

WELLINGTON RABBIT

BARELY THERE



For grandson Edward Dyott Ball
Who sparkles and shines

Titles set in Harrington Bold
Text set in Harrington and Goudy Old Style

Copyright © 2007 by Sandra Leigh Jett Ball
Illustrations © 2007 by Sandra Leigh Jett Ball
Back cover Wellington photograph by Joan Willis
All rights reserved, including the right to reproduce
this book or portions thereof in any form.

Published by Donny & Sandy Ball
at Bayside on Colington Island, North Carolina
Post Office Box 3324, Kill Devil Hills, NC 27948
252-441-5351 800-723-3057
wellington@baysideschoolservices.com

ISBN 0-9709028-8-3

Table of Contents

Preface		4
Chapter 1	Puzzled	7
Chapter 2	Bee Quest	11
Chapter 3	The Upper Warren	15
Chapter 4	Burrbears	19
Chapter 5	An Enchanted Bean	23
Chapter 6	Homeward Bound	27
Chapter 7	Missed Adventures	31
Chapter 8	Bee Fair	35
Chapter 9	Preparations	39
Chapter 10	Championship	43
Epilogue		46

Index to Illustrations

Webby tells Wellington about his wonderful new uniform	6
Georg digs for pollen nuggets	10
Burnee Bear explains about burrbear outfits	14
Bertie talks to her goats	18
The enchanted bean bears fruit	22
Wellington is delighted with his magic beanie	26
Pollen plans are discussed	30
Georg shares his pot of honey	34
Webby heads to the garden for dinner salad	38
The Double U's admire their new trophy	42



Chapter 1 Puzzled

Wellington stood up. He shook himself all over and reached for the telebee to read it one more time. It did not make any more sense than the first time he read it. “Maybe Bethleann can figure this out,” he muttered, “she’s good with puzzles.” He began looking round for a safe place to keep the telebee until Bethleann could see it. Being inscribed on a rather small leaf by bee stinger, it was somewhat fragile. “This will do,” said Wellington aloud as he tucked the leaf into a seldom-used teapot.

Georg and Bethleann had taken Webby to get him fitted for his hopscotch uniform. He was competing in a team match with Wellington for the first time ever and so a new uniform was called for. Wellington elected to stay behind and do some cooking.

They were all staying at Uncle Wells’ house while practicing for the competition. After Uncle Wells won his second warren championship, he built himself an amazing practice grid in his dell. He trained Wellington in all the subtler skills of the sport and was so proud when Wellington blossomed. Wellington himself was twice warren champion and hoped to add a third title this spring.

A tear came to Wellington’s eye just thinking about his beloved Uncle. He tried not to miss him too much. A few springs ago, Uncle Wells had passed to a land called the WEB but before that he made an amazing revelation to Wellington. Uncle Wells, Wellington learned, was the Easter Bunny. Tradition has that no rabbit is allowed to know who carries out the actual duties of the Easter Bunny, only that it is one of them. This is to protect the job from title seekers and help keep the focus on the spread of love, the all-important nature of the work. So Wellington was much awed to not only learn that his Uncle held the special title, but that he, Wellington, would be the next Easter Bunny.

Uncle Wells had it all planned out. After Georg, the magic black bear happened upon Willis Warren as a result of a muffed magic spell, and then became Wellington’s BFF, Uncle Wells decided to teach both of the boys the many details about the special task. Teaching Georg Easter Bunny secrets had been a monumental decision for Uncle Wells to make and Wellington upon learning the aspects of fading worried how Georg would manage it. But Uncle Wells explained that once he reminded the WEB about exactly how so many more children there were throughout in the world, they would agree that help with the job was a good idea. And since Georg was not a rabbit, the single bunny bearer tradition remained safe.

Actually after Wellington met Bethleann the spring following his titling, he invited the young girl to become a member of the team since she clearly knew a lot about the job already. Apparently, a select core of Uncle Wells’ unusual friends knew of his responsibility. They, being non-rabbits, had no interest in the job and so were no threat at all to the position. Truth be told, upon more than one occasion members of this elite group had played an important role in maintaining the tight security that was all important to the success of the job. Bethleann was delighted to be officially asked to join the team because the three worked so well together. In a

rather trying time for Wellington, Bethleann and Georg had pulled together to assure a positive ending to what could have been a very nasty situation. From that moment on, Wellington knew she belonged on the team.

“Wellington, Wellington, it is going to be so so sweet,” Webby flew into the kitchen almost bowling Wellington over.

“Whoa, there young man,” commanded Wellington, stopping Webby short by throwing up both paws in surrender. “It seems that your trip to Miss Sew&Sews was a success.”

“I’ll say,” beamed Webby whose official name was Webster, although no one ever used it. There was a time when he was only known as little bunny and not only that but he worked for that awful rabbit Black Veil. Black Veil out to thwart all successes of the Easter Bunny was a constant thorn in the side of all things good. His latest nastiness then had been to get little bunny to bunnynap Wellington. It took everyone to rescue Wellington and in that process little bunny realized that he was in the wrong camp and asked to be rescued himself. True he had the means via his transport rock to get the rescue team out of their tight spot in Black Veil’s underground garden camp, deceptively lovely in a poisonous way. And so he asked to be allowed to come along and they all heartily agreed. A year later after another amazing adventure in which little bunny played a pivotal role, the group decided that little bunny needed a real name and in a wonderful naming ceremony he became Webster, or Webby. He had really wanted the name of Wellington, after his hero, but when he found out that Webster was the name of a former Easter Bunny, he was extremely happy.

“The material is light blue, something she called Carolina blue. What does that mean? And it has white, and stars and...” Webby babbled on non-stop describing every single detail of his uniform that he could recall.

“I don’t think he’s missed a one,” grinned Georg watching Webby tick off all the special attributes of his new uniform on his paws, one by one, not caring that Wellington was only partially listening.

“I’m going to practice a bit,” declared Webby drawing a deep breath as he finished his vivid description of his uniform. He dashed out the door before they could stop him.

“That boy certainly has plenty of energy,” mused Georg. “He could hardly hold still while Miss Sew&Sew measured him. I on the other hand was more than ready to leave. Keeping myself in the form of a rabbit too long makes me hungry. You rabbits certainly have a high metabolism.”

“Higher than say a bear’s appetite?” Wellington handed Georg an apple. “Webby does have the energy that it takes to make a good competitor. His one downfall is that he gets distracted and loses focus. He gets such good height in his hop, too. We’ll just have to figure out a way to calm him down a bit. Where’s Bethleann?” he moved on in his conversation.

“She told me she had to make a stop at Precisely’s and would be along presently. She said not to keep dinner waiting for her.”

“Dinner is just about ready,” said Wellington. “But it’s a pot roast and can nestle in its juices for awhile. I’ve got something to show you.” Wellington decided that since Bethleann was on an errand he would show the telebee to Georg to see if he could shed some light on it.

Wellington carefully removed the telebee from the teapot and showed it to Georg.

Georg studied the message for a long minute and then shook his head. "It makes absolutely no sense to me," he frowned. "Any idea where this came from?"

"None at all. The bee had gone by the time I got to the door."

"Maybe we could contact telebee central," said Georg. "Maybe they keep delivery records or something."

"Now why didn't I think of that," yelled Wellington. He reached for the honey pot. It was the quickest way to find a bee that he could think of. He rarely sent or received telebees so procedure was unfamiliar. "If I set this honey pot outside it should attract some bees, but then what do we do?" he asked Georg.

"Ask for help?" offered Georg.

"Maybe," Wellington put the honey pot outside the back door and stepped back inside. Before he put the kettle on for tea, he heard a buzzing sound.

He returned to the door and called out, "Any telebee messengers available?"

"Buzzy Buzz at your service, sir," sang out a shrill voice from a nearby flower.

"I'm looking for some information," said Wellington.

"What sort of information? I'm very busy," buzzed Buzzy.

"How about some pollen nuggets for your tip pouch?" offered Georg, reaching for his rumplesack that was hanging on a hook near the back door.

Wellington gave Georg a look.

"I used to send lots of telebees when I lived in the taiga," said Georg. "Girl bears love them," he blushed reaching into the sack for his nugget pouch.

"Georg, you never told me you were a courter. Anyone special?" teased Wellington.

Georg grinned and winked, "Very!"

"Why Georg I do believe you are blushing," continued Wellington.

"Behave and I might introduce you someday. Everyone here is so chatty. Too much talk could ruin everything." Wellington looked at Georg with his mouth hanging open. He wondered why Georg thought he was such a chatterbox. Bethelann was the incessantly chatty one.

"Her name is Gloria. She has the prettiest brown fur, flecked with black," went on Georg a big grin spreading over his face from his own furry ear to furry ear, just talking about her made him so happy.

He would have kept right on telling the glories of Gloria but Buzzy interrupted. "Excuse me but I've got messages to deliver," he buzzed tapping his foot very fast.

"Sorry about that," Georg pushed five pollen nuggets into the bee's upper hand. Buzzy eyed each nugget carefully with his multi-plex eyes. "Now about that message," queried Georg.



Chapter 2

Bee Quest

“Excellent looking pollen,” buzzed Buzzy turning the nuggets over in his palm. “Quality color, good weight, not crumbly.” He ate one, “Ummmm! Taiga, right?” He put the rest in his tip pouch attached to his lower middle arm.

