselves well hidden. Perhaps, Squiggledy and Wriggledy thought, they were very shy and afraid of strangers that suddenly intruded into their world.

Therefore, Squiggledy and Wriggledy hid themselves behind some of the big flowers, to wait and see if anyone else might come out of their hiding place. They lay there very still, making no sound at all, and looked over to a group of trees, where the sun shone down through the branches and leaves, creating a pattern of light and shadows.

Suddenly, Wriggledy saw something unusual in that regular pattern of bright and dark stripes – two white spots next to each other, with another white spot just below. And behind those spots ...

He got very excited. ‘Squiggledy, look – there, over there, among the trees: the shadows are moving.’

Squiggledy squinted against the sunlight, but he couldn’t ... oh, yes, he could. They could both see it very clearly now. Out from the trees, step by silent step, came a big tiger.

‘So, uhh ...’ Squiggledy said in a small voice, ‘you think it might be afraid of us?’

Wriggledy was not quite sure. ‘It might be startled if it saw

us, you know, if it has never seen someone like us before.’

Therefore, they decided that it was probably best to stay hidden, not to frighten the tiger. But as well-hidden as Squiggledy and Wriggledy were, the tiger came closer and closer towards them. When it had come to within only a few paces, it crouched very low. Then, without a warning, it pounced straight at them – no, over them, high above their heads the big cat flew, paws and long tail outstretched.

Squiggledy and Wriggledy turned around and saw what the tiger was pouncing at: there was a monkey sitting in one of the trees behind them. But it was a very clever monkey. It had seen the tiger a long time ago, long before Squiggledy and Wriggledy had. And while it nibbled on some fruits, it dangled its long bushy tail from the branch it was sitting on, as if to say, ‘Come and get me!’

Because the monkey was not only very clever, it was also very quick. The moment the tiger pounced, the monkey was off, swinging and jumping from branch to branch. Every time the heavy tiger made one big jump, the monkey made two. And very soon, it was so far ahead, the tiger had no chance of ever catching up with it. Instead, the tiger settled back down in the shadow of another tree and continued its afternoon nap.

Well, that had been a surprise for Squiggledy and Wriggledy! Having almost met the monkey and the tiger, they now realised that they were much too slow to talk to the animals that lived in this leafy world. After all, it is very difficult to meet others, if you cannot see them right up until the very moment when they come flying past you at a great speed, only to disappear again in an instant. And so, Squiggledy and Wriggledy moved on.

As they walked, the ground began to rise, getting steeper and steeper all the time. The higher they climbed, the fewer flowers

and trees were there, and the more rocks started to appear instead. In the end, they had to scramble over some large boulders to get to the top of the steep slope. And when they finally reached it, they were very exhausted.

But the view they had from the high mountain was worth the effort. They could now see the whole world they had travelled through on that day. Directly underneath them were the many trees of the jungle, where the monkey and the tiger lived. Then came the sandy desert of the elephants. Far away in the distance glinted the sea underneath the evening sun, and beyond it was the icy world of the penguins.

Then, Squiggledy and Wriggledy saw an animal sitting right in the middle of the path in front of them. They did not recognise it, but it looked very big, and they were unsure as to whether they had to be afraid or not. Should they turn around and go down again from the mountain, after it had taken such a long time to climb it?

No. They decided to be brave instead. And as they got closer to the big animal, they noticed that it looked very friendly indeed. It had a round head with white fur, but black ears and black patches around its eyes, and it held a bundle of long branches in one arm, from which it ate the fresh leaves. It was a panda bear.

Squiggledy and Wriggledy walked up to him and said hello. He invited them to stay for dinner – or breakfast rather, as he had just woken up – and Squiggledy and Wriggledy realised suddenly that they had also become very hungry from their long journey. They tried to eat a few of the bamboo shoots the panda offered them, but found them difficult to chew. So, they ate their sandwiches instead and drank some orange juice.

They told the panda bear about their journey and about the

animals that they had met along the way. He had never seen any of them, and he listened with great interest. He told them that he liked to be awake during the night, when the world gets quiet. It was a good time for him to sit and to think, and to talk to all the animals that wake up when everyone else goes to sleep; animals you can only meet at night; animals with big eyes, so that they can see in the dark, and with big ears, so that they can hear everything, even if they cannot see. With their big eyes and their big ears, these animals get to know a lot, and the panda bear enjoyed hearing their many stories.

Squiggledy and Wriggledy would have liked to stay and to talk to the animals of the night themselves. But when they had finished their dinner, they began to get tired. It had been an exciting day, and now the sun was sinking low. Before long, night would fall.

Then they remembered their little house, back home on the farm, and they started to miss their comfortable beds. Therefore, they said good-bye to the panda bear, picked up their rucksacks, and went down from the mountain and back towards the entrance of the zoo.

As they got nearer to the big gate, they saw more and more other people coming from all directions, people who had been to different parts of the zoo. Squiggledy and Wriggledy heard them talk about the animals that they had seen during the day: animals that could live on land *and* in the water, animals that glowed in the dark, animals that jumped around a lot and carried their children in a pouch on their belly. Clearly, there were still many more interesting animals to meet in the zoo, and Squiggledy and Wriggledy decided that they would come back soon.

When they had got off the bus and walked up the path leading towards their farm, they could see the familiar buildings glowing in the last light of the sun. And when they finally arrived at their own house, they had barely enough strength left to brush their teeth, before they crawled into bed.

