

ESMERALDA

PIG

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BOOK THREE

ESMERALDA

AND

BORIS

Colin Whittemore

You will remember that Esmeralda pig lived by the farm kitchen door and was very fond of food. Esmeralda had escaped being made into sausages and run off to be with Vladimir the wild pig in the wild wood. In due time Esmeralda gave birth to eight piglings. These were, naturally, half *Wild Pig*; darker brown than ordinary piglings and with stripes. Nathaniel's father wanted to sell all the piglings to the butcher, but Nathaniel had a favourite one called Ermentrude. When the piglings were big enough, the butcher would be called. Oswald the butcher, however, knew the pigs were specially valuable (which Nathaniel's father did not). He collected all eight (including Ermentrude) and sold all the girl-pigs to his brother Jeremiah for three times normal price. When Nathaniel's father realised that Ermentrude had been taken away he rushed off to Jeremiah's farm and had to buy her back. Meanwhile Nathaniel knew nothing of all of this because he had been kept back at school in detention for climbing onto the lavatory roof to rescue a baby rabbit. Nathaniel's father meanwhile had come to realise that if he could get more piglings from both Esmeralda and Ermentrude he might make enough money even to take the family on holiday. He tried to work out how he might capture Vladimir so Vladimir could be the father to some more of these valuable half-wild piglings. But Vladimir wasn't in the wood any more.

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17 EH46 7DJ

colin.whittemore@bitinternet.com

colinwhittemore.uk

An even Grander Plan (that would certainly go really badly wrong)

While Esmeralda was busy with her piglings, and Nathaniel was getting into trouble for rescuing the baby rabbit from the roof of the school lavatory, big changes were happening in the Dark Wild Wood. The wood had (up till now that is) belonged to Vladimir the wild boar and to no one else. Not to the hooty owls in the oak trees, not to the barking foxes in their dens, not to the short-tailed water rats in the big ditch.

But the Wild Wood did not any longer belong to Vladimir either! The Wild Wood now belonged to *Boris*. Boris was a wild boar like Vladimir, only a little more brown in colour and a lot more ferocious in nature. He had big tusks to bite with, and wicked piggy eyes.

Boris had come one night, a night well lit by the moon, to check out Vladimir's wild woodland glades. The two had met, head on, under a spreading oak tree. There had been a fierce fight in the moonlight all amongst the old oak and birch trees, crashing and banging, grunting and squealing, as they fought. Vladimir had lost. Boris's big tusks could not be matched by Vladimir, who in any event was still not fully recovered from the indignity of having a Yap dog

hanging on to the end of his tail while he charged about the wood trying to shake him off.



Boris chased Vladimir, screeching in distress, out of his wood. Vladimir (now Vlad the vanquished) eventually found a place to live down in the Combe where there were birch trees and gorse bushes to be sure, but no wild boar wives.

Vladimir would be living all alone for a while. He was very sad. He got to thinking about Esmeralda. He had abandoned her, it is true, and she was a soft farm pig not cut out for living in the Wild Wood, which also was true. But nonetheless Vlad had found big fat Esme rather attractive. Besides, in the Combe Vladimir had no wives at all and Esmeralda would be much preferable to nobody. Esmeralda however was most unfortunately otherwise engaged, with eight pigling to look after in her sty and a whole lot of swill to get eaten.

In the dark Wild Wood, Boris now had two inherited wives to look after. These were the wild boar sows that had once belonged to Vladimir. They seemed not to mind too much who they had for a husband, provided only that whoever it was he would protect their piglings, and keep the Dark Wild Wood a safe place. The mother sows reckoned that, by the looks of him, Boris would do that alright.

Nobody at the farm had any idea that there had been such an important change in ownership in the Wild Wood. They could never have known that Vladimir had been chased away and Boris was now in charge. Now, the fact that they did not know of these goings-on would come to matter quite a lot, because Nathaniel's father

would very soon be hatching a Grand Plan – a Grand Plan to capture Vladimir. And Nathaniel's father thought that it was Vladimir who was still living in the Wild Wood.

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Nathaniel's father had worked out what he wanted, but he had not worked out *how* to get what he wanted. What he wanted was more piglings like Ermentrude and her brothers and sisters – piglings that had stripes on their backs and looked like wild pigs (even though they were only *half* wild pigs). These wild pigs were worth twice as much money as ordinary pigs – *three times* as much even. What was wanted was lots of stripy piglings to sell to Oswald the butcher. That way he could make some money for the family, and maybe even afford a holiday by the sea.