“Yes,” beamed Georg, “and the finest you’ll see anywhere. Straight from the heart of the taiga.” He glanced over at Wellington, who pretended not to hear Georg’s comment.

“Where did this telebee come from?” asked Georg, showing Buzzy the note.

Buzzy flipped it over and over reviewing each stinger prick carefully. “It looks like Bongo’s work,” he said finally, “but Bongo is down in the South Seas right now drinking up hibiscus nectar at a messenger reunion.” He returned to the leaf. “I can take it in to central for analysis and get back to you.”

“How much?” asked Georg.

“Fifty nuggets,” replied Buzzy.

“Fifty!” shouted Georg.

“Gotta take time off from messaging,” buzzed the bee.

“Well, I am just about out,” muttered Georg digging out the few grains remaining in his nugget pouch. “I’ve got fourteen here.” He put the nuggets on the table.

“Say,” piped up Wellington suddenly, “will you take wild warren nuggets?”

“Wild warren?” Buzzy was excited. “That might just be better than taiga. Can you really get some?”

“Come back tomorrow,” replied Wellington.

Buzzy nodded in agreement. He felt a flicker in his wings just then a new job was coming in. “Same time,” finished Wellington as the bee rose in the air. Buzzy gave Wellington a salute and zipped away. “Wild warren pollen, I must be daft,” wailed Wellington. “Do you know how hard that stuff is to get?” he turned to Georg who was putting the fourteen nuggets safely in a tin box which he put on the kitchen shelf noting this fact to Wellington with a shake of the box..

“Never heard of it actually,” said Georg, reaching for an orange to peel. “Must be pretty special to excite that bee so.”

“It comes from way up in the highlands. It’s very fragile and is only potent for a few days after harvesting.”

“Sounds complicated,” mumbled Georg, his mouth full of orange. “I can transport to the taiga and look for some taiga pollen,” suggested Georg. “Gloria will help me.”

“Okay Georg,” said Wellington in a distant voice. “That would be great.”

“I’ll leave right away,” said Georg. “Come on Wellington, it’ll work out.”

“Sure Georg,” Wellington did not sound at all confident. “But we just have to find out the source and meaning of that telebee.”

“I’m off then,” replied Georg, “that is just as soon as I get a snack for the road.” He dug in the icebox, pulling out pickles and sauces and spreads. Soon he had a huge sandwich assembled,

laden with cold cuts of all sorts. Between every other layer he had added a dollop of one type of spread on another finishing off with a grand aioli made from his great grandmother's recipe. Assembled between two healthy slices of sourdough bread, the feast looked perfect for a hungry bear. "Mffmmm..." Georg took a big bite. "YownatonetooWellintn?..." he slurred, belatedly thinking of his buddy.

Wellington laughed. "I wouldn't dare interrupt your feast to ask you to make me a sandwich, Georg. But a snack before leaving is a good idea." He began digging in the icebox and soon emerged with a vessel of soup and a slab of cheese. He put the soup into a pan to take the chill off. While the soup was warming, Wellington made a pot of green tea. When the soup was ready he grated the cheese on top and joined Georg at the table.

"I'll write Bethleann and Webby a note explaining where we have gone and that the roast only needs to be heated up a bit," said Wellington as Georg polished off his sandwich and rose from the table.

"Okay," said Georg. "I'll meet you back here in the morning."

Wellington nodded. "You be careful. This could be the work of Black Veil."

"Never thought of that," mused Georg. "What trouble is he stirring up now?"

"I didn't say it was him, just that it might be," reminded Wellington. "Anything mysterious always has that ring to it for me, and it will until we put that rabbit in his place."

"Gonna take some doing there," said Georg.

"I know," sighed Wellington. He removed the dirty dishes from the table and made quick work of washing them up. Georg grabbed a towel for the drying. Shortly the kitchen was sparkling and the two refreshed pals were ready for their quests.

"You go on, Georg," suggested Wellington. "I'll just finish up this note, put the roast in the fridge and be off myself." He had dug a pad of paper and pencil from the depths of a drawer and was hastily writing about their change of plans.

"See you later then," answered Georg.

"A hello to Gloria," called out Wellington as Georg swirled out of sight. "Wow, Georg is good with that transportation spell," marveled Wellington remembering the countless times he had stood saying the phrase over and over until he got it right enough to work. And sadly how many times he had ended up only a few yards from where he started, so he avoided that particular spell out of dismay at his pitiful showing. "I'll just hike to the highlands. It's nice weather and not so far," he planned. He got his haversack and stuffed some supplies inside. He intended to be back by nightfall but one never knew when heading out on an adventure.

"Past time to get going," said Wellington to no one in particular. He stepped out of the front door pulling it shut behind him and set off down the lane whistling a light tune just right for walking. It was such a good day to be outside. The sun beamed down on his fur. He dug a pair of sunglasses out of his haversack and put them on. He picked up his pace. It felt really good to be walking in the fresh spring air, he had not been on a bound-about in ages. He reached the end of the lane and stepped over the stile onto a hardened dirt path that led straight up into the hills.

As he clipped along, Wellington began to think about his life as the Easter Bunny. He had met so many wonderful new friends. There was Georg and Bethleann, of course. After the three

joined together to simplify Easter deliveries were they ever surprised to find themselves in need of help to accomplish their very first mission. Well, Wellington was on track with his deliveries, but got an added assignment from a friendly stork, Stephen, who thought nothing of asking Wellington to deliver a package for him. Before Wellington could explain that he was on a very important mission of his own, he found himself in possession of a package that required an urgent delivery. That mission brought Wellington in contact with an astounding mathematician, Count Donald, and his equally amazing daughter, Precisely Prime.

Meanwhile, Bethleann found herself in hot water with Black Veil. She was rescued at the very last moment by her new friend, Emily Elf.

And Georg, Georg did not even get out of the dell where the three friends packed and planned for the trip before his troubles started. All unbeknownst to Wellington and Bethleann who had gone on ahead of Georg as their deliveries were much more complicated. Georg delivered wish flower seeds to children who could not receive a special egg and while extremely important the actual work took far less time than the egg drops. But as he was about to leave, a violent wind turned his rumplesack topsy-turvy. Almost all of the precious seeds were picked up by the wind and carried away before Georg could react. Georg rescued the few seeds that remained and decided to deliver what he had. As he scattered the last of his meager pile he happened upon Sir Andrew Ant and the Ball, a fine collection of ant women. They helped Georg round up his missing seeds and even scattered them in all the needed locations for him.

After all the excitement, the entire group, except for poor Emily Elf who was last seen in a fierce battle with Black Veil, came together by happenstance one evening at Uncle Wells' cottage and formed a firm bond of friendship so much so that regular gathering quickly became the norm.

In their next adventure, Wellington was bunnynapped and Georg in attempting the rescue of his BBF acquired a new friend, Mr. E, a cricket acquaintance of his mentor Sir Boris Bear. Mr. E helped Georg locate Wellington who has been whisked away by little bunny to the lair of Black Veil, that sour rabbit whose sole mission is to put a stop to Easter and all things good.

The next season brought a harrowing scramble in which Georg thanks to little bunny's help located his missing e. In the course of that adventure they all became grand friends with White Rabbit but he stays so very busy with the demanding Red Queen that they do not get to see him as often as they would like. Why when White Rabbit was younger he was even scheduled to be the Easter Bunny (this was well before Wellington's or Uncle Wells' time) but gave it up just before his titling to instead serve the Queen.

And then there was their latest saga in which Velveteen Rabbit and Golden came to Willis Warren to meet the famous Georg and stayed to help Georg finally get his e back.

Wellington was amazed to consider his wealth of new friends, Georg, Bethleann, Stephen Storke, Emily Elf, Count Donald, Precisely Prime, Sir Andrew, Mr. E, Velveteen, Golden and dear sweet Webby. He was so busy with his thoughts he did not notice that he was almost at his destination. "That went fast!" he exclaimed.



Chapter 3

The Upper Warren

Wellington came to a crook in the road. A signpost indicated that the wild warren was to the left. To the right was the upper warren. Wellington turned left and almost immediately, the path started a steep climb upward. It was rather rocky and had a lot of hairpin turns so Wellington could not see ahead of himself. Still the surrounding foliage was pleasant and he hummed a saucy tune as he worked to maintain his pace on the steadily increasing incline.

“What’s that song?” called out a voice behind him. Wellington turned with a start, he was so busy making up verses to his tune that he had not heard anyone approaching. There was a small bearlike creature approaching him with an inquisitive expression on its face.

“I haven't given it a name yet,” Wellington replied. “It’s my climbing tune.”

“Sounds nice. I’m Burnee. Who are you?”

“I’m Wellington Rabbit. Do you live around here?”

“Well I have a bakery down there,” Burnee pointed back where they had come from. “But I don’t live there. I live with my wife, Flour, over in the wild warren.”

“Isn’t this the way to the wild warren?” asked Wellington with a sinking feeling. “The sign at the crossroads pointed this way.”

“Oh well now youngsters twist those signs around so often that even folks from here get confused sometimes.”