As they watched the sky outside grow dark, and saw the stars begin to appear, they thought, 'Isn't it nice to know that, in the morning, we will all be woken up again by our dear old friend Cockledy-Coo, just in time to have breakfast while the sun rises.'

And with that thought, they closed their eyes, and they fell asleep.

Squiggledy & Wriggledy

Go to the Sea

It was very early in the morning, as Squiggledy and Wriggledy left their house and quietly walked across the farmyard. The sun had not risen yet, but a narrow band of the faintest purple began to show above the distant fields.

In the dim light, they could see Cockledy-Coo, the rooster, snoozing at the top of his haystack, only occasionally risking half a glance towards the horizon to see if it was time already to start his work. Even he had not begun to be excited about the new day, and everyone else on the farm was still fast asleep.

Except, of course, Squiggledy and Wriggledy, who were wide awake and very excited. They had been looking forward to this day for so long. There had always been another tomorrow before it, but no more – this was it. And as it was such a long way to the coast, they had to leave so early to arrive there before the day was over again.

The bus ride into the Big City was only the beginning. After that, they had to wait in the busy train station, sitting on their bags, as other early morning travellers bustled around them. When the seemingly endless train had finally rumbled in and come to a screeching halt at the platform, they had to find the right car and the right compartment. Then, they had to wrestle their bags into the high luggage compartment, until they could settle down in their seats by the window, just as the guard sounded his whistle and the train pulled out of the station again.

For quite some time, they rattled along at a faster and faster

speed, out of the Big City and through the countryside, while the sun rose ever higher in the sky. Around noon, they got to Another Big City, where they had lunch in the station as they waited for their connecting train.

Now it was afternoon. And as they got closer to the coast, they became even more excited. Still watching the world fly past their window, they wondered what the beach and the sea would be like – and the little cottage in the dunes by the bay where they would be staying during their holidays.

It all had started after their return from the adventure in the zoo. For all the fun they had had on that journey, they could not help remembering how thrilling their ocean crossing had been on that mountain of ice – a rapidly shrinking mountain of ice at that. In fact, it was possible to say – if one was being perfectly honest – that this particular part of the adventure had been almost a little bit scary.

And so, the following day at breakfast, they had decided that something needed to be done. Should such an occasion ever present itself again, it seemed advantageous if one was able to swim – and swim well. Therefore, for weeks and weeks, they had been practicing every day in the pond on their farm, and now they felt ready to test their newly acquired skills in the big sea.

But as the train continued to speed along, steadily closer to the coast, and as the sun began to descend towards the horizon, they could tell that they would probably have to wait until the next day before they could go for their first swim.

Indeed, when they finally arrived at the little station by the coast, it was already very late. As no other passengers left the train with them, Squiggledy and Wriggledy stood alone on the platform for a while, watching the train disappear into the night.

Then they took their bags and followed the path that led towards the bay.

After they had walked through the dunes for a few minutes, suddenly, there it was – the sea, twinkling in the silvery light of the full moon. They could hear the rushing of the waves as they ran up onto the beach, and they could smell the salty water.

But the moon was not the only thing that brightened the night. On a little island, some distance away from the shore, stood a tall lighthouse, its roving beam swiping round and round in circles, time and again, across the bay and far out to sea.

As tempting as it was to run into the waves straight away and to start swimming, they were both too tired from the long journey. Now, they could also see their little cottage among the dunes. It looked very cosy. And so, they went straight to bed and fell asleep immediately.

The next morning, Squiggledy and Wriggledy woke up as the sun began to shine into their window. At first, they were surprised that Cockledy-Coo had not been crowing. Usually, he never forgot the daily wakeup call. They thought that perhaps he had caught a chill overnight, and his throat was a little sore. But as they became properly awake, they remembered that they were not back home on their farm at all. They were far away by the sea, much too far to be able to hear Cockledy-Coo, no matter how loud he was crowing.

It was already bright day, and they had clearly slept way too long. Without wasting any more time, they quickly jumped out of bed, brushed their teeth, ran out of their cottage, through the dunes, down to the beach ... and then they froze in their tracks. For several moments, they just stood there, rooted to the spot, staring straight ahead. They did not believe their eyes. It seemed

impossible, as if they were still dreaming – they had to be, surely.

But they were very much awake now, and there was no point denying it: someone had come along, in the middle of the night, and stolen the sea. The bay was completely empty. The water was gone. And as far as they could see, all that was left was the ocean floor, with a pattern of ripples in the wet sand – no more than a little reminder of the waves that had once been there.

Squiggledy and Wriggledy looked at one another, and they both knew: they would have to set out on another adventure, to find out who stole the sea.

So, they started to ponder. It was a curious riddle indeed – very strange. When they had arrived, the sea had still been there, they were both quite sure about that. In the light of the full moon, they had clearly seen the waves running up the beach and almost to the dunes. They had heard the sea, and they had smelled it. It had definitely been there – and now it was gone.

The moon would probably know what had happened to the sea, having spent the whole night looking down to the world. But it was much too high up in the sky to be able to ask it – and anyway, it was gone now since the sun had risen, and it would not return until the evening.

Then, Squiggledy and Wriggledy remembered that the lighthouse too had been active during the night. Someone had to have been up there, turning the light on in the evening, and turning it off again in the morning. From the top of that tall tower, and in the light of his powerful lamp, that someone might well have seen who had taken the sea away.