So it was not a matter of what to do, it was a matter of how to do it; and the secret of how to do it lay with Vladimir, the wild boar in the Dark Wild Wood. Somehow, Vladimir would have to be encouraged to be the father of some more piglings. But how? Vladimir was not any sort of farm pig in a pig sty; he was a wild boar in a wild wood. How to bring him to the farm? He would

need to be captured. Capture a wild boar in a dark wood? Hmm... That was a real problem.

“Nathaniel”, asked his father, while the two of them were at the kitchen table; father drinking tea and son drinking his milk, “You seem to know a bit about pigs. How can we capture a wild boar and bring him back to the farm so he can be the father of lots of wild piglings like Ermentrude?”

Nathaniel was a knowing child, so naturally he knew the answer straight away. “Dig a big hole in the Wild Wood so the wild boar will fall straight in it. Then tie up his snout with tape and his four legs with ropes, and carry him back to the farm on the back of the quad-bike.”



“Maybe that’s not such a bad idea.” Said Nathaniel’s father in a way that suggested he thought it actually was a rather silly idea. But the more the possibilities were considered, the better Nathaniel’s Plan seemed to be.

Nathaniel’s father did not sleep so well that night. He was too busy planning. By morning when it was time to get up and milk the farm cows, Nathaniel’s father had a good plan. Part of it he would keep secret because he was not so sure it would work, but part he told to the family over breakfast next day.

“We are going to have a herd of wild pigs on the farm. Esmeralda will have more wild piglings just like she had Ermentrude. Then we will keep the girls to be the sows and one of the boys to be the farm boar.”

“Well,” spluttered Aunt Margaret trying not to talk with her mouth full of breakfast eggs and bacon, “You just can not do that.”

“And why not?” asked Nathaniel’s father.

“Because,” Aunty Margret was all indignant and started going red in the face again, “Because it would not be proper!”

“And why would that be? asked Nathaniel’s father.

Now, he knew very well ‘why not’, but he wanted Aunty Margaret to be the one to say it. That way there would be no arguments. Besides he knew she would be embarrassed, and that was always amusing for everybody – when Aunty Margaret got embarrassed her face just went redder and redder and her words got more and more spluttery.

“Because” spluttered Aunty Margaret going so red in the face that Nathaniel thought she might explode like a Christmas balloon, “Because we only have Esmeralda and Ermentrude for mothers which means that Esmeralda’s future husband would be her own son and Ermentrude’s future husband would be her own brother.” “If the girls are going to be having the right piglings, they will be needing the right husband. Esmeralda can not be the mother of the farm boar.”

“Hmm.” Nathaniel’s father quietly stroked his chin. “Quite right Margaret, that would never do;

no not all. We will just have to go and buy us another pink sow from another farmer to keep Esmeralda and Ermentrude company.”

At that, Margaret stumped off in a huff, not even finishing her toast and marmalade. She knew that her brother had caught her out again. She just hated him spending money, and now, because of what she said, he would!

The next day Nathaniel and his father were off to market in the farm pick-up truck. There they looked for a nice young lady pig to buy – one that was big and fat and pink like Esmeralda. Nathaniel found one that was perfect; she had lop ears that went right down over her eyes. She was put into the truck and brought back to the farm; there to wait for Vladimir to be captured and brought to join her as her new husband. Nathaniel decided that she should be given the name of Hermione.

Esmeralda, Ermentrude and Hermione could not all fit into the sty by the farm-house kitchen door, so all three were put out into the pig field. Where they were very happy on account of all the mud there.

Nathaniel's father set-to to build a whole row of three new pigstys in the farmyard, just along from

Esmeralda's place by the kitchen door. With four stys, there would be plenty of room for his new pig herd and all the little stripy piglings that would (he hoped) be coming along soon.

But only after Vladimir, the wild boar in the Wild Wood was captured.

Nathaniel's father told nobody what he did next, because he thought they would laugh at him. And he wasn't going to give Aunty Margaret the chance to do that!