Wellington looked exhausted at the thought of climbing all the way up the twisty path for nothing. “I need to get to the wild warren,” he sighed.

“This path leads to upper warren. Going there myself,” said Burnee. You’re welcome to stride with me. There’s a short cut to the wild warren from the top.”

Wellington felt relief. He would not have to go back down the hill after all. “How much farther to the top?” he asked.

“Over the next foot bridge and around the bend,” replied Burnee. “Say, that would be a good verse for your walking song. What do you need from the wild warren?” he asked.

“I’m looking for some pollen,” answered Wellington.

“Well why didn’t you say so,” declared Burnee slapping his knee “Getting wild warren pollen is easy if you are a burrbear.”

“It is?” Wellington clapped his paws together, not quite sure what a burrbear was, but not really caring.

“Indeed, burrbears trade with wild warren bees all the time. The bees love Burrbear Beer.”

“Sounds very special,” said Wellington cautiously.

“Oh it is! It is,” replied Burnee proudly. “Made with wild warren honey. Nothing quite like it.”

Wellington grinned, “You must be a burrbear.”

“Part burrbear,” returned Burnee. “My mum is a full burrbear, but my dad is a taiga bear.”

“A taiga bear? My best friend is a taiga bear!” exclaimed Wellington.

“You don’t say.” The two travelers had started their journey again and chatted as they moved along.

“Yes, my friend is Georg with no e, although he actually got his e back, but he has not made time to reattach it yet.”

“Do you mean Georg, the magician?”

Wellington turned around excitedly and started walking backwards looking Burnee directly in the face, “Yes! Do you know Georg?”

“I don’t, but I am very anxious to see his magic sometime. Flour saw the first ever Georg, the Magic Bear performance before we were married when she was in art school in the low country. She still talks about how good it was.”

“Georg is very talented. He would be with me on this quest and you, and Flour too, could meet him, but he is in the taiga trying to get some taiga pollen while I search here for wild warren pollen.”

“Meeting Mr. Georg would be an honor. Maybe another time?” asked Burnee.

“For sure,” said Wellington. “So how can I get some pollen?”

“Hmmm...since you’re not a burrear, I need to think on this a moment.” said Burnee. “I would be glad to help you but I simply must get a wedding cake delivered this afternoon. I am gathering upper warren flowers to decorate it with. Flour is putting on the finishing icing touches and is anxious for the flowers.”

“That’s okay,” said Wellington.

“I may have it,” Burnee clapped his paws together. “If you dress like a burrear it should fool the bees long enough for you to work a trade,” went on Burnee. Wellington looked sideways at the burrear and waited patiently for the next piece of information. “You are going to need a burrear beanie, suspenders and pants.” Wellington felt the top of his head and ran his paws on down his long ears which were not burrear like at all. Burnee noticed. “Oh, you don’t need to look like a burrear, just dress like one.”

“Oh,” said Wellington.

Burnee rubbed his chin, “I’d lend you my outfit but I don’t have it with me,” he pondered some more. “Bertie Bear might have a spare or her son, Bottie. She has a goat farm near here.

“I see,” said Wellington.

“If you explain the situation to her I am sure Bertie will help you. You can definitely say I sent you. See that footpath coming up on the right? The one that goes off through the brushes?” Wellington nodded. “Just follow it until you pop out onto Bertie’s farmlands. You’ll see her house.”

At the path, the two new friends parted ways, Wellington stooping down to clear the low branches. Before he ducked under the first branch, he turned to Burnee, “Thanks for your help. I’ll bring Georg over soon.”

Burnee waved a hearty goodbye, “Good luck!”

Shortly thereafter Wellington cleared the trees and brush and found himself on a dusty dogtrot sort of lane. Dragonflies flitted around his head. Bees buzzed among the flowers, but none came close to Wellington. “Probably don’t have any wild warren pollen anyway,”

rationalized Wellington. Soon he found himself approaching a wooden house painted dandelion yellow with darker sunflower yellow trim.

“Hey there sonny, what can I do yer for?” a spry voice rang out.

Wellington took his haversack off his back and set it down on the ground. He rubbed the back of his neck that was getting a little sunburned and said, “Burnee Bear sent me. He said you could help me with a burrbear outfit. I need one to get some wild warren pollen.”

“Wild warren pollen,” spoke the lady. “Now there’s something tricky to come by.”

Wellington looked dejected, Burnee had not mentioned tricky, “Tricky?”

“It’s pretty tricky fooling those wild warren bees into thinking you’re a burrbear. They don’t deal with anyone but burrbears. Husband’s a burrbear. Runs the best butcher shop in the upper warren. Yessir you want some fine ratbit chops, you go to Bork the butcher.” Wellington looked horrified.

Bertie noted the look on his face. “You got a problem with that sonny?”

“Umm, rabbit chops?” stuttered Wellington nervously.

“Yup, ratbit chops. Say you sorta look like a ratbit, but not that much. That worrying you? You think you’re headed for my stew pot?” She laughed a huge roaring laugh. “Now don’t that beat all? Ratbits are scrawny things that scamper around the warren making trouble for everyone. Only good ratbit is a stewed ratbit.”

“But I’m a rabbit,” said Wellington proudly. “And I certainly do not envision myself in your stew pot.”

“You’re not the kind of ratbit my husband deals with,” said Bertie trying to contain her laughter. “Those critters got no fur to speak of. They’re wiry with long skinny tails and beady eyes, like yours. Yeah you got the same sort of eyes, and whiskers,” she peered at Wellington closely, “but you’re no ratbit, too furry, tail’s wrong.”

Wellington looked relieved. Whatever she called them, it sounded like Bertie was talking about rats. And he agreed that they were nothing but a nuisance.

“So you’re looking for wild warren pollen,” Bertie returned to Wellington’s quest. “Problem is I’m not a burrbear so they won’t have anything to do with me. Husband’s way too busy to go traipsing after pollen, but I sure could use some. It comforts my bursitis. Can’t rightly git me own pollen seein’s I never bothered getting a burrbear outfit myself. Them suspenders rub on my shoulders all wrong.”

Wellington looked at the ground. He was never going to get any wild warren pollen today.



Chapter 4

Burrbears

“Tell you what,” went on Bertie. “I’ll lend you my son Bottie’s outfit if you bring me some pollen. Bottie’s off at camp this week. Had to leave his burrbear things at home. Not allowed to take non-regulation outfits with him, ya see.”

Wellington smiled a little smile, maybe his luck was changing. “Of course, Miss Bertie.”

Bertie went into the house and came back with a beanie, a pair of suspenders and pants. “Here ye go. Trot on over to that outhouse and gear up.”

Wellington took the things and headed for the outhouse. It was very old and smelly inside. He would be quick. The pants were pretty loose. He was glad for the suspenders, and glad that they had adjustments. He put his clothes into his haversack and stepped out into the sunlight.

“My goodness, I’d think you weres a burrbear anyday. Put that beanie on, boy,” Bertie sure did like ordering folks around Wellington thought. He plopped the beanie atop his head but it fell off. He tried again. And again it fell off. “It’s them ears, sonny. Want to cut them?” Wellington looked at her in horror.

“No ma’am,” he stammered.

“Just thought I’d ask,” said Bertie. “Sure would make that beanie fit better.”

Wellington just stood there, beanie in hand.

“Well, gotta get to milking,” said Bertie, reaching for a pail and stool. “Here goat. Come on now,” she began calling her goats that came bleating toward her from all parts of the farm. Soon eleven goats were gathered around her sniffing Wellington and bleating. They tried to nibble Wellington, or rather Bottie’s pants. Wellington shooed them away, but they kept coming back.

“Goat’ll eat anything,” laughed Bertie. “You better hop on that bale of hay over there. They’ll never give you any peace. They know better than bother me. I’ll knock’em into next week.”

Wellington hopped onto the bale of hay unsure of what to do next. Bertie seemed to have lost interest in him. He knew that without the beanie, he was no burrbear in disguise. And if the beanie would not stay on his head then his whole outfit was no good.

Bertie commenced milking, singing a ditty to her beloved goats. The ones that weren’t being milked milled about occasionally wandering over to Wellington’s bale and bleating at him. He had sat down. He did not want to interrupt Bertie while she was milking. He could not think of what else to do besides wait for her to finish. Patience, his mum had always said, would reward him. He sure could use some reward about now.

Shortly Bertie finished milking the last goat and stood up. “Git on ye varmints,” she gently shoved the closest one toward the fields. It took a step and stopped. “Go on now,” she said. “I’ll be feeding you later.” The goats apparently understood her because they all trotted into

the fields and dispersed in different directions. “Reckon you think I forgot about ye,” she spoke to Wellington who had dozed off, beanie in hand.

“Oh no ma’am,” he said just a bit loudly. He hopped off the bale and approached Bertie. “Would you like me to tote that pail of milk into the house for you?”

“You’re a mighty patient fellow,” she said, ignoring his question. “Like that in a person. Shows good judgment. Tell you what, take a jug full of this goat’s milk to Bryte over in the dell and tell him I said to lend you his beanie. He’s got a big head. It’ll fit you fine. He’s always begging for my goat’s milk. Says it’s the best in the upper warren. He’ll be happy enough to trade.”