It was quite a distance to that little island on which the lighthouse stood, all across the bay and out towards the open sea – or rather to the vast stretch of sand and mud where the open sea had used to be.

But there was nothing for it. If they wanted to solve this mystery, it seemed that the operator of the lighthouse would be the only one who might be able to help them.

As they began to walk out over the exposed ocean floor, they noticed that by no means all animals had vanished with the sea. True, all the fish were gone. But several crabs were still scuttling along in their peculiar sideways fashion. Worms were busy digging themselves deep into the sand, to hide away from the swarms of birds that descended onto the waterless bay, looking for food. Different types of mussels and snails and starfish still clung to overgrown rocks, perhaps hoping that eventually the sea might be coming back. But even as Squiggledy and Wriggledy walked farther and farther away from the beach and out into the bay, they still could not see where all the water had gone.

Then, some distance ahead, they spotted a large object that, at first sight, they did not recognise. Only as they got closer did they realise that it was the old wreck of a fishing boat. It must have sunk in a storm, and now it lay abandoned and half buried in the sand. Squiggledy and Wriggledy thought it looked interesting and decided to go and investigate.

It was difficult, but after some attempts, they managed to pull themselves along the slippery and sloping deck up to the cabin. Everything was at an angle in there, and they found it impossible to stand unless they leaned against one of the walls, or held on to the door or to the large steering wheel.

Then they noticed a hatch in the floor, with stairs descending below deck. It was dark down there, and a strong smell of rotten wood hang in the air. There was some water left in the buried hull, with a few small fish still swimming inside it. After their eyes had accustomed themselves to the dim light, Squiggledy and Wriggledy could also see some bulky objects lying at the

bottom of the boat – a collection of boxes and barrels, apparently.

They got curious and wondered if they might be able to dive down and find out what was inside. So, they started to wade into the water, took a deep breath, put their heads underneath the surface, and then pushed themselves off into the unknown depth. They had practiced diving in their pond, and it was not difficult for them to reach the bottom. But when Squiggledy and Wriggledy looked inside the boxes and barrels, it was rather disappointing – they were all empty, except for a few crabs and other small sea animals who used them as their homes.

Squiggledy and Wriggledy had just checked the last box, when they saw something moving in one of the dark corners. They looked at one another, wondering what kind of creature it might be. But since they were still holding their breath, they were unable to speak.

Meanwhile, they could see that the creature was very long, and getting longer all the time, as it came winding towards them through the murky water. It leered at them out of two piercing eyes. And when it was quite close, it opened its mouth – a mouth with two rows of very pointy teeth.

That was when Squiggledy and Wriggledy decided – simultaneously and without any need for conversation – that now was the right moment to get out of the water and back up into the fresh air. After all, they had accomplished what they had intended to do, and established that the boxes contained no hidden treasures.

When they had climbed out of the boat, and slid down the sloping deck back onto the sand, they could see that they were now at the entrance of the bay. Already, the tower of the lighthouse, with its red and white stripes, looked much taller

than it had from the beach. And that was where they still needed to get to, if they wanted to find out what had happened to the sea.

After a while, they passed a long red buoy with a big bell at the top. It had used to dance in the waves, but was now lying forlornly in the sand.

Nearby, a group of seals were basking on a sandbank, strangely unconcerned about the sudden absence of all the water. But as they appeared to be sleeping, Squiggledy and Wriggledy did not want to disturb them, and continued their journey to the lighthouse.

Very soon, however, they found it increasingly difficult to walk. At first, they were unsure why that was the case. But then they realised that the sand seemed to be getting wetter; and the wetter the sand got, the deeper their feet sank into it; and the deeper their feet sank, the harder it was to pull them out again.

They tried to help each other. But by the time one of them had succeeded in pulling the other out of the mud, their own feet had got stuck even more firmly.

Then, suddenly, at a distance, they saw something glistening in the sun. It was something in motion, something that seemed to be rising and falling regularly, something that moved with the rhythm of waves. It almost looked as if ... yes, it *was* the sea – and it was coming back.

Completely preoccupied with wondering about where the sea had gone, Squiggledy and Wriggledy had not noticed that, in fact, the water had begun to rise again. Up out of the sand it crept, gurgling around their ankles at first, but rising higher and higher until it reached their knees.

Channels started to form behind them, getting wider and deeper all the time, and cutting them off from the land – while

ahead of them, the sea got closer and closer. Already, the dark water came swirling around the little island. Then, in an instance, the first waves came rushing over them, grabbing them, and pulling them along.

Well, now at least, they were not stuck in the sand anymore, and that was one thing to be happy about. But very soon, Squiggledy and Wriggledy had to admit to themselves that swimming in the sea was quite another thing compared with paddling along in their little pond.

And as the water got deeper, the waves became higher and ever more violent. Squiggledy and Wriggledy found themselves not only being thrown up and down, but also pulled back and forth, as wave after wave washed over them.

Getting spun around like that, sometimes they could see the sky, and sometimes they could not. Sometimes they could see the lighthouse, and sometimes they could not.

Then they saw the red buoy, floating on top of the water once more – until it disappeared, as yet another wave came crashing down onto them.

But there it was again, the buoy, a little closer now. If they could paddle hard enough to steer themselves towards it, and if they could manage to hang on to it, before they were rushed past by the relentless sea ...