After Nathaniel had gone off down the farm lane to school, his father slung a pick-axe across his shoulder, picked up a stout spade in his other hand and trudged off; out of the farm yard, over the fields and into the Dark Wild Wood.

In the middle of a sunny glade between the trees of oak and birch he began to dig.

It took him most of the day and a lot of sweat, but by the end of the afternoon he had dug a huge round pit with straight sides from the top to the bottom. It was two metres wide and two metres long and nearly two metres deep. Just the right size in which to trap a wild boar! The soil that had been dug out to make the pit was now in a big pile by the side of the hole.



Next, Nathaniel's father carefully put a handful of best farm pig food into the bottom of the pit. Last, he collected all the branches he could find nearby and used them to cover over the top of the hole. The branches made a complete roof, so the hole below could not possibly be seen.

He stood back, wiped his sweaty forehead with the back of his hand, and admired his work. Now all that was needed was for a wild boar to come along, smell the food and fall right into the pit.

That night, Boris (the really fierce wild boar) came. Somebody had been messing about in *his* wood. Nobody was allowed in Boris's wood

without his say-so. He sniffed and snuffled about the wooded glade. He could smell lots of new soil which had been dug up and put into a pile. There were roots and bugs in the fresh soil which was good, so he rooted about with his long snout and ate them. Boris could also smell human – a sweaty human person. Boris was not frightened of people; he could win any fight with one of them. But Boris also knew to be careful, because humans could be clever and troublesome. Boris snuffled his way toward the fallen branches that Nathaniel's father had so carefully placed across the top of the pit.

Boris was walking straight into the trap.

Boris was a proper wild boar. Wild things might be wild, but they are not stupid! Boris's keen nose smelled lots of things all at once. He could smell that the branches had not just fallen off the trees – something was not quite right. He could smell the smell of Nathaniel's sweaty father which was not at all right in the middle of his, *Boris's*, wood. He could smell the food, which did not smell like woodland food – like worms and grass and maybe truffles. Even the food was not right. He could also smell a big empty shape under the branches. A smell of nothing. A smell of a pit!

Boris walked once all around the hole, did a big piggy poo to tell anybody who cared what he did not think much of Nathaniel's father's hole, and wandered off back to his two wives.

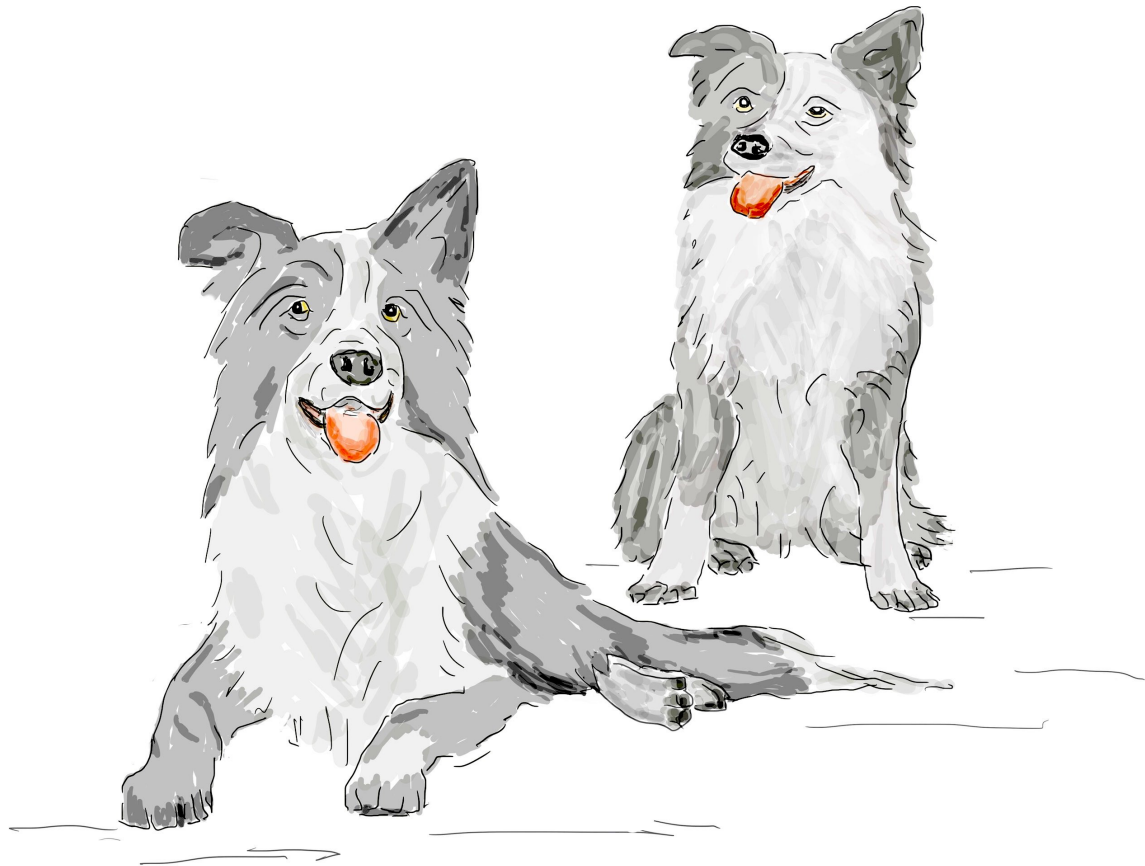
Next day Nathaniel's father went again up to the wood to see if he had caught anything in his trap. When he got to the glade he saw that his pile of earth was all shoved about, and there were the tracks of pig's trotters all around his pit, and he also noticed a big smelly wild pig poo. But the branches making a roof across the pit were just as he had left them, and there was nothing in the pig trap. Not even a bunny rabbit.