Wellington could only breath relief, “Yes ma’am,” came out with his sigh.

Bertie went into the house and came back with a jug that she filled with the warm milk. She wiped off the outside of the jug, stopped it with a cork and then wrapped it in a soft cloth she had in her pocket. “Here ye go, laddie. Now mind don’t drop the jug. Then ye’d have naught but spilt milk,” she slapped her side with a chuckle.

Wellington handed her the too small beanie and then tucked the jug of milk into his haversack. “Thank you for your kindness. I’ll be back with the pollen.”

He took off in the direction Bertie had indicated he should go and soon reached the edge of the meadow. He was supposed to follow a different path through the woods and at the very bottom of a deep slope, he would find Bryte’s log cabin.

“Sounds easy enough,” mused Wellington. He skipped along briskly anxious to finish his quest. It seemed like he always had yet one more step to take before he could reach his goal. And just when he finished that step another one popped up. But he was making a lot of new friends. And he liked making new friends, so that part was good. As he hurried along, Wellington whistled an engaging song, one by that Cutie group that Webby was always listening to, “Not very upbeat lyrics,” Wellington mused, “but the tempo’s got a good pace to it.” He reached a sharp down sloop that he figured was the one leading to Bryte’s home. He began his descent cautiously. There were a lot of tree roots growing into the path and loose rubble was scattered everywhere. As careful as he was, suddenly Wellington’s foot caught on a root and he felt himself tumbling forward. “Oh no,” he cried out trying to stop the tumble with his paws. There was the milk, and he still had on the borrowed burrbear pants. So many things to worry about all at once. Wellington didn’t care a hoot about himself he just had to save that milk and keep the pants from getting torn. Gravity was against him. The weight of the jug in his haversack pulled Wellington over and over. “Help!” he cried out just before his head hit a rock and he lost consciousness. Everything was black as black could be.

“Mighty bad bump you got there,” Wellington blinked trying to lift himself out of the black. He tried to figure out where the strange voice was coming from. The last thing he recalled was tumbling over and over, down and down.

“The milk,” he cried, sitting up quickly. He began to see stars, “Oh my head,” he sank just as quickly back onto his elbows. Or that is he tried to. “Ouch,” he cried out sitting back up as the weight of his body pressed down on his arms, the right one in particular. Wellington wondered if he had broken it.

“You took a nasty spill, laddie, take it easy,” the strange voice urged. “But nothing is broken. I checked you over pretty carefully.”

“Spill is exactly what I am afraid of,” moaned Wellington. “Where is my haversack?”

“Your what?” asked the kindly voice.

Wellington blinked again and stared in the direction of the voice, “My haversack. I had it on my back.”

“If you mean that cloth thing that was hanging off of your arm, I left it on the porch. Soaked to the bone it was.”

“Soaked?” Wellington’s heart sank. “This is awful,” he looked around his surroundings, “Where am I? Are you Bryte Bear?”

“The one and the same Bryte Bear at your service, the best candle stick maker in the wild and upper warren. I was in my smithy making a set of special candlesticks for the Lord Mayor when I heard you call out. Who might ye be anyway? And how did you end up in my woods? Do I know you?”

Wellington introduced himself and told Bryte of his quest and Bertie’s idea.

“That Bertie, always looking out for me,” chuckled Bryte. “Fresh goat’s milk you say? Maybe all is not lost.” He went to the porch returning with the still dripping haversack that he hastily put into his sink. He began pulling things out of the haversack one by one. Wellington came over to help. His arm still hurt even if it wasn’t broken.

Bryte reached the wrapped up jug. He pulled it from the sack and began unwrapping it. “Look, there is only a big crack along the side,” said Wellington as Bryte finished unwinding the wet cloth.

“Quite so,” Bryte reached for a glass in the cabinet. He carefully poured the liquid from the jug into the glass. “What do you know,” he exclaimed as he finished pouring. “One full glass of fresh goat’s milk. Just the thing to trade for a burrbear beanie. Wouldn’t you say?” he winked at Wellington as he downed the milk. “Ah, just the ticket for this fine day.”

“For sure!” cried Wellington greatly relieved. Everything looked so much brighter. Even his arm felt better. “You look very much like a burrbear though, Mr. Bryte. How is it that you need a beanie?”

“Well now, I am almost full burrbear. But my grandmammy on my mother’s side fell real hard for a pole R bear and so my blood’s just a tiny bit tainted. So that makes us purrbears.”

“You mean like a cat?” asked Wellington.

“No,” said Bryte, “like almost burr but a tiny bite polar, and so we be purr.”

“I see,” said Wellington.

“Not too much here,” misunderstood Bryte. “Fortunately we don’t have but a bit of polar in our line so we don’t really wish for the frozen land at all.” Bryte opened the chest where he kept his burrbear outfit “Hmmm,” said Bryte digging around a bit. “Where could that beanie be?” He looked up at Wellington, “it’s not in here.”



Chapter 5

An Enchanted Bean

“Are you sure?” asked Wellington wondering how Bryte could be so sure without really looking through the chest.

“I always keep it in this chest, right on top,” said Bryte. But to humor Wellington he took everything out of the chest, including his burrbear trousers and suspenders. “It’s not with the rest of my outfit. Guess I cannot help you after all.”

Wellington did not want to hear what Bryte was saying.

“Sorry old chap,” repeated Bryte. “Misplaced beanie could be anywhere. Got work to do. Love to help you but I’ve been away from the shop too long already, the Lord Mayor is anxious for his candlesticks.”

Wellington looked sad, “I really need a beanie.”

Bryte seemed not to hear Wellington, “Still I think I’ll have a bite to eat before I get back to work. Would you care to join me?”

Wellington was really hungry. It had been a long day with no end in sight. “That would be wonderful, Mr. Bryte.”

“Just Bryte will do, sonny. Let’s to making some sandwiches,” Bryte moved toward the kitchen area of the cabin. He unwrapped a loaf of bread. “Here, slice this up,” he said, handing it to Wellington. “You’ll find a knife over there,” he waved his hand in the direction of a cutting board.

Bryte found the remains of a ratbit meatloaf in the icebox and cut off several slices. He removed a condiment pot from a lower shelf in the icebox and handed it to Wellington, “Here, sonny, spread some of my special sauce on those bread slices.”

Wellington’s mouth began to water. The sauce smelled divine. It had a mild whiff of dill to it. He loved dill. Bryte handed him the plate with the ratbit slices. Wellington put a slice on each piece of bread and topped that with another dab of sauce. He much preferred an open-faced sandwich. Less carbs that way.

Bryte filled two tall glasses with water from his sink hand pump and set them on the table. He lit a pretty yellow candle snuggled in a squatty candlestick that sat center table. “Made this candlestick when I was just starting out,” he said. “Looks pretty ordinary now, but I was sure proud when I finished it. Took fourth prize at the county fair too,” he beamed.

“It’s very nice,” said Wellington warming his paws a bit over the flickering flame.

The hungry guys sat down and dug right into their meal. “Like this topless sandwich idea, Wellington,” remarked Bryte between chews. “Too much bread can really pack on the pounds fast. You’re a right smart lad.”

Wellington grinned. The food was definitely helping his mood and his arm hardly hurt anymore. Maybe the day would turn out all right after all. “Thanks.”

Refreshed, the two friends quickly tidied up the kitchen, leaving the washed plates and glasses to air dry in the drainer. “Here, Wellington,” said Bryte. “Have a Burrbear Bryte, a juicier

apple would be hard to find. My dad developed the strain and named it after me. Sure does make up into a fine cider. Lots of folks prefer it to Burrbear Beer.”

Wellington bit into the apple. Bryte was right. It was really good. “Ummmm,” he said apple juices dribbling down his chin. “A more perfect apple would be hard to find.”

“Yup,” said Bryte, sinking his bear teeth into his own Burrbear Bryte. “Say there, sonny, talking bout these apples just set me to thinking.” He reached up onto a shelf and pulled down a silver bowl. “Forgot all about this,” he said. “Enchanted bean. Got it from a trader while back. Not sure what it does exactly. But you need a beanie. Maybe a bean could help.”

Wellington looked at the bean Bryte had retrieved from the bowl. He didn’t want to say so, but he did not think that it looked so special. He sighed to himself. This adventure was taking on more legs than a centipede He began to wonder if he would ever get any wild warren bee pollen.

Wellington turned the bean over and over in his paw. It just looked pretty ordinary to him. “How would you use it?” he asked Bryte.

Bryte pondered the question. “I think I would stick it in the ground or, say how about this?” he stopped.

“Yes?” begged Wellington.

“Well, what if you put it in a glass of water, sort of a hydroponic environment.”

“I like that idea!” Wellington looked around for a glass.

“Here use this,” Bryte handed Wellington a clear glass he had pulled from a cabinet and filled with pump water.

“Now what?” wondered Wellington. He looked at the bean floating in the water. It looked very beanish. It just floated around and around.

Bryte peered at the floating bean, “Not doing much is it?” he said finally. “Must be hexed or something.”

“You did say it was enchanted,” reminded Wellington. “Perhaps I should plant it in the ground like you suggested, just like a regular bean.”

“Probably a good thought,” said Bryte. “Take it on out into the meadow where the sun is strong,” he suggested. “Meanwhile it’s back to work for me.”