Once more, Squiggledy and Wriggledy were lifted out of the water by a breaking wave – and there, the tall buoy rose up directly in front of them.

Groping, grasping, as they were flung through the air, they reached out, stretching their arms as far as they could ... until their fingers closed around the metal framework of the buoy's tower. They clung to it with all their strength, now dangling

above the heaving sea, while the foaming waves rushed past beneath them.

To be able to see better what was going on, Squiggledy and Wriggledy climbed higher up the tower. And as they climbed higher, the tower started shaking more violently, until the bell at its top began to ring.

The seals lying on the sandbank nearby woke up as they heard the ringing and wondered about it. Normally, the alarm bell did not ring on a fine day like this. It was only meant to be heard during a storm, when the wind was particularly strong, and the waves were particularly wild. They looked over to the buoy and saw Squiggledy and Wriggledy holding on to its top and waving at them. The seals knew instantly that these two travellers were in trouble, and that their help was needed.

And so, Squiggledy and Wriggledy were very glad indeed when they saw two of the seals glide into the water and race through the waves towards them, as if it was the easiest thing in the world. In fact, the seals seemed to be quite enjoying themselves.

They suggested that they could take Squiggledy and Wriggledy back to the beach. But encouraged by the seal's cheerfulness, Squiggledy and Wriggledy were not ready yet to abandon their quest. Now more than ever, having been surprised by the water like that, they wanted to find out who had taken the sea away, and why it had come back.

However, to Squiggledy's and Wriggledy's great amazement, the seals told them that this was quite a regular occurrence – happening twice daily, in fact, every day. The seals too had wondered about it occasionally, but as it was such a good arrangement, they had never put too much effort into finding out why it happened. They simply enjoyed the sea while it was

there – went swimming and fishing in it – and when the water was out, they enjoyed lying comfortably on their favourite sandbank, taking a little nap, and letting the sun warm them.

But the seals agreed that, once you started to think about it, it did seem rather curious that this should happen, this constant back and forth of all the water. And if there was someone who knew the answer, it would probably be the pelican who lived in the lighthouse and made sure that it worked so well every night.

Hanging on to the seals' flippers, Squiggledy and Wriggledy were quickly taken to the little island, where they climbed out of the water, thanked the seals for the lift, and rang the bell of the lighthouse.

After a little while, the pelican opened the door, and seeing how wet they were, he immediately asked them to come in. They followed him up a very long staircase that wound round and round in a tight spiral, until they got into the kitchen.

Then, quite exhausted from all the climbing and the paddling in the sea, Squiggledy and Wriggledy sat at the table and looked out of the window, while the pelican made them hot chocolates. The view was magnificent. From the top of the lighthouse, they could see the whole bay beneath them. It was full of water again, and the noontime sun glinted on the waves, which looked a lot smaller and much friendlier than they had from down below and being surrounded by them.

The pelican was rather surprised when he heard why Squiggledy and Wriggledy had come to visit him. He pondered their questions for a moment and then said in a measured tone that, as far as he could tell, no one actually stole or borrowed the sea, only to return it half a day later. He certainly had never witnessed anything like that. This was just something that happened by itself, he supposed.

Although ... the pelican continued, as he brought Squiggledy and Wriggledy the steaming cups of hot chocolate and sat down at the table with them ... now that they brought up the subject, he had noticed over the years that, during the night at least, the higher the moon was in the sky, the higher the water rose up against the island. Last night, for example, as they may remember, the moon had been completely full and very high in the sky. And he was sorry to say – this, with a rueful glance at a pair of wellington boots and a bucket that stood in a corner – that the water had definitely reached his front door sometime around midnight.

On the basis of that, he had always thought that the moon should somehow be involved in this regular motion of the sea. But what with looking after the lighthouse, it was difficult to find the time to work his admittedly rudimentary observations into a firm theory.

And he would have to agree with the seals that the current state of affairs was rather convenient. He personally, of course, was not among those birds who seemed to enjoy walking over the sand at low tide, eating worms and crabs and such things – not that there was anything wrong with that, necessarily, and far be it from him to criticise his avian colleagues. But he would like to point out that he himself preferred fresh fish, which he caught during high tide. So, he supposed, the way the system was set up really was the best solution for everyone, wasn't it?

His recommendation then for Squiggledy and Wriggledy was to refer to the tide tables which were prominently displayed at the little shop by the beach. They indicated with great accuracy when the water would be there and when it would not. Someone, apparently, managed to find the time to do these calculations. He, unfortunately, was unable to supply this

additional service. Nonetheless, he could reliably assure Squiggledy and Wriggledy that, in the afternoon, the water would be going out again, and they would be able to walk back to the shore.

However ... the pelican looked at them thoughtfully for a moment, and a little concerned ... while they were there, if they still had a moment to spare, there was something he could give them, that might turn out to be beneficial for their future endeavours.

And so, after they had finished their hot chocolates, he led them back down the winding flight of stairs and into a room in the basement of the lighthouse, where he kept all the things that he found washed up on his island.

Among these were two items that Squiggledy and Wriggledy did not recognise. They looked like waistcoats, but were very thick, bright red, and had whistles attached to them. They were lifejackets, and Squiggledy and Wriggledy were delighted when the pelican said that they could keep them. As long as they wore these lifejackets in the water, they would always float at the surface, and the big waves would not be able to push them down anymore.