"Very nearly," thought Nathaniel's father, "Next time that wild boar will be in my pit and I will have him." Which, of course, was not all likely. Boris would never be that stupid.

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That evening, Nathaniel was thinking as he wandered back from school about how he had not seen much of Esmeralda, Ermentrude and Hermione since they had been moved from the sty by the kitchen door and put out into the pig field. After he had had his tea, he asked his mother if it was alright to go to visit the pigs in their field.

“Of course Nathaniel.” replied his mother, “But don’t be too long and be sure to take the sheep dogs and Yap along with you.”



Nathaniel found the pigs in their hut in the field. He scratched each pig behind the ears, picking off the black lice as he scratched. Then he tickled Hermione’s tummy for her – she liked that. Then he started back home. But no sooner had he got half way across the field than Yap dog started barking furiously and then charged off toward the Dark Wild Wood with the sheep dogs

close behind. They had got the scent of something; something strong – like a wild boar!

“Come back!” Yelled Nathaniel at the dogs, but it made no difference. The dogs were off on a chase. In a trice they had disappeared into the Dark Wild Wood.

Nathaniel could not go home without the sheep dogs (Yap didn’t matter so much – Yap was always going off on his own), he would get a most tremendous row. So he went after them, across the field, through the fence, and into the Wild Wood.

Following the noise of Yap’s barking, Nathaniel finally caught up with the dogs in a glade in the middle of the wood. They were making a big fuss round a pile of earth. But Nathaniel could see nothing much interesting except a pile of branches. He went closer to see what the dogs were fussing on about, and walked straight into the pit, falling through the roof of branches as he went.

The pig trap had trapped a person instead of a pig.

The pit had such straight sides down to its bottom that neither wild pig, nor small person

could get out. Nathaniel was well caught, and night was beginning to fall – it was getting dark. He could not think of what to do so he started to cry out for help.

It was Boris that the dogs had been chasing back into the wood. He had been investigating interesting piggy smells from the farm pig field. Boris was getting quite interested in his new neighbours, and was getting into the habit of a regular evening visit to say hello! through the fence.

And it was Boris who was now just the other side of the pile of earth by the pit! Boris was very angry. His wood was being invaded by persons and dogs that had no right to be there. His tusks would be getting to work to see them off, just as they had seen off Vladimir.

Nathaniel could not see anything of what was going on, but he could hear; ferocious grunting, excited barking and a lot of yapping. The dogs knew well enough that if Boris charged one of them by themselves they would be torn to shreds by his tusks. So they made sure Boris did not get the chance. Yap dog was behind him worrying at his backside, while the sheepdogs were in front, left and right, dashing in and out nipping at

Boris's shoulders as if he were a naughty sheep. Boris got angrier and angrier.

Nathaniel meanwhile had realised that shouting 'help' was going to be no good for anything. There was nobody anywhere nearly close enough to hear one small boy in a pit in the middle of a wood. So, instead of shouting, he had a think.