Wellington removed the bean from the glass and wrapped it in a soft cloth he found in his haversack. He slung his haversack over his shoulder and the two friends stepped onto the porch. “Good meadow spot might be over yonder,” suggested Bryte pointing to a flower filled meadow beyond his work shed.

“Thank you for all your help,” returned Wellington shaking hands with the bear.

Bryte moved toward his shop. “Good luck then,” he called out, waving his purrbear paw.

Wellington stepped toward the flowery meadow, already he could smell springtime grasses and soft scents on the breeze. In just a few strides, he was at the edge of the meadow. A few more strides brought him near the middle. It was a good meadow. Grasshoppers hopped from leaf to leaf of the tall grasses. Birds chirped in the nearby trees. Even a mourning dove could be heard cooing softly in a copse of trees nearby.

Wellington stooped down and dug out a small hole with his paw. He unwrapped the damp bean that he had been carrying in his other paw, stuck it into the earth and covered it up.

He knew how long it took regular beans to grow. Even if this bean was really enchanted, how could it grow fast enough to help him today? He was out of time, he would have to go home empty handed. Maybe Georg had found a mother lode of taiga pollen, enough to pay Buzzy his fee.

Wellington looked at the ground, it seemed to be moving a bit. As his eyes stared at the spot where he had placed the bean, he saw a few leaves poke up out of the earth. And then a few more, but they did not exactly sprout upward and they did not exactly look like leaves. They began to curve down toward the ground all emerging from a central spot. They were all colors. Wellington blinked. It really looked like, well very much like, no exactly like. Oh zounds, it was! The bean had sprouted a beanie. Wellington grinned a huge grin. He touched the beanie. It was soft and shimmery. It had a little whirly gig on top that was red and already spinning in the gentle breeze.

Wellington pulled the beanie from the stalk and tried it on. It fit perfectly. “Yippee!” he shouted. “Hey bees, where are you?” Almost at his request, a bee landed on his arm.

“Bitz, here. What can I do for you?” buzzed a voice.

“Hi there,” laughed Wellington so happy to have finally reached one of his many goals. “I need some wild warren pollen.”

“No problem,” buzzed the bee. “But it’s all at our annual Bee Fair right now. So you’ll have to go there to get what you want.”

“Where’s the fair?” wondered Wellington.

“Willis Warren,” replied the helpful bee.

Wellington stared at Bitz, not wanting to believe what he was hearing. “Willis Warren?” he repeated.

“Yes, really nice place down in the valley.” Bitz pointed the way with one of his arms.

“Oh, I know it well,” sighed Wellington, wondering exactly how many legs a centipede really did have. He took a deep breath, trying not to think about his wasted morning too much. Then he squared his shoulders and said with a bright smile, “I’d best be getting home.”



Chapter 6

Homeward Bound

Wellington watched Bitz as he rose in the air buzzing, "See you in the warren!"

"Wait," called Wellington reaching up to stop the friendly bee. "These burrbear clothes are borrowed save the beanie. I need to return them. How will anyone talk to me?"

Bitz stopped his ascent and began fluttering his wings at a pace to keep himself stationary. "That there is an enchanted beanie, right?"

Wellington nodded yes.

"No problem then. You can skip the rest of the outfit when you have an enchanted beanie. Just plop it on your head and we will recognize you as a friend." His wings were getting tired, "Gotta go," he rose out of sight before Wellington could ask one more question.

"Goodbye and thanks," Wellington called to the speck high in the air. He decided to take a moment to thank Bryte. Without his help and his magic bean, Wellington would really be in a fix. He hopped back across the meadow and into Bryte's workshop. "Your bean really worked well, Bryte."

"Glad I could help, laddie," Bryte's voice was friendly but he did not look up from his work. "Did you get your pollen?"

"No, but I know where it is and must be getting there. I just wanted to thank you for your help."

"Glad to oblige," Bryte turned the candlestick he was working on over in his paws. He held it up to the light.

"A true work of art," declared Wellington. "I will be back to talk to you about making some for me."

"Ah good plan, sonny. I'll start working on a design or two." He put down the candlestick and looked at Wellington noticing the beanie for the first time. "That come from my bean?"

"Yes," said Wellington. "And since it came from a magic bean, I do not need the rest of the outfit." Something then occurred to Wellington. "Actually this beanie is yours since the bean belonged to you. But do you mind if I borrow it until my quest is finished?"

"It's your beanie, Wellington. You figured out how to use the bean."

Wellington could not believe Bryte's generosity. "I will take good care of it and anytime you need it just let me know."

"Me own will turn up," said Bryte. "But thank ye jist the same." The bears shook paws. Wellington shoved out the door as Bryte returned to his job.

Wellington began the climb to Bertie's. He needed to return the burrbear clothes he had borrowed. Going up the hill was much easier since he was in control of the situation and not tumbling like a lost marble. Still it was a hard climb and Wellington was glad for all the walking he did to keep himself in shape.

Bertie was no where to be seen, neither were any of her goats. "Hmmm," mused Wellington. "If I leave these pants and suspenders around anywhere the goats might eat them."

But I need to get on to Willis Warren.” He pondered his options. He could leave them in the outhouse, but it might be awhile before Bertie discovered them. He did not have anything to write a note with. He really did not want to go into Bertie’s cottage when she was not home. “Wait,” said Wellington to himself. “Pants with suspenders! I’ll just hang them from a branch high enough that the goats cannot reach up to nibble and in plain sight so that Bertie will spot them.”

He scooted into the outhouse and swiftly changed. His pants were a little damp but from the milk incident, but he knew they would dry off in the sun quickly.

Back outside, he shook the borrowed pants out and looked around for a suitable branch to hang them from. He found one on a nice looking tree near the house. He rolled a bale of hay close to the branch and stepped up onto it. He fastened the straps of the suspenders around the branch and flipped the legs of the trousers up over the branch.

“Nope,” he declared, “wind might blow those legs down.” Instead he tucked each leg up inside itself so that the pants became really short with no tasty hems hanging down for the goats to sample. “There,” he hopped off the hay bale and rolled it back where he had found it. He inspected his ingenious plan brought to fruition. “Excellent.” He gave the tree a shake, the pants stayed right in place only swaying a bit. He wished he had some paper and a pencil to write Bertie a note but his haversack somehow did not have these common items which he usually did carry with him. “Nevermind, I’ll be back with the wild warren pollen I owe Bertie and can thank her then.”

He set off for the main trail and soon found himself humming along back down the path he had jogged along earlier in the day. He had put his beanie in the haversack. He did not mind if it got a bit damp.

It was an uneventful trip to the warren and actually Wellington made good time too only stopping once to drink from a cool spring close by the road and to use the facility twice. One spot he located was well secluded, the other time he felt the urge he could only find a rocky slope and feared someone would come along at a most inopportune time but no one did thankfully.

“I’m back,” he shouted popping into the front door, shedding his gear before heading to the kitchen. “Anyone around?” the house was quiet. “Webby must be still practicing. I certainly hope he took a break while I was gone.” He nibbled on a carrot from the fridge. He noticed that the roast was still there. “Bethleann must not be back either. Thought I was gone longer than that.” It was not so late but his trip had taken a few hours at best. Not having a watch with him, he was then unsure of the time. He looked at the clock. It was getting on toward dinner time. He had left around midday. “And I guess Georg is still in the taiga. Maybe a short nap before dinner then.” He pulled out the roast and set it on low simmer knowing it would be okay unattended at that temperature for a little while.

He climbed the stairs to a spare room. “Maybe we should just move in since we spend so much time here anyway,” he muttered as he climbed into bed. “But then we might get in Bethleann’s way. She values her quiet moments like we all do.” He was babbling, a sure sign that he was tired. He pulled up the covers and closed his eyes. “Ah, perfect, a nice nap after a hard morning.” He was asleep just like that.

“Wellington, Wellington, where are you?” a high voice brought Wellington out of his delicious nap. It was Webby.

Wellington struggled to sit up, still very much in his nap mode. “Up here, Webby.”

Webby bounded up the stairs and into the room. “I finally got it!”

“Got what?”

“The Hoppity Hop Hop!”

“Really,” Wellington’s eyes popped wide open. “That is a very advanced step.”

“I know. I have practiced and practiced. I wanted to get it right before I even told you I was trying to master it,” Webby jumped up and down with glee. “We’re going to win the trophy. We’re going to win the trophy.” Wellington looked at Webby with a new respect. It had taken him years to perfect the move more commonly known as the H3. It was one where the jumper hopped and twisted in such a manner as to be able to snatch up his stone before landing thus being able to hop in that very box. Provided there were no other stones in the box of course. The advantage was points. The team with the most points won the match. A panel of judges scored the teams, which were always composed of two players, on the elements of style, execution, difficulty of the jump, height attained, centering in the space, and landing. During the preliminaries only one footed hopping was permitted but as the grids got larger the competition went into what was called secondaries and here a two footed landing was allowed. Still a two footer did not boost the team score by much and so all rabbits worked toward their secondary level one footed landings of which the most difficult and thus worth the most points was the Hoppity Hop Hop.

“Well,” grinned Wellington hopping up, “I do believe that I must see this Hoppity Hop Hop right this very minute.”