In the afternoon, when the sea no longer washed around the little island, Squiggledy and Wriggledy said good-bye to the pelican and began their journey back to the beach. On the way, they waved to the seals, who were lying once more on their sandbank, and promised they would visit them again the next day.

It was already late in the evening when Squiggledy and Wriggledy finally got back to the beach, and they were very hungry. So, they sat among the dunes, munching the sandwiches they had made for their dinner.

They watched the sun sink lower and lower, and the sky turn red. The strong light came on at the top of the lighthouse, and they waved to the pelican – although he was much too far away to be able to see them. Then, just as the sun disappeared, the moon rose on the opposite side of the horizon, still almost full.

But even as night fell around them, Squiggledy and Wriggledy remained sitting at the beach, wondering if the sea would really be coming back. And sure enough, as the moon rose higher in the sky, they could see the first waves washing around the little island again. Then they knew that there was nothing to worry about. They could safely go to bed now and look forward to their first proper swim with the seals while the water was in, and to another visit to the pelican when the water was out.

As they walked to their little cottage, they saw the round face of the moon high above them. And for a brief moment, Squiggledy and Wriggledy thought that it gave them a little wink. But they were probably just imagining that, because they were already half asleep.

Peace and quiet settled over the world. The moon continued to glide serenely across the night-time sky, looking down to this beautiful blue planet, with all these oceans, and all these animals that lived inside and around them.

Then the moon thought about its own barren landscape, with nothing but rocks and sand – without any water at all, and without any animals – and it got a little sad.

But then it reminded itself that, although it could not give these animals a place to live, it did do something useful for them after all. It made two big waves run around their planet every day, creating both the high and the low tides, so that all the

many different creatures could live together along the same coast – those who liked a lot of water, and those who were happier without it.

As the moon remembered that, its sadness disappeared. It continued to gaze down to the twinkling sea that filled the lovely bay once more, and it thought: wasn't it a shame that, at that very moment, no one else was around to enjoy it. They all appeared to be asleep down there.

Squiggledy & Wriggledy

Go Out at Night

The light of the full moon glinted on the calm water, as Squiggledy and Wriggledy walked around the little pond and towards the edge of the forest beyond it. Before them, the trees rose up, seemingly even taller than during the day, their leaves whispering mysteriously in a soft breeze that was not felt down among the grass through which Squiggledy and Wriggledy forged themselves a narrow path.

Into the sombre atmosphere of the forest they ventured. At first, they could see nothing but blackness ahead. Then, gradually, their eyes got used to the dim light, and they could make out the irregular shapes of the many trees, standing around them like a solemn group of watchers.

For the first time in their lives they had entered the old forest at night; and as well as they knew it with the warm rays of the sun streaming through the gaps between the treetops, they barely recognised it now in the silvery twilight.

But the forest not only looked different than during the day, it felt different too. Although the sun had long disappeared from the sky, clearly not everyone had gone to sleep. The wary movements of nocturnal animals could be guessed by different furtive sounds in all directions. Occasionally, too, for only a brief moment, Squiggledy and Wriggledy could see a dark figure quickly darting out of sight, or a pair of eyes watching them from the cover of the undergrowth. The birds had stopped singing, and it seemed that everyone was determined to be as silent as

possible, while listening intently into the darkness for any noises made by someone else.

Through this hushed world Squiggledy and Wriggledy wordlessly walked for a while, until Squiggledy finally broke their silence. ‘So, how *do* you think it is going to look? I mean, how do we know when we found it – out here among all these trees and with hardly any light at all?’

This was, of course, still the same question that, without any particular urgency, had already occupied them the entire day. But now, walking through the night-time forest, being able to answer this question somehow had become a lot more desirable.

And it was a good question under any circumstances. How does a ghost look like? How do you recognise a ghost, when you found it – or, possibly, when it found you? And then, what happens? Can you talk to them? How do you make friends with ghosts? Are they at all interested in holding conversations or making friends with non-ghosts?

And so, as Squiggledy and Wriggledy continued walking farther and farther into the forest, not knowing what to expect, or how to deal with whatever they might encounter, they became more and more anxious.

Yet, for all this excitement, the day had begun rather ordinarily, when they had sat – as so many mornings before – at the top of the tallest haystack on their farm, having just had breakfast together with Cockledy-Coo, the rooster. For a while, they had simply sat there, lazily squinting towards the early morning sun as it rose higher and higher above the fields in the east, each of them following their own thoughts.

Then, in an offhand fashion, Cockledy-Coo had mentioned, ‘I think I heard it again tonight.’

‘Heard what?’ Squiggledy and Wriggledy had asked.

Cockledy-Coo had thought about that for a while. Then he had said, 'I don't know. But I'm sure I heard it. It couldn't have been a dream, I should think, because it woke me up – long before sunrise. And I've heard it before.'

It sounded – he had tried to explain, although it was difficult – hollow, somehow, and haunting, like ... he couldn't be sure, but it might have been ... well, possibly, the call of a ghost.

Of course – he had been quick to add – he wouldn't want to give anyone the impression that he ever got scared out there, sitting all alone on top of the haystack and surrounded by darkness, waiting for the sun to come back, while everyone else was comfortably tucked up in their beds and fast asleep. It was an important job he had to do, he knew that, and he was happy to do it ... but some of the noises he occasionally heard in the forest at night were definitely, he would say, odd.