Paying no attention to the racket of squealing boar and baying dogs above him, Nathaniel stretched high above his head and pulled down into the pit all the rest of the branches. Then he piled the branches up all on one side of the pit, to make something not too different from a tree – only one in a hole rather than up in the air. Like all farm boys, Nathaniel was good at climbing trees, so up his home-made tree he went and out he climbed.

Once back on level ground. He saw a terrible scene. Yap dog had by now got hold of Boris's tail (he was good at grabbing pig's tails), but one of the sheep dogs was bleeding from a shoulder wound made by Boris's tusks, and the other was limping. The fight was going Boris's way, and next in line for his slashing tusks would be Nathaniel himself. There was only one thing for it. Nathaniel ran for his life.

Seeing him go, the dogs decided they should follow too. Boris chased after, but not for too long, thinking a person (even a small one) and three dogs might be too much all at the same time, even for as fierce a wild boar as he. Nathaniel was running out of breath. He looked behind to see following him two sheep dogs and Yap, but no wild boar.

He sat down at the bottom of big beech tree, gasping for air. The dogs, panting like mad with tongues hanging out came and sat beside him. It had been another narrow escape.

Nathaniel had a look at the sheep dog's wounds. The slash was not so bad; it was bleeding, but clean. The other dog seemed not to be much minding a bit of a limp and Yap was fine. But then he was always good at getting out of scrapes. All four of them were ready to go home.

At which point Nathaniel realised that in his haste to run away from the wild boar, he had no idea which way he had gone. He could not go home because he did not know in which direction home might be. He was quite lost – again.

The sheep dogs were lying down, one licking a paw and the other licking his wounded shoulder.

Nathaniel had a good idea. When the dogs were naughty, or not needed any more in the fields, his father would send the dogs home. Sheep dogs always do as they are told.

“Home!” Nathaniel commanded in the sternest voice he could manage, “Go Home!” “Dogs, **Go Home.**” The sheep dogs pricked up their ears, got up and obediently began to trot off through the woods. Nathaniel had to run again to keep up with them. “Hey, wait for me!” he called. In no time at all the foursome had reached the woodland edge, and Nathaniel at last could just see the way back to farm, where the lights in the farmyard were already switched on.



On his way through the farm gate, Nathaniel was met by his father coming out of the farmyard.

“Nathaniel, where *have* you been.? We looked in the pig field and everywhere. Where have you been?” “Look at the dogs, what a state they’re in. What have you been doing?”

Nathaniel reckoned his father sounded more worried than angry, and anyway, he had not really had time to make up any sort of believable story, so maybe the truth would have to be told. Not, Nathaniel reflected, that that always worked out either. If a school master was unlikely to believe a story about a bunny being rescued from a roof, then who would believe that the dogs had run off after a wild boar, and they had had a ferocious fight with it and he had fallen down a deep pit he could not get out of and

But when Nathaniel told his father everything that had happened, strangely, his father said nothing at all, except “Seems like you’ve had an exciting time and those dogs got you well out of a spot of bother. That wild boar – same one we met in the wood before was it?”

“No,” said Nathaniel, thinking about it, “It was bigger and browner and hairier and had bigger teeth.”

Nathaniel's father did not know what to make of that, but said nothing. He was thinking about the fact that he had trapped his own son in a pit meant for a boar, and that things could have turned out really badly – if it hadn't been for the sheep dogs.

His grand plan was not such a good idea after all, and maybe he had better think up a new one. He was back to square one; he knew what he wanted – a wild boar husband for his three sows – but how to get it?

Meanwhile, as far as wild boar catching traps were concerned, the less said the better, or he would never hear the end of it.

Nature takes its course

Farm fences can keep ordinary pigs in, and even wild pigs out. But nothing can keep two pigs in love apart from each other. No fence can stop a boar in love being with the lady pig of his desires; especially if that boar is a *wild* boar.

Vladimir was *very* love sick; he was all forlorn and lonely. He hankered after his old love, Esmeralda. One night he decided that he would leave the protection of the Combe and go looking for her. He knew she would be somewhere near the farm, which was right because she was in the pig field. Vladimir was also helped by the piggy smell which came off the pig field. *That* field could be smelled from miles away!

