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Opening extract from Olga Da Polga

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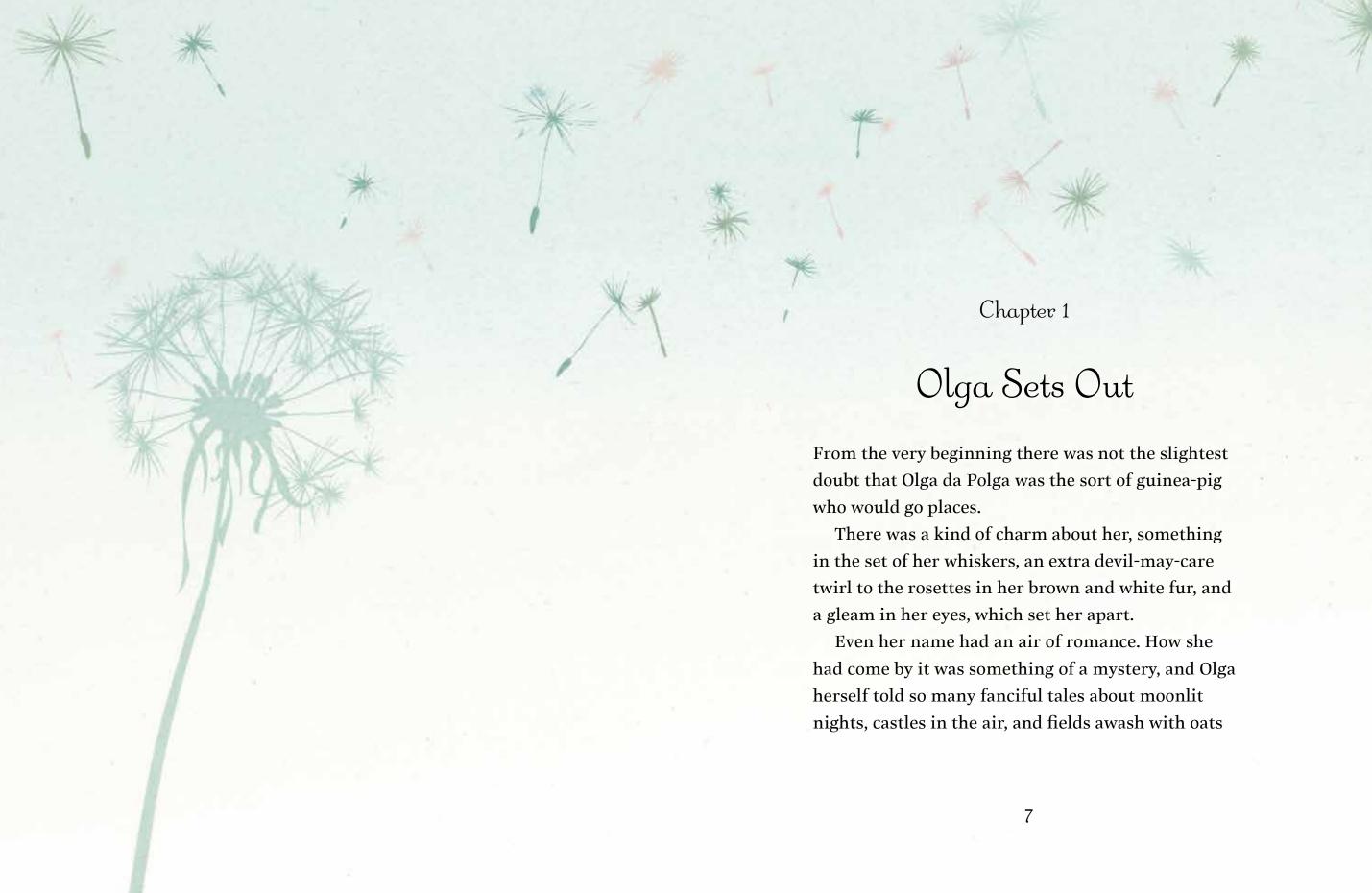
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and beautiful princesses—each tale wilder than the one before—that none of the other guinea-pigs in the pet shop knew what to believe.

However, everyone agreed that it suited her right to the very tips of her fourteen toes, and if some felt that it wouldn't come amiss if Olga was taken down a whisker or two it was noticeable none of them tried to do it, though many of them talked

of the dangers of going out

into the world alone, and without the protection of the humans who normally looked after them.

'You can't do without the Sawdust People,' warned one old-stager known as Sale or Return, who'd lived in the shop for as long as anyone could remember and was always listened to with respect because he'd once been away for two whole days. 'It's a cold, hard world outside.'

But Olga would have none of it. 'You can stay here if you like,' she would announce, standing in the





Olga was never quite sure whether she really believed her words or not, but she liked the sound of them, and secretly she also rather enjoyed the effect they had on the others.

Each night, before she settled down in the straw, she would look at her reflection in the water bowl, puffing out her cheeks and preening herself so that she would look her best if any likely looking customers came along.

And then it happened.

Quite unexpectedly, and not at all in the way Olga had always pictured it.

There were no grand farewells.

There was no battle royal.

No wild dash for freedom.

There were no cheers whatsoever.

In fact it was all over in a flash.