Squiggledy and Wriggledy had never heard of ghosts living in the old forest, but they thought that it would probably be good to know if there were – even if that meant going out looking for them. After all, there had to be plenty of farms with cows and sheep and horses and chickens, but ghosts were rather unusual neighbours to have.

And so it came, several hours later, that Squiggledy and Wriggledy found themselves stumbling through the dark forest, wishing they knew what ghosts looked like, to be prepared when they eventually met one.

Then they saw a bizarre shape appear among the trees. Could that be a ghost? It was hard to tell in the faint light. From the distance, it looked more like a giant, with many deformed limbs, standing very quiet and still, not to draw attention to itself; intending perhaps to let them come ever closer, until it would

reach out to them with its long arms and snatch them up, right off the ground.

Now, Squiggledy and Wriggledy had a decision to make – and it was an important one. Were they going to be cautious and stay away from that bizarre shape? At which point they might just as well return to the farm immediately and go to bed, like everyone else had done. Or, alternatively, were they going to do exactly what they had gone out to do, and discover what it really was that stood there among the trees?

Of course, there could only be one answer to that question. And so, very carefully, Squiggledy and Wriggledy crept nearer to the giant – if that's what it was – trying not to make any sound, and looking out for even the slightest movements of its limbs. But it remained standing completely still. Nearer and nearer they crept, until they finally recognised it: it was just a very old and weathered tree – so old, in fact, that it had lost all its leaves. Now it stood there, sheltered under the thick foliage of the younger trees around it, giving shelter itself to several families of woodpeckers that had built themselves comfortable homes inside its wide trunk. From close up, it looked very peaceful and friendly, and definitely not like a ghost or a giant.

Therefore, Squiggledy and Wriggledy left the old tree behind and continued walking farther and farther into the forest, farther than they had ever been, even during the day. All the while, they were still surrounded by the same furtive activity that they could not distinguish in the dark – only a rustling of leaves here, or a scurrying silhouette there.

Then, after they had gone a good distance, they saw a dim shine in a little clearing among the trees ahead of them, a yellow-green glow, very different from the pale shimmer of the moon. It appeared to be coming from a tall slender figure, luminescent

somehow, and swaying gracefully side to side, as if dancing in the moonlight that filled the clearing. Never before in their whole lives had Squiggledy and Wriggledy ever seen anything like that, and they could not even begin to imagine what this mysterious apparition might be.

Yet, as otherworldly as it appeared, it wasn't a frightening sight at all. The way the figure moved, it seemed to beckon them to come closer, to join it in its silent dance. Squiggledy and Wriggledy couldn't help but being fascinated by it, and began walking towards it. But the longer they watched the dancing figure, and the closer they got, the more they found that looking at it was strangely dizzying and entrancing, as if a spell was being put on them that lured them in – until they got very close, and they could see what this figure really was. It was made up of hundreds upon hundreds of beetles, each one with a little light shining on its belly, all swarming about one another in a perfectly orchestrated motion, swirling and circling inside a column of air that had remained warm from the previous day.

For a little while longer, Squiggledy and Wriggledy watched the beetles' intricate dance, but then they remembered that they still had not found a single ghost. So, they left the clearing and continued walking farther into the forest.

Soon they noticed that the ground began to rise, gently at first, but gradually getting steeper. And as they scrambled higher and higher, the forest got brighter, as the trees got smaller, and the spaces between them got bigger.

Then, above them, Squiggledy and Wriggledy saw the entrance to a cave in the steep hillside. They climbed up to it and looked inside, but the moonlight did not reach far into the rocky opening.

It was very quiet inside the cave. Only faintly, at a distance,

they could hear the regular drip-drip-dripping of water from the ceiling. Squiggledy and Wriggledy wondered whether this was a spot where ghosts might decide to live, whether they liked gloomy places like this, and – if indeed a ghost *was* living in there – whether that was a good reason to go in, or not to go in.

Just when they had decided to take a better look, they heard a curious sound emerging from deep inside the long passage – a soft whirring and whizzing, getting louder, until it turned into a swishing and swooshing that got closer and closer. Out of the darkness, something came flying towards them at a great speed.

Then, in an instant, the passage was filled with the wild flutter of countless wings. Squiggledy and Wriggledy ducked low, as the nocturnal swarm passed over them. On and on it went, seemingly never-ending, as more and more of these creatures emerged from the cave.

And strange creatures they were. Although they could fly exceptionally well, they were clearly not ordinary birds. Instead of feathers, they had sleek furry bodies, with big pointy ears, and wide leathery wings. How they managed to race through the dark and narrow passage, without bumping into one another or against the rough walls, Squiggledy and Wriggledy could not work out. They watched the swarm leave the cave and flit in front of the bright disk of the full moon, as the creatures rose higher and higher into the night-time sky, until they disappeared, swiftly flying off above the trees.

After this encounter, Squiggledy and Wriggledy decided that it might be better not to venture into the cave. By then, all of its inhabitants had either left, or probably preferred not to be disturbed.

Therefore, they kept walking, further up the hill. The trees continued to get smaller, until, with one final push through a

dense entanglement of branches, they left the forest behind and found themselves at the foot of a bare hilltop. Above them, clearly outlined against the moonlit sky, loomed a grand castle. Of everything Squiggledy and Wriggledy had seen on their nightly journey so far, surely, this had to be the best place for a ghost to choose as its abode – dark and ominous, as it was.