When he found her, he nearly found Boris as well. Boris was visiting too. Vladimir watched from behind a thicket of gorse, then when Boris had gone back into the Dark Wild Wood, Vladimir crept quietly up to the field fence, snuffling and softly grunting.

“Hey Esme!” “It’s me, Vlad.”

“Vlad?”

“Vlad from the wood. You know, your husband for three wonderful days in the glades of the Dark Wild Wood.”

“Vlad? Oh *that* Vlad!” exclaimed Esmeralda. “The one that pushed off and left me all alone. I had to bring up your piglings all by myself.”

“But I loved you Esme.”

“You loved me for three days and left me pregnant for three days plus three weeks plus three months. And then when I produced your piglings – eight of them I’ll have you know – I had to feed them for three more months. No help from you. None that I noticed anyway. And you expect me to fall for that all over again? No way Vlad! There’s a new man coming into my life quite soon I reckon. Bigger and better than *you* Vladimir. You’d better not meet him. He’ll well chase *you* off; his name’s Boris!”

Vladimir was crestfallen at this turn of events. He had not expected it at all. But his attention was diverted when he realised there were two more sows in the field. One was quite dark and hairy, a bit like him. He rather fancied her! Ermentrude came up to the fence. She had never met a boar before, of course, and definitely not a *Wild* Boar.

Ermentrude could not help herself. “Oh Wow!”

Vladimir was flattered. “Just-call-me-Vlad.” he cooed.

“Just-call-me-Ermy” replied Ermentrude.

“None of that nonsense,” scolded Esmeralda. “Ermentrude, as truly as I am your mother, that wild thing on the other side of the fence is your father.” “You’ve to have nothing to do with him, do you hear”. “Vladimir, behave yourself in a proper manner. “*Ermy*”, for goodness sakes, is your *daughter*.



Vladimir's nocturnal visit to the pig field was proving quite a disaster for him! But now he had noticed Hermione, who had taken to hiding in the bramble patch and peeping out. She was there right now, peeping shyly at Vladimir from under her big flappy ears. Hermione was somewhat taken with Vladimir. She rather liked that he was smaller than Boris and had neater little tusks. It was Hermione who was beginning to feel love pangs – for Vladimir!

But by now Esmeralda was getting really cross with Vladimir and started making threatening noises. Vladimir thought it wise to make a quick get-away and head back to his home in the Combe. But he promised himself he would be back next evening – that Hermione was quite attractive, and maybe she could be persuaded to like him. If a pig is falling in love, anything might happen!

Boris had not visited the pig field on the following day. He had been taken up with digging operations for another find of truffles under an old oak tree on the far side of the wood. Boris was especially fond of truffles. More fond of truffles even than wives! Vladimir had the girls all to himself.

No sooner had Vladimir arrived at the fence than Esmeralda stuck her nose in the air and marched off in disdain. “Ermentrude, you’re to come with me back into the pig hut. You’ve to have nothing to do with that Vladimir.”

Hermione however had got a sniff of the saliva dripping provocatively from Vladimir’s tusks. To her it was the most delicious smell there ever was. She was suddenly and hopelessly in love – rooted to the spot in admiration of such a fine man as Vladimir. He would, she knew immediately, make a fine husband or herself and a fine father for her piglings.



Vladimir was also smitten with the charming way Hermione peeped out from under her ears. For Vladimir there was no choice, he just had to be in the pig field with his newfound love, Hermione. There was only one question. How to get over the fence? He could dig under it, he could leap over it, or he could just barge through with his bony head. Not being the heaviest of wild boars, Vladimir decided he would leap over. He ran at the fence and was over in a one-er.

Vladimir and Hermione lived in the pig hut, much to Esmeralda's disgust. Hermione made a nice bed for them both in there. But one morning the nest that she had made was empty. Vladimir had gone!

"I told you so." Smirked Esmeralda, "That Vladimir is a bad lot. Makes you fall in love then leaves you. Before four months are out my girl, you'll be having his piglings, you mind my words." But Hermione did not mind. That was the way of things. And at least she would be useful having piglings. She had been told that 'being useful' was quite important on the farm.

A week or so after these happenings had taken place, Vladimir thought to try his luck again – perhaps Esmeralda would forgive him. One evening, under a starry sky with a romantic

crescent moon, Vladimir made his way from the Combe up to the pig field. He was careless. He was thinking about Esmeralda (and perhaps about Ermentrude as well if the truth be known). He did not notice that Boris was there at the field fence, in deep conversation with both Esmeralda *and* Ermentrude.