Chapter 7

Missed Adventures

“Webby, I think you have just the ticket to put us over the top,” yelled Wellington allowing himself a small jump for joy. “Just a few more practice hops now and then come on in for dinner,” he called over his shoulder as he left the glen whistling a hoppy tune. “We might just win that championship this year.” Wellington stopped at the kitchen garden to pull a few greens for a fresh salad. To this he added some radishes, spring onions and early carrots. He loved this tiny garden nestled beside the kitchen door.

There was a bigger garden farther out tended by Mr Bunny, Uncle Wells’ long time gardener. Wellington loved Mr Bunny, he never seemed to be bothered by anything. He always got his work done and cheerfully took home his share of the garden bounty to distribute among his large family. After Uncle Wells had faded Wellington asked Mr Bunny to stay on and keep the garden just like he and Uncle Wells liked it. At first Mr Bunny was a little uncertain about working for anyone but Uncle Wells but he decided to give it a try and soon grew to love Wellington and his crew. He always made sure they had a full basket of whatever the garden was producing that week close by the back door for easy access. He knew they all traveled a lot and had precious little time to fetch from the garden. He even checked on the kitchen garden to be sure it was weeded and watered properly although nine times out of ten there was not much for him to do there. They were a responsible lot of youngsters and kept the house and grounds neatly tended.

Sometimes Wellington hired Mr Bunny’s wife Myrtle to tidy up a bit but that was only occasionally. This suited Myrtle very well. She liked the sugar bowl income but a full time job would have been too much what with raising the bunnykins and all. Come spring any of Wellington’s crew might spy Mr Bunny and his entire family of bunnykins planting and weeding and even trimming the grounds. They were a busy group. But the rest of the year it was mostly Mr Bunny on his own working the hoe or rake.

Wellington stepped into the kitchen and dropped his armload into the sink. He rinsed the greens and tore off the roots. Next he trimmed the carrots, onions and radishes. He cut these into bite size pieces and put the entire lot into a big wooden batter board that offered many different uses. The roast smelled divine. He removed the pan from the stove and closed the opening where the pot had been sitting. “Nothing like a good wood cook stove,” Wellington declared. He had one just like it in his cottage. Some rabbits were switching to the newer gas stoves but Wellington preferred the flavor of a meal cooked on a genuine wood stove. He transferred the roast from the cooker to a blue willow platter and spread the small potatoes that had been cooking with the roast in its juices around the edges of the platter. “There!”

“Looks like I got back just in time,” boomed Georg coming in from the front of the house. “How was your trip?”

“Interesting.”

“Did you get the pollen?”

“Not exactly. You?”

“Not exactly.”

“What does that mean?”

“I think I hit a record low time!” Webby bounded into the doorway. He scurried to the sink to wash up. Georg looked at him and then at Wellington with a what’s up with him look on his face.

“Webby has managed to perfect the Hoppity Hop Hop,” offered Wellington. “He is quite the hopscotch athlete. It took me years to get that one even in a passable manner. What with Webby’s new skill we might just take the championship this year.”

“Do you think so, Wellington?” asked Webby. The three sat down to eat. Webby dug into his salad with relish.

“I do,” said Wellington. “If you keep your focus and continue to perform the H3 as you did today we stand a good chance.” He passed the roast after putting a goodly selection on his plate.

“But the competition is in two days!” shrieked Webby.

“The Double U’s are ready,” soothed Wellington referring to their team name. He lifted a loaded fork to his mouth. Georg ate in rapt silence, he was starving and tired. He listened to the game plans with awe. He was not so good at hopscotch. Good enough, but not championship material.

“Bethleann must have eaten with Precisely,” sighed Wellington a bit later, pushing back his chair. “Still let’s fix a plate for her just in case she’s hungry when she gets home.”

“I’ll do that,” said Webby and he began making a fine looking supper plate. He covered it with a clean cloth and slipped it into the icebox. “If Bethleann does not need this it will be a good lunch for me, or someone else,” he added as an afterthought. “I’m sooo tired. I think I’ll take a nice long bath and go to bed. I want to get up early and practice all day tomorrow.”

“Well, for goodness sake, don’t wear yourself out,” huffed Wellington.

Webby laughed, “Sometimes, you worry too much Wellington.” He did a practice hop out the door.

“I’m soon to follow you,” called Georg after the young bunny who was already on the stairs. “I’m too tired to go home tonight.”

“I’ll second that,” said Wellington. “Good thing Bethleann has plenty of guest rooms.” He put the kettle on for a night cap of tea and began clearing the table. “Tell me about your pollen adventure.”

“I found Gloria easy enough and she had time to go on the search with me. She is personal friends with the Queen so we got right in to see her and what do you suppose we learned?”

“Beats me.”

“She did not have any pollen to spare. None!”

Wellington waited for the rest of the story.

“Seems like somebody named Will was worn out and they sent it to him. He must really be bad off to need all of their pollen.”

“Odd,” mused Wellington. “But I have an opportunity to get what we need,” and he gave Georg the short version of his adventure. As he finished he hopped to the foyer to get the magic beanie to show to Georg.

“That ought to work,” said Georg eyeing the fine looking beanie, “but I thought that Buzzy bee was coming back here tomorrow. “What if he gets here before you get the pollen?”

“I plan to get up earlier than Webby and go pollen searching, so I will be ready for Buzzy. Want to come along?”

“I do,” said Georg. The two finished up their tea and tidied up. They left a note for Bethleann so she would not be surprised to find three guests in her house. Before they left the kitchen they banked the stove fire and put out all but one light.

“I’m beat,” yawned Wellington, “that Bertie takes the cake and my tumble down the hill has made me a bit sore.’

“You bathe up first,” suggested Georg. “I’ll read a travel journal.”

“Thanks,” said Wellington and hopped up the stairs. “I’ll be tapping on your door before daylight. I want to get to the high meadow by sunup.”

“Okay,” said Georg. “Night then.”

“Night,” Wellington hobbled up the stairs. He had all but forgotten his tumble until he told the story and now every bone in his body was talking about it too.



Chapter 8 Bee Fair

Next morning bright and early, well even before bright since it was still dark, Wellington shook himself awake. “Seems like I just fell asleep,” he muttered to himself. Nevertheless he struggled out of his warm bed and got dressed. He brushed his teeth and tapped on Georg’s door.

“Go way,” growled the bear.

“Wake up Georg,” urged Wellington, “I need you to come with me.”

“Why?”

“Because I just do. Please.”

“Okay, okay keep your britches on. I’ll be right out.”

“Thanks, good buddy,” Wellington whispered. He went downstairs to tidy up his haversack while Georg got ready.

“Can we eat first?” asked Georg coming down the stairs.

“No time,” replied Wellington, “but the fair should have lots of good food.”

“I certainly hope so,” Georg tried to be cheerful about no breakfast but it was not easy.

They left a note saying they had an errand to run, it was easier than trying to explain the whole complicated thing, and that they would be back shortly. They slipped out of the front door closing it quietly behind them.

“Now where?” asked Georg squinting in the dark.

“Like I said last night, I am thinking that the high meadow might be a good place to start,” said Wellington. “Since I forgot to ask Bitz where in Willis Warren the fair is being held.”

“Daft!” shouted Georg. “That’s what that queen was talking about. Her accent was so thick I thought she was saying Will is worn in, whatever that means. She was actually saying Willis Warren. This fair must be some deal.”

“It must be.”

The two swiftly reached the high meadow by which time Georg’s stomach was in high gear. “I need food kinda bad,” he pouted.

“Let me put on the beanie and see what happens,” suggested Wellington pretending not to hear Georg’s plea for food. He had not worn the beanie because he wanted to attract the bees away from all those nosy town rabbits. He enjoyed his cozy community but he did not have time to do a lot of explaining right now.

“Hungry,” said Georg sitting down on a rock.

“Who are you?” a brightly colored bee buzzed up to Wellington and Georg.

Wellington explained that they lived down meadow below and asked where he could find the fair. He was not going to go into a lot of detail until he needed to.

The sentry bee looked Wellington and Georg over. “You seem like okay folk. What’s your business with a Bee Fair?”

Simultaneously Georg uttered, “Food,” and Wellington, “Pollen.”

“Well which is it?” asked the befuddled bee.

“Both,” the two added in unison.

The bee cocked his head to one side and waited. Wellington decided this was a need to explain time but being short on time he simply said he had money and needed pollen and his friend was looking for some special honey. Georg could only nod.

“Well, then the Bee Fair is the place for you two,” the now friendly bee stated. “Follow me.” With that he took off at a good speed which Wellington and Georg barely kept up with. Higher in the meadow he stopped and hovered near the boys. “Just down in that patch of flowering trees is where the fair is. Keep the beanie on and you will be able to see everything. Your friend too if he stays close.”

“Thanks,” Wellington waved to the bee as he headed back to his post. “Come on Georg.”