Naturally, this meant that now they had to be particularly careful, as there was no good place to hide anymore outside the forest. With that in mind, they slowly crept closer to the castle, taking cover among the heather as much as possible, until the outer walls of the ancient building stood before them in a forbidding manner, surrounded by a wide moat.

Squiggledy and Wriggledy skirted the castle, until they found an arched gateway. Since the drawbridge was down, they walked across it and into an overgrown courtyard. All around stood the battlements, with a tower in each of the four corners. Straight ahead, they could see the imposing front of the keep, with its many empty windows looking down to them.

But as big a place as this was, there were no movements anywhere, nor any sounds. It had been a very long time since people had lived there. Now, the old castle lay abandoned.

Past a massive front door, which luckily stood a little ajar, Squiggledy and Wriggledy squeezed inside the keep and followed a long corridor into the Great Hall, where, many years ago, elaborate celebrations had taken place.

For a while, they stood under the rays of moonlight that shone down through a hole in the high domed roof in the middle of the large room, wondering what might be hidden in the dark corners around them.

Then, a single cloud moved across the moon, and the light in the Great Hall vanished almost completely. Squiggledy and

Wriggledy stood rooted to the spot, listening intently, but all they could hear was the rapid beating of their own hearts.

Suddenly, from somewhere above their heads, there came a hollow, haunting call – *whoo-hooooo-hoo* – exactly as Cockledy-Coo had described it. A moment later, they felt a cold wind sweep over them, very softly; and as they looked up, they could just make out a large shape gliding past them, over to the other side of the room.

For a moment, there was silence again. Then, out of the dark, a quiet but clear voice spoke to them. ‘So, you two ... what brought you here, in the middle of the night?’

Unfortunately, just then, Squiggledy and Wriggledy found it difficult to explain, even to themselves, why precisely it was that they had decided to go out – *in the middle of the night* – looking for ghosts, rather than staying at home like everyone else and, by now, comfortably sleeping in their beds.

Therefore, they were quite relieved, when the cloud moved on a bit, and the moon appeared again. In its shimmering light, they could see an owl perched among the rafters. It had fluffy brown plumage, a round head with bushy ears, a large curving beak, and two big yellow eyes, that gave it a rather serious expression.

‘Oh, hello,’ Wriggledy said, a little nervously. ‘Why have we come here? Well, what happened was ... basically, we came to find out if, by any chance, there were ghosts living in the forest.’

‘Yes, exactly,’ Squiggledy chimed in. ‘You see, a friend of ours mentioned that perhaps there might be some – ghosts, that is. But he wasn’t quite sure. So, we thought we could go and investigate.’

‘Indeed?’ The owl now blinked friendlier down to them. ‘And, did you meet any ghosts in the forest?’

‘Not really, no,’ Wriggledy conceded. ‘Although, once, early on, standing among the trees was a big creature – as it appeared to us at the time, when we saw it in the dim light. We didn’t know what ghosts look like, you see, and so it could have been one, couldn’t it? But then it turned out that it was just a particularly old and gnarly tree.’

‘Yes,’ Squiggledy confirmed. ‘And after that, we saw this shining dancing figure; and we thought it too seemed a bit ghostly at first. But then we got closer, and we discovered that it was only a swarm of many little beetles that managed to glow, somehow.’

‘Hmm ... very odd that was,’ Wriggledy remembered. ‘And then we came to a cave, and there were these curious beings that could fly very fast inside a very narrow passage, although there was no light at all; and we thought – well, maybe they are some kind of ghost-birds, which have an unusual power that lets them see in the dark. But as they flew over us, we could see that they weren’t birds at all. They were really these strange furry creatures with wings ...’

‘Bats,’ the owl interjected; but Squiggledy and Wriggledy weren’t sure what that meant.

‘These strange furry creatures with wings that you saw were bats,’ the owl continued to explain. ‘As they fly through their dark cave, they make a special type of sound, and then they listen to the echoes, as they bounce off the walls and everything else around them. That way, they can hear exactly where the walls and their friends are, even if, with their eyes, they can’t see anything at all.’

‘Yes, bats,’ Wriggledy agreed. ‘So, that was quite interesting. But we didn’t stay very long, because the bats flew off, and we didn’t want to intrude into their home, while they were away,

because ... well, it's not very polite, is it? Instead, we carried on, and then we came here.'

'Thus it would seem,' the owl remarked. 'And when you heard me hooting, and when you felt the soft wind from my wings as I flew over your heads, perhaps you thought that I might be a ghost too?'

'It occurred to us at the time, as this is a rather old castle ...,' Squiggledy began.

'Yes, we thought that, in an old castle like this, it would be a possibility,' Wriggledy admitted.

'But now that you have seen me, you would agree that I am not, in fact, a ghost?'

Squiggledy and Wriggledy agreed that they would agree with that; but they couldn't help being a little disappointed.

'It's sad, isn't it,' Squiggledy said. 'After we've come all this way, we still haven't found a single ghost.'