As soon as he saw Vladimir, Boris charged at him hitting square in the ribs, then with a mighty upward thrust of his tusks he tore into Vladimir's shoulder. In one instant Vladimir was once again vanquished. This time for good. He would never be back. Esmeralda thought that he deserved what he got. Hermione was distressed at the sight of her fleeing husband. Ermentrude wasn't too sure of anything, because she was falling in love with Boris. Wasn't he just so terrific!

Boris was minded to end, once-and-for-all, this nonsense of talking through fences, so, being the ferocious beast that he was, he battered down the fence and tore it to shreds. Esmeralda and Ermentrude escaped through the big hole where the fence had once been before being trashed by Boris and followed the new love of their lives across the fields and deep into the depths of the Dark Wild Wood.

Hermione stayed where she was, in the pig hut. Esmeralda was right. Hermione had Vladimir's piglings already growing inside her.

When Nathaniel's father came to feed the pigs next day with their bucket of pig swill he was met only by a hungry Hermione. Of the other two there was no trace, only a big smash in the fence.

"I'll be darned" he said, "I'll bet that's the work of that dratted wild boar. If those girls are off into the wild wood it'll take forever to find them." "Come on Hermione, I'll take you back to the farm yard, you can go into one of my new stys. 'Till next week when I can get that fence properly mended anyhow."

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"You know Mother," Nathaniel's father said as the pair of them sat at the kitchen table with a mug of tea each, "I should not have bothered to try to catch a wild husband for they two pigs. Seems like Esmeralda and Ermentrude are more than capable of taking matters into their own hands."

"How is that?" asked Nathaniel's mother.

“They two have gone off to find their own husband in the Wild Wood. They need no help from me. I mind I’ll need to go and get them back in a day or two. If I can find them that is. But I reckon they’ll come home themselves when they’re ready. That’s what Esmeralda did last time.”

“She’ll be doing it again, for sure.” said Mother. “Clever girls, pigs.” “They’ll look after themselves just fine.”



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Just short of four months later, Nathaniel was helping Hermione, Ermentrude and Esmeralda each have a fine family of stripy wild boar piglings. Ermentrude and Hermione each had their home in one of the new pig stys that Nathaniel's father had built specially for them. Esmeralda, because she was special, was back in her own sty; the one that was right next to the farm kitchen door, as ever was.

Hermione was first to produce eight fine piglings whose ears were not pricked up like Vladimir, nor floppy down like herself, but ears that were half way up and half way down. Ermentrude had six piglings. Their stripes were dark so they looked quite like Boris. In fact Ermentrude's piglings looked really *wild*, which is not too surprising because Ermentrude herself was half wild.

Esmeralda, now an experienced mother herself, had ten piglings. She was proud of Ermentrude's family too, because they were her grandchildren.

Nathaniel could not believe how many little stripy pigs there were. The pig pens were getting quite noisy with grunting mothers and happy squeaking piglings.

After Nathaniel and his father had fed Esmeralda, Ermentrude and Hermione their breakfast of swill, they spent a moment looking at a fine sight ... a herd of very special wild pigs. The Grand Plan had actually come to be.

“Now then, Nathaniel,” his father said, “Seems like we’ve got ourselves quite a big pig herd. We needs to do some more planning.”

“Father, what do we do with the third new pen you built? It’s still empty.”

“Aha,” replied Nathaniel’s father, “That is the *boar pen*. A farm pig herd has to have a farm boar. He is special because he will be the Dad of every little pig we have on the farm. So he needs his own boar pen.”

“Where will we get a boar from, Father? Will we buy one?”

“Goodness me no! You can’t buy a wild boar, ’cause they are wild. But we already have one. You are looking at him, son. You will need to choose the very best boy pigling that you can see. Come on, you choose.”

Nathaniel looked at all the little pigs in the three fine litters. But most of all he liked the really dark piglings that Ermentrude had produced, and in Ermentrude's litter there was one especially dark one. One, in fact, that looked just like Boris.

"That one!" exclaimed Nathaniel, pointing.

"A very good choice, if I may say so," said his father, "now you must give him a name."