The boys scurried down into the tree line and as they passed through a whole new world opened up for them. There were booths of honey from all over the world, rows and rows. There was delightful music rising over the fair. There were bees doing juggling acts up and down the rows. Everyone was in some sort of costume. Everyone of course was a bee of some sort except for Wellington and Georg. But so many kinds and sizes of bees! Neither Georg nor Wellington had ever seen anything like it. There were booths of hand crafts and puzzles, bees loved mazes and puzzles. Georg bought a whole crock of exotic honey and began dipping into it immediately. Wellington had to laugh at his sticky paws and mug. “Wan som, Wellintn,” Georg stretched out his paw holding the crock.

“Maybe a little,” Wellington said dipping his own paw into the container. “Ummmm..this is good. Maybe a bit more.”

The boys found a place to sit and finish off the crock. “We are a mess,” declared Wellington. Being the less messy of the two, he went in search of water and soon returned with two flasks. He pulled a towel out of his haversack and they took turns cleaning off the sticky honey and satiating their thirst.

“Everything disappeared after you left Wellington,” said Georg, “but once I thought I could hear a bee reminding everybody about a story telling that’s going to start right about now. I love old stories. Let’s go.”

“Okay,” said Wellington. He loved old stories too.

They found the place and a good listening spot. Wellington had bought some honey candy when he got the flasks and he offered a piece to Georg. The two leaned back on Wellington’s haversack savoring their candy and soaking up the warmth of the morning sun. It was a perfect setting for a story telling.

“Hullo, ladies and gents,” started the story teller, a rather large bee with a portly belly. “And welcome guests,” this with a nod to Wellington and Georg. “I want to begin by telling you a few stories brought from across the years and waters by my ancestors. These first stories are not bee stories but human stories.

There was and is a place near the big ocean where lots of exciting things happened. My bee family has quite an extensive colony there and this has been so for many generations so I know these human stories to be factual and true.

During a time of war for the humans a small fishing village there called Hatteras was a fuel stop for human airplanes to reload,” the bee stopped talking and looked at his audience.

“Aren’t we bees glad we can do our own refueling whenever we like?” The audience laughed. “Anyway to continue. This village, Hatteras, was the only refueling stop between two major ports, one north and one south.

And so many of the planes refueling were seaplanes. That means they had wings to fly and pontoons for floating on water instead of wheels like most airplanes. Now these Hatteras folks were a sheltered folk and had never seen a pontoon plane. They knew about airplanes cause not too far away from there two other humans a bit back had figured out the mystery of flying.” Here he paused again. “We coulda told them how easy it is if they had just asked.” This brought another round of laughter from his audience.

“Anyway, one of them youngsters got up his nerve to chat with one of the pilots. That’s what they call the guys that drive the planes.” He grinned and winked at the audience. “Bees, we do have it easy! Imagine having to have someone else fly you around!” This story teller had his audience holding their sides with laughter. His story was great and the asides put the whole telling over the top.

“There was a famous human pilot flying the route with the regulars. Cause this was war time and everyone was helping out. This guy’s name was Charles Lindbergh. He was famous because he was the first human to fly a plane all the way across the big ocean from one big land mass the humans call a continent to another. Now that is something, even us bees would have a difficult time with that flight plan.

Anyhow, he’s helping out with the war effort and flying these pontoon planes up and down the coast to where they need to go. This Hatteras youngster decides to ask a question of Capt Lindbergh. He asks Capt Lindbergh if what he is flying is a plane or a boat. Capt Lindbergh replies that it is both. The kid puzzles this over. You can see him pondering how this machine can be both a plane and a boat.

He then asks Capt Lindbergh if he has bad engine trouble in the air what he would do. Capt Lindbergh looks that kid straight in the eye and replies that in that case he guess he would have to bail out.

The kid looks Capt Lindbergh back in the eye and says, ‘You mean they leak?’”

The audience went into gales of laughter. Wellington and Georg laughed until tears flowed. “This guy is great,” said Wellington between fits of laughter.

“I’ll say,” said Georg. “We need to meet him.”

“Got another one, just as good,” the bee settled his audience down. Wellington and Georg were hooked, all thoughts of pollen had set sail, right out of their heads.



Chapter 9

Preparations

The morning turned into afternoon and Georg even forgot to be hungry the stories were so entertaining. "I think I like the pontoon plane story best," he said as they stood for a good stretch after the last story had been told.

"I like the one about little Tommy Tate trying to convince everyone that he was really the first human to fly."

"Well he was. Those Wright brothers knew what they were doing to put the light weight kid on the glider first to test it out before adding a man's weight.," Georg had paid attention to the story. He knew how Wilbur and Orville had always convinced Tommy to take a ride before they tried the gliders out themselves.

"And all of that taking place on those outer banks of the big ocean. We might need to visit there sometime. You know I think Uncle Wells has a painting by an Everett Tate hanging at the house. Wonder if he is related to that Tommy."

"You mean that one that is signed ET? Bet so," returned Georg brushing off his fur. "Getting hungry. Time for dinner."

"Dinner? Ohmigosh, Georg what have we done?"

"Huh?"

"Not only did we forget to get some pollen, we completely forgot about Buzzy. He surely has come and gone by now." They looked around. Most of the booths were closed up for dinner time. This was a family Bee Fair. The boys could see families beginning to spread out blankets and comforters in the clearing beside the rows of booths. Apparently they all had dinner at the same time and Wellington just bet there was evening entertainment for the gathered crowd.

Georg looked around. "Nothing to be done now. We could come back tomorrow."

"Tomorrow is the competition. I have got to get home and be sure Webby is comfortable with everything."

"Gee, I'm sorry Wellington," Georg really did look sorry.

"It's not your fault, Georg."

"I completely lost my head in the story telling. Let's go. We'll think of something. We are the A team."

"That's right, we'll think of something." The guys left the clearing and brushed through the trees. Wellington took off his beanie and tucked it into his haversack. They made their way home in silence.

"There you are," called a cheery Bethleann from the backyard as they strolled around the outside of the house. They had not completely cleared themselves of honey and did not want to cause any more commotion inside than necessary. "Any luck?"

"We need to bath and then we'll bring you up to speed." Wellington dropped his haversack on the stoop. "Webby around?"

“He’s still in the dell practicing. Been there all day. I decided to stick around until you all got back in case he needed anything. Course I don’t really have any place to go. Precisely and I had a great visit. I ended up spending the night and got home just as Webby was finishing up his colossal breakfast. I think he ate enough to hold him all day long. I have not seen hide nor hair of that hare all day.”

“Is he okay?” asked Wellington.

“Oh sure, I could hear him yelling encouraging words to himself off and on. I thought best not to disrupt a good thing, besides I’m almost finished with this last book in that new series by Laurie McKay, *The Last Dragon Charmer*. It’s so hard to put down! I’m really going to miss these characters though. They really remind me a lot of us. Good friends but with very distinct personalities,” she grinned and winked. “If you know what I mean.”

Georg had ambled on up the stairs to de-honey his fur. Soon he came down looking fresh and refreshed. “I’ll rustle up some grub, while you bath, Wellington.”

“I’ll help you Georg” said Bethleann.

Wellington retrieved his haversack from the stoop and went to draw his bath.

Georg began telling Bethleann some of the shorter fun stories they had heard as they started dinner. They decided that it was a good night for macaroni and cheese. They knew it was a favorite of Wellington and Webby. The competition was in the morning at ten sharp.

“How do you think they will do?” asked Bethleann between stories. Georg told her about Webby and the Hoppity Hop Hop.

“They should win,” she screamed. “This is awesome.”

“It’s not over yet,” reminded Georg. “And we cannot use any magic even a sly slight to help them, remember.”

“I know,” Bethleann returned. “It’s tempting sometimes though. Especially when you see some of the shenanigans some folks pull. I would almost call it cheating but that sends negative energy. Not good according to my book, not even when it seems justified.”

Georg had procured a block of cheese from the icebox and begun chopping it into tiny chunks. Bethleann filled a pot with water and set it to boil. She put a smaller pan on the next burner and scooped in a dollop of butter and a bit of flour. These she cooked into a nice roué. Now she measured out some milk and slowly stirred it into the roué.

Georg handed Bethleann the bowl of chopped cheese and then put two scoops of macaroni into the now boiling water. He found four good looking apples and began cutting them into slices.

“Done practicing,” Webby announced coming into the kitchen.

“Great,” said Georg. “Go to the garden and bring us a nice picking of spinach for our salad.”

Webby took up a basket and left whistling, “Okay.”

Bethleann put the cheese chunks into the bubbling mix, stirring as she went. She seasoned with salt and pepper, just a bit.

“Opps, almost forgot the onion,” she got an onion from the pantry and chopped off a small section which she diced finely and added to the cheese mix.

“Macaroni’s ready,” Georg announced as he poured the hot macaroni and water into the colander and then back into the pan for mixing with the cheese sauce. Bethleann poured the smooth cheese sauce over the macaroni and mixed it all together thoroughly.

“Here you go,” said Georg offering her a glass baking dish. Bethleann scraped the cheesy macaroni into the dish which she then popped into the oven side of the cook stove for the final cooking.

“I’ll get some flowers from the yard for the table while the mac and cheese cooks,” said Bethleann.

“I’ll brew some tea,” said Georg.

“Here’s the salad,” piped in Webby.

“I’m starved,” chimed a cleaned up Wellington. They all looked at each other and grinned. Together, in the same place, at last. It would be a great dinner. Good food. Good company. And good stories.



