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Opening extract from

Pongwiffy: Back on Track

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WITCHWAY WOOD O'LUMPICK GAMES

READ CAREFULLY!

The Witches proudly announce that the very first O'Lumpick Games will be held in three weeks' time. You are cordially invited to join in. Yes, YOU. The Games are open to all. You are required to form teams who will compete against each other in seven exciting events (see below). Each team may enter one contestant only per race. An exception is made for the Three-Legged Race , which needs two**, and also for the Relay Race which needs four.*

In the true O'Lumpick spirit, the Games will be played ***FAIRLY.*** *Yes, really!* ***Magic is Strictly Banned****. So is Cheating, Skullduggery, Back-stabbing and Fighting. Mingling is compulsory. So is Good Sportsmanship, even if you lose, which you probably will.*

The best three contestants in each event will be presented with medals by popular star of stage and screen Scott Sinister, who will also provide the commentary.

Please complete the following in your best handwriting. YOU HAVE THREE WEEKS TO GET FIT!

TEAM NAME.....

EVENT	**CONTESTANT NAME(S)**
Three-Legged Race	.....
Egg and Spoon Race	.....
Weightlifting	.....
High Jump	.....
Sack Race	.....
Toss the Caber	.....
Relay Race	.....

****NB. Except Goblins. **NB. Three-legged monsters are not eligible.***



CHAPTER ONE

A Typical Evening

It was evening, and a typical scene was taking place in Number One, Dump Edge, Witchway Wood. Supper was over and Witch Pongwiffy was slumped in her armchair eating toffees and watching Hugo, her Hamster Familiar, wash up.

The only sounds were of clinking plates and a bit of tuneless humming from Hugo and a lot of vigorous, noisy chewing from Pongwiffy.

Suddenly, the chewing stopped.

'*Gugo!*' said Pongwiffy, urgently but indistinctly. '*Gugo gy geeg!*'



Was this some sort of new language?

Hugo turned and looked at her. Pongwiffy was sitting bolt upright, pointing at her mouth with a strange expression. Sort of alarmed but sheepish at the same time.

'Vot?'

'Gy *geeg!* Gy *geeg* ga gug goo gegger!'

Her teeth were stuck together.

'Vot, *again?'*

'Nng.'

Pongwiffy rolled her eyes and waited for help. Hugo dried his paws on a tiny tea towel.

'It ze last time I do zis,' he warned.

He scrabbled in a drawer, took out a fork and a small hammer and advanced briskly on Pongwiffy, who quailed. With a hop and a jump, he was on her shoulder.

'Turn head,' he instructed. 'Open up.' Pongwiffy turned to face him and nervously bared her teeth. He positioned the fork and brandished the hammer. 'Ready?'

'Nng. Nnnnnggggggg . . .' – there was a sharp crack. '*Ah!*' Pongwiffy gave a cry as her newly freed jaws sprang open. 'Ooh, that's better. What a relief.'

'Vot I tell you 'bout eatink toffees?' scolded Hugo, clambering down.

'But they're all I've got left. I've eaten all the crunchy ones and the soft centres.'

'*Zat whole bag of sweets?* But I only got zem zis morning!'

'So?'

'Zat so greedy,' tutted Hugo. 'After great big supper too.'

Pongwiffy had indeed had a big supper. Four greasy helpings of skunk stew, no less. And now, on top of all that, she was eating sweets. Or would be, if she hadn't run out.

Hopefully, she fished around in her cardigan pocket and, with a glad little cry, produced something green, fluff-covered and frog-shaped.

'Ooh, look. A *Hoppy Jumper*.' She peered down, picked off the fluff, popped it in her mouth and crunched. 'Yum. I love these, I do. I could sit here and eat 'em all night.'

'I thought you goink out,' said Hugo. 'You say you goink to visit Sharkadder.'

'Did I? Well, I'm not. I've broken friends.'

'Oh ya?' Hugo didn't sound all that surprised. Witch Sharkadder was Pongwiffy's best friend. They argued a lot, though, so they frequently weren't speaking. One day best friends, the next, worst enemies. It was hard to keep up.

'She wouldn't answer the door,' explained Pongwiffy. 'Last time I called. I know she was in there, though. Crunching sweets in the dark. Didn't want to

share, I reckon. So I'm not speaking. She just doesn't know it yet.'

'So go round and tell 'er,' advised Hugo.

'How can I *tell* her if I'm not speaking?'

'Write note.'

'Can't be bothered. Too far to walk.'

'Fly zen, if you so lazy. Take Broom.'

The Broom, who had been mournfully drooping in a corner, straightened up and looked desperately keen, like a puppy who's been promised a walk. It hadn't been flown for ages and it was terribly bored, just hanging around collecting cobwebs. A brisk fly would be just what the tree doctor ordered.

'Don't want to,' said Pongwiffy. 'I want to lie around and eat sweet things. Like cake. Fetch me some cake.'

The Broom went back to mournful drooping. Hope dies quickly in Broom World, especially if you belong to Pongwiffy.

'No cake,' said Hugo. 'All gone. You eated it.'

'So make another one. Make a sponge cake, it'll soak up the grease. Basic science.' She gave a loud, rude belch and rubbed her stomach, which was inflated to the size of a small balloon.