Hearing this, the owl looked at them thoughtfully for a while. 'I wonder ...' it said, eventually. 'Perhaps you *have* seen ghosts all along, ever since you entered the forest; but because you weren't afraid, and because you didn't run away, you were able to find out the truth about them. And as soon as you did, the ghosts were ghosts no longer. They simply became what they really are: a gnarly tree, a swarm of fireflies, a colony of bats – and me, I suppose. I think that, in the end, there are only as many ghosts as there are things in the dark that you are too afraid to investigate.'

This sounded wise enough. And so, confident that they had done everything they could to find ghosts in the old forest, Squiggledy and Wriggledy said good-bye to the owl, left the keep, walked back across the courtyard and through the

drawbridge gate, until they stood, once more, outside the high walls of the abandoned castle.

All around them, the hill sloped down towards the trees, the forest stretching out as far as they could see. Having skirted the wall for some time before finding the gate, Squiggledy and Wriggledy couldn't be sure anymore on which side of the castle they had come up the hill, and which slope they would have to go down again to get back to their farm. North, south, east, west – it all looked the same at night – the same slopes, and the same forest in all directions. Dark as it was, they couldn't see anything that might show them the way.

Therefore, Squiggledy and Wriggledy stood outside the castle gate for a while, perplexed and increasingly tired, wanting nothing more than to return to their cosy home and snuggle into their warm beds.

Then, they heard the faintest whooshing sound above their heads. As they looked up, they could see again the large yellow eyes of the owl benignly blinking down to them from the top of the wall. 'You're lost, aren't you?' the owl asked.

Squiggledy and Wriggledy had to admit that that appeared to be true.

'Well, generally, if ever you get lost, you need something to guide you, something you can always rely on.'

Squiggledy and Wriggledy began to think very hard. Something to guide them ... Of course, during the day, they could have followed the sun. The sun never seemed to get lost. It always knew where to rise in the morning, and where to set in the evening. Squiggledy and Wriggledy had noticed before how the sun always appeared above the horizon on the same side of their farm, shining into the same window, as they got out of bed, then moving across the sky along the same path every day, until

disappearing again beneath the horizon on the other side of the farm, as they went to sleep. And it did this with such regularity and precision, that they could use the sundial in front of the farmhouse to tell them exactly when it was time for lunch, or how many hours they had left before sunset, if they wanted to go for a picnic by the pond.

The pond ... Thinking about that, Squiggledy suddenly remembered something.

‘Wriggledy, when we walked away from the farm and into the forest, we came by the pond, didn’t we? Now, from the farm, that is precisely the direction in which all the shadows point, when we’re having lunch, isn’t it? So, around lunchtime, we would have walked *away* from the sun.’

‘You’re right,’ Wriggledy agreed. ‘Then, all we have to do is wait until the sun is at its highest point in the sky again, around lunchtime tomorrow, and then walk *towards* it.’

It was an idea. But as Squiggledy and Wriggledy stood there, far from home, surrounded by all these strange silhouettes and noises, it seemed like a very long time to wait until lunchtime the following day. By then, they would not only be very tired, but also very hungry – and they would still have to walk back to their farm.

The owl listened quietly to their conversation. Then it nodded in a comforting fashion. ‘Instead of waiting here all night, perhaps there is something else you could do. Whenever you get lost in the dark, and you feel that there are ghosts all around you, just remember to look up to the stars. The darker it gets down here, the brighter they become. And they can help you find your way home.’

Squiggledy and Wriggledy looked up. Some of the brightest stars could be seen glinting next to the full moon. Seven stars,

directly above their heads, stood out most clearly.

‘Can you see them?’ The owl asked. ‘Those four stars, forming a rectangle; and the other three, leading away from it along that line there – together, they look like a waggon, don’t they?’

Squiggledy and Wriggledy could indeed see it, the outline of the big waggon, among the myriad of other stars.

‘Now, look at the two stars at the back of the waggon. Imagine that you could draw a long line between them, high up into the sky, until you get to this bright star there, around which all the other stars circle. The direction to that star, that is north, and that is the direction in which you came here. So, all you need to do to get back to your farm is to walk in the opposite direction.’

To illustrate this point, the owl swivelled its head around on its flexible neck, looking down one of the slopes that led away from the castle and into the surrounding trees.

Then it rose up on its wide wings, hovering above them. ‘I shall leave you now. But you will be safe on your journey home – as long as you follow the stars.’

With that, the owl rose higher into the air, silently sailed away, and vanished into the night.

Squiggledy and Wriggledy were alone again. All around them, the old forest was still as mysterious as it had been when they had left the farm, filled with as many strange things as before. But Squiggledy and Wriggledy were not worried anymore. Whatever ghosts they might meet on their way back, they would not run away. They would find out what these ghosts really were. And they would not get lost in the dark again. They would follow the stars, and everything would be all right.

For a little while, they remained standing on top of the hill

and enjoyed the view over the night-time world beneath them, bathed in silvery moonlight – the same world they knew from the day-time, and yet so different than under the golden light of the sun. How exciting it would be if they could explore this part of their world further. But they both knew they could not stay there any longer.

It was time to go home.

The next morning, the sun rose again over the farm, exactly as it had done many mornings before. And as it moved higher up into the sky, roused from their sleep by Cockledy-Coo, the inhabitants of the farm came out of their different homes to start the day, just as they did on any ordinary day.

And yet, something *was* different this particular morning: Squiggledy and Wriggledy were nowhere to be seen, and the curtains in their windows remained drawn until long after breakfast. Following their exhausting journey through the night, they were still fast asleep.