Chapter 10

The Competition

The friends lingered over dinner finishing it off with fresh strawberries Mr Bunny had left by the stoop on his way home.

“That Mr Bunny sure does treat us well,” declared Bethleann.

“I’ll say,” said Webby. “He even taught me a new hopscotch move today.”

“What did you learn?” asked Wellington.

“It’s called the Bunny Hip Hop,” said Webby.

“The Bunny Hip Hop? I know the Bunny Hop but never heard of the Bunny Hip Hop,” Wellington wondered if he would be able to contribute to this team after all. Webby seemed to know all the new fancy hops and maneuvers.

“Well it’s sorta like the Bunny Hop only you thrust your lead hip forward as you take off, then as you rise in the air, you pump that foot back and forth a few times and finally, as your feet descend, you extend the leg as straight as you can. You are practically airborne and the distance you can travel is amazing.”

“Why have I never heard of this?” asked Wellington.

“Mr Bunny made it up and then was too embarrassed to try it in competition. He never could get any of his kids to try it either. He says I’m a natural.”

“Wow,” said Georg, “that will be perfect when the grid gets redrawn so huge like it does right there at the end of a stiff competition.”

“With your two new moves I’d say we are surely ready,” declared Wellington. “Let’s get a good night’s sleep and bring home the gold tomorrow.”

Swiftly the kitchen was tidied and everyone again bunked down in Bethleann’s house. “This is becoming a habit,” said Georg. “A nice habit.”

“I love having you all here,” said Bethleann as everyone climbed the stairs to bed. “You could just move in.”

“We practically have,” answered Wellington. They all laughed.

Soon the house was quiet with only the gentle sounds of slumber. But then a huge racket woke them all up.

“I’m lost. I’m lost,” cried a frantic Webby from his bedroom.

“Whoa,” called out Wellington rushing to his side, Bethleann and Georg close behind.

“I cannot remember any of my hops. I, I, I...”

“He’s having a panic attack,” said Wellington. “Georg, heat up some warm milk for the poor laddie. It’s going to be okay, Webby. You will remember everything tomorrow. You’ll see.”

Bethleann rubbed his back. “You and Wellington are the best team ever.”

Soon Georg returned with the milk and some vanilla pudding. Webby drank his milk and yawned, he nibbled at the pudding nodding off before he had half finished. “Guess, I’m kinda tired,” he rubbed his eyes.

“Sleep now, the alarm will go off soon.” said Wellington. The three tiptoed out of his room. They looked at each other and shook their heads. “That rabbit is a handful.”

“Good thing we love him,” giggled Bethleann. Georg nodded his head bobbing too. Next morning Bethleann had a scrumptious breakfast ready when the guys awoke.

“What got into you?” asked a grateful Wellington.

“Got to be sure my winning team gets off to a good start,” Bethleann playfully swung a towel in his direction. “You look nice.” She was referring to Wellington’s seldom seen hop scotch uniform.

“Smells delish,” Webby proudly marched into the room twisting this way and that to show off his new uniform. “You look awesome, Wellington.” The two stood side by side for Georg and Bethleann to review.

“You both look great,” said Georg grabbing up a hot biscuit. He chose to put butter and jam on it rather than his usual honey. He had enough honey yesterday to last him a long while. “The Two Double U’s should have no trouble bringing home the trophy.”

Eggs, biscuits, fresh fruit and juice speedily disappeared into four famished stomachs. A hasty tidy of the worst part of the kitchen, saving the rest for later, and the crew was off to the races.

There was already a crowd gathering including lots of foreigners, as the locals liked to call visitors, even those for the next village. Rabbits tended to be rather clannish about their territory, albeit friendly enough.

The announcer was relating that fourteen teams were in today’s competition, five local and the rest from nearby villages. “Ohmygoodness,” breathed in Webby. “That team from Down in the Dell is here. I thought they were out for the season. Didn’t one of them have a hunting wound?”

“Apparently not that bad,” said Georg. “Are they the ones to beat?”

“Well they definitely are tough,” Wellington echoed Webby’s dismay. “We need to go warm up, Webby.”

“Right.”

“Good luck,” Bethleann and Georg went to find a seat in the stands. They blended very well with all the out of village visitors. Preliminaries began. Wellington and Webby swiftly passed. All the teams did. But as the grid was erased and drawn larger for each subsequent round teams began to fall by the wayside. Soon there were only four teams left: Down in the Dell, Bunnies Go Lightly, Lucky Hairs and The Two Double U’s.

“I’m nervous,” Bethleann clutched at Georg’s fur.

“Watch the coat,” cautioned Georg. He was nervous too.

The Two Double U’s came through only by Webby using the Hoppity Hop Hop at a critical moment. The Lucky Hares were not so lucky. Now there were three. The grid was getting huge. The Double U’s almost muffed a few hops but they garnished enough points with fancy jumps to stay in. Down in the Dell played it safe electing to go with solid non fancy jumps. Bunnies Go Lightly slipped on the first go and that was that for them. It was down to Down in the Dell and The Two Double U’s. Handily both teams cleared the next three rounds.

The announcer called a short recess while the grid was redrawn yet again. It was getting harder and harder to accommodate the highly skilled teams. Usually by this time the competition was over, but so far the scores continued to be tied.

Down in the Dell and The Two Double U's were really good! The crowd began picking favorites. The match resumed. Down in the Dell drew first hop. The first DID member did well and made some points for his team. Now it was The Two Double U's turn. Webby started and did well until his last jump. He decided they needed the points and so he tried the Bunny Hip Hop. He touched the line on his first go. He tried again and again touched the line. He did not want to chance it, and so he did a regular hop and made it, even though the points were few. Still his other hops were high point ones. Now DID's second rabbit went. She was very small and could really soar. She scored quite well. The DID's were ahead. Wellington was up. He moved through the grid with grace. His jumps were right on target. Yet with all his skill the DID's were still in the lead. Wellington had one more jump to go. He took a deep breath, it was now or never. He jumped and literally sailed through the air his lead foot pumping furiously before landing perfectly. He brought down his other foot and raised his arms in the air. The hushed crowd roared. Wellington had executed a stunning Bunny Hip Hop, the first ever in competition.

Even before the judge's decision was announced, it was clear that The Two Double U's had taken the competition. Everyone rushed the grid. Wellington and Webby were lifted high and marched around and around. Mr Bunny grinned from ear to ear, his hop had saved the day. Finally the adoring crowd put them down. Georg and Bethleann rushed up, gushing accolades. "You were awesome! Both of you. What team work."

Webby was not so sure, "I almost lost the match for us."

"Nonsense," babbled Wellington. "You told me about the Bunny Hip Hop. And you carried your share of the match. Like Georg says, team work takes the day, silly rabbit. Now let's go get cleaned up and get ready for our banquet."

There was to be an awards banquet in the pavilion that very evening at which The Two Double U's would be guests of honor. The four friends hurried back to the cottage, well as fast as they could what with all the well wishers.

While Webby and Wellington bathed Bethleann and Georg tidied up their uniforms with a bit of magic, so shortly two very spiffed up rabbits were ready for their awards banquet.

"You must come too," Wellington said to Bethleann and Georg.

"We might startle the rabbits," said Georg. "Today was different, there were lots of odd looking folks there."

"You must come," pleaded Webby. He agreed with Wellington completely.

"No excuses," said Wellington, "it is time to introduce you to the entire village. I feel certain they have spotted you both from time to time anyway. Let's make it official."

Georg and Bethleann smiled. They liked Wellington's idea. And so off to the banquet the four friends went hand in hand. And when Wellington introduced Georg and Bethleann to the party goers, all of the rabbits rose and cheered, "Any friend of our champion, Wellington, is a friend of ours!"

Epiloguz

The next day everyone slept in and later after entertaining well wishers most of the day, settled into comfortable chairs on the back lawn for a fine glass of lemonade.

“You guys really are champs,” Bethleann sipped her drink. “Say Wellington I almost forgot, there was a bee here the other day looking for you.”

Wellington rose up in his chair, “Be right back.” He dashed into the house and retrieved the telebee from the pot where he had stashed it. Returning to the lawn, he handed the telebee to Bethleann and asked her if it made any sense.

She looked it up and down, “Nope. Did that bee bring it?”

“No, he was trying to help us figure it out,” said Georg and he told her about the pollen quest and their forgetfulness. “Now we’ll never know what it says. Buzzy won’t come back here for awhile after the way we treated him.”

“Let me see that,” said Webby. Wellington passed the leaf to Webby.

He read:

M N

‘ 3 A O 7

d 3 L S V 3

J d d V H

“What’s the problem?”

“We don’t know what it says,” said Wellington.

“That’s easy,” said Webby. “Just turn it upside down and read. Some of the leaf pricks are missing but it’s easy enough to decipher.”

“Well I’ll be,” said Wellington an amazed look on his face. He passed the leaf to Georg.

“Who woulda thought,” breathed Georg, “that’s cosmic.” He handed the leaf over to Bethleann.

“Exactly like him,” Bethelann clapped her hands together, “this is wonderful, just wonderful!”

“What’s the fuss?” asked Webby.

“It’s a note from Uncle Wells,” Wellington replied, a tear of joy in his eye. “This is the best Easter ever!”