'Exercise,' advised Hugo, 'Zat vot you is needink. You in bad shape.' He began poking around in the food cupboard which was empty apart from three jars of skunk stew labelled *Last Week*, *Month Old* and

Vintage. 'You not fit. Just lie about eatink rubbish.'

'And what's wrong with that?'

'Everysink. You should be like 'amsters. Alvays on ze go, 'amsters. 'specially ven it comink up to ze Rodent Olympic Games.'

'The what?'

'Ze Rodent Olympics. Held in my home town, 'amsterdam. Boy, do ve train 'ard. Is big sing.'

'A big *sing*? What, like opera?'

'Nein, nein. *Sing!*'

'Oh, *thing!*'

'Ya. Is like big Sports Day. High spot of ze year.'

'*Is* it now?' Pongwiffy gave a theatrical yawn.

'Ya. Ve play games.'

'Do you *really*?'

'Oh, ya. Rats, mice, guinea pigs, 'amsters. All join in.'

'I didn't think you got on with mice and guinea pigs. I thought you usually fought, that's what you said.'

'Not ven it ze Olympics. On zat day ve have truce. Got to be nice to each uzzer. It all about teamvork.'

'Teamwork?' sneered Pongwiffy. She didn't care for teamwork. Witches aren't known for their co-operation.

'Ya. Rats gotta team. Mice gotta team. 'amsters gotta team. Everyvun compete against each uzzer, see? Ze best team vin.'

'It'd be quicker to fight, wouldn't it? Get it over and

done with?'

'Not ven is *Sport*,' explained Hugo. 'Sport different. Sport got rules. Got to be fair. No fightink, no cheatink.'

'No *cheating*?' Pongwiffy sounded shocked. 'Are you serious?'

'Jah.'

'You mean – no *Magic*?'

'Certainly not.' Hugo was scandalised.

'Well, it doesn't sound like a Witch thing,' said Pongwiffy. 'Playing fair and being nice. All that effort when you can just wave a Wand.'

'Ah, but zat not ze *point*. Ze point is . . .' Hugo gave up. Pongwiffy was scrabbling through her pockets again and had stopped listening. 'Ah, never mind. Vere ze sugar?'

'How should I know? Why? Isn't there any?' asked Pongwiffy innocently, and instantly came out in green spots. (This always happens when she tells fibs. It's very inconvenient.)

'You eated it, didn't you?' said Hugo.

'I might have had a couple of handfuls, I can't remember.'

'Green spots,' said Hugo, pointing.

'All right,' said Pongwiffy sulkily. 'All right, so I did.' The green spots faded.

'You such a fibber,' said Hugo, shaking his head.

'Oh, stop lecturing me. I don't want want to be lectured by a Hamster. Leave me alone, I've got tummyache.'

'You better get better,' warned Hugo. 'Is Coven Meeting midnight tonight.'

'I think I'll have to cancel. I'll send you along with a sick note. Oooooh.'

'Vot, *again*?'

'Yes *again*. Just shut up and make cake.'

'Can't,' said Hugo. 'Run out of cake stuff. No sugar, no eggs, no flour, no nussink.'

'Well, I'm not sitting here all night with nothing to munch on. You'll just have to go along to *Sugary Candy's* and get me more sweets. I'd go myself if I didn't feel so poorly. Don't look like that, it won't hurt you. Get me a mixed bag, heavy on the *Hoppy Jumpers*. I'll have some *Bat Splatz*, and a couple of bars of *Sludge Fudge*. Oh, and some *Minty Stingeroos* . . .'



CHAPTER TWO

Sugary Candy's

Sugary Candy's was the name of the new sweet shop in Witchway Wood. It had only recently opened, but was already attracting a huge amount of custom. It was designed to look like a charming gingerbread cottage, with painted sweets stuck on the walls and a twist of pink candy floss emerging from the crooked chimney. It had a pointed roof and an old-fashioned door with a quaint shop bell. But instead of poky little widows there was one great big one. The display was truly a sight to behold.

Sweets! Great big jars of them arranged in rows, all different shapes and colours. Green froggy ones, crimson ones shaped like little mouths, black bat-shaped

ones that flapped in your mouth and large staring ones like eyeballs that blinked when you bit into them. There were humbugs and gobstoppers and big pink balls of bubblegum. There were huge red lollipops with faces on. There were toffees and sherbert dips and striped sticks of rock and – oh, everything under the sun. It would take far too long to describe all those sweets. You just need to know that temptation-wise, they were off the scale. They had exciting names too, written on the labels. It made them fun to buy.

As well as the giant jars of sweets, there were trays of chocolate. Big brown bars, piled high. *Slime Slabs. Sludge Fudge. Bog Bars.*

It would have been good if *Sugary Candy's* was owned by somebody called something like Mr Twinkle or Arthur Applecheek – a merry old fellow who loved little children. It wasn't, though. It was owned by the Yeti Brothers – large, hairy, hard headed business types who didn't love anybody.

The Yetis specialised in bad food. Their names were Spag Yeti and Comf Yeti, and they owned a great number of greasy spoon cafes, burger bars and pizza houses in far flung locations, all of which they ran simultaneously although nobody knew how, seeing as there were only two of them. They also did the catering for important events like parties and weddings.