"Bogdan", was the immediate reply, but Nathaniel had no idea where in his mind that name had come from.

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A couple of months later, Oswald, the butcher, payed a visit to the farm. He brought with him an important friend. Nathaniel and his father were waiting for them on the farmyard by the pig stys.

"This," said Oswald, "is my friend Aimé. He is a famous French cook. He has the place in town called '*La Forêt*'. That is where all the posh people go for an evening out to have an *extra* special, *extra* expensive meal!"

"Non, Non, my friend." Aimé said in voice that Nathaniel thought was rather peculiar. Nathaniel

also noticed that the man waved his arms about rather a lot. And when he talked he made all sorts of different faces all at the same time. “Non,” continued Aimé, “No ‘expensive’, my food is ‘gastronomic’ – the best. Best veal, best truffles, but truly the best pork. The best pork is les sangliers. That is what I search for. I am from Ardennes, en France. So for me best pork is from the *sangliers*. The – how you say – *the Wild Boar*. The wild boar is the finest meat in all the world. And for the finest meat my customers will pay the finest prices.”

“And,” butted in Oswald, worried that his friend was getting over-excited about things. “I have told him the place for him to get his wild boar to cook in his kitchen is from none other than ‘*Oswald Slaughter, family butchers*’.” Oswald gave Nathaniel’s father a big wink, which Nathaniel did not like much. But then he didn’t like anything much about Oswald. Nathaniel thought that Oswald would make a good husband for his Aunty Margaret, but he kept that to himself.

Nathaniel’s father guided Oswald and Aimé toward the pig stys, with Nathaniel following on behind. “Come and see then,” he said, “come and see what we have. I think you will be amazed.”

When the French cook saw all of Esmeralda and Ermentrude and Hermione's piglings – which by now were getting really quite big – he threw his hands up into the air like somebody gone mad. "Mon God." "Wey, amazing! Hon Hon Hon! Marcassins! Formidable! Marcassin! I did not think I would see. They are bumble bees, they have stripes like humbug sweets; Magnifique!"



Nathaniel thought the French cook had somehow got broken and all his bits were exploding. Just like the clockwork engine that Nathaniel had wound up too much and the spring had snapped

and all the bits had fallen out from underneath. He was jumping up and down and flinging his arms and legs all over the place. He was using strange words which made no sense. He was a clown. Nathaniel could not help himself laughing.

“Non. Non,” the French cook said, “Do not laugh. Nathaniel. It is most perfect for me. A dream come true. I will cook the wild boar for my customers in my fine dining room. I will be even more famous, and maybe even more rich. And Oswald – he will become the most well-known of all pork butchers.”

‘Oh Aye,’ thought Nathaniel’s father to himself. ‘Then maybe I should be charging Oswald *four times* normal price for letting him have my pigs.’

Aimé went from pen to pen. He could not take his eyes off the lovely little brown stripy pigs.

“All the Marcassin are very fine. Wonderful. But the finest of all are these.” He was looking at Ermentrude’s litter. “They are the most dark. They are the most best.” “They will have the most finest flavour.”

“All my pigs will be like that from now on,” said Nathaniel’s father, “see that one there, the

biggest one. That is Bogdan. He will be our farm boar.” “Bogdan will be the father of all of our pigs that we sell from the farm.”

“And we will have all the others?” suggested Oswald.

“No!” said Nathaniel’s father. “When they are grown up and ready you can have all the pigs from Ermentrude *except* Bogdan, and you can have all the boys from Hermione and Esmeralda, but I am keeping all the girls to make our wild pig herd here on the farm.”

“It’s done!” said Oswald, shaking Nathaniel’s father by the hand.

“Très good, bon!” said Aimé.

Nathaniel wasn’t too sure.

Oswald and Aimé got back into the butcher’s van and drove off down the farm road. Nathaniel and his father went back into the farm kitchen.

“Cup of tea and piece of cake due, Mother.” Nathaniel’s father exclaimed. “Nathaniel, you and I and your Mother have two nice jobs to do. First we have to find nine girls names for the pigs we’re going to keep. Then, when the other

fourteen are sold, we will have some money to spend on a holiday. So we had better get planning. Where would you like to go, Nathaniel, for your first ever holiday– to the seaside?”

Nathaniel thought that would be a Grand Plan.

