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CHAPETR ONE

A MYSTERIOUS PIG IN FANCY DRESS RUNS WILD!

If you noticed I spelled 'chapter' wrong at the top of the page, **CONGRATULATIONS!** I'm just making sure you're awake.

You may think it's a bit crazy to start a book with a wrongly-spelled word. Well, with the story I'm telling, you'd better get used to crazy. And I should warn you, we're talking **bonkers, fruit-loops, round-the-bend, round-the-twist, round-and-round-the-mulberry-bush-then-round-an-extra-twisty-bendy-fruit-loop crazy.** Not throwing the book away in disgust? Good. Then I'll continue. . .

The whole thing started when we saw a pig in a top hat running wild through the house. By "we", I mean my whole family: Mum, Dad and Lib.

Lib – or Liberty – is my little sister. My stupid, curly-haired, whiny, annoying little sister.

She was the first one to see the mysterious pig… and to hear it, for that matter.

I was asleep at that point.

Who am I?

Glad you asked.

I'm Stew Penders, and this is my book.

Confession: it's my first go at writing a book and I'm feeling my way a bit. So, please. . . bear with me.



There – a picture! I couldn't resist! I feel happier when there are drawings involved, you see; I'm more of a comic book kind of guy. I've been writing and

illustrating my own comics since forever. Here's proof:

Well, OK, I may have exaggerated slightly there. But from now on, I won't. I don't need to. This true-life story is crazy enough already.

I'll prove it. Let's get back to the night it all began. . .

There was Libs lying in her strange, unfamiliar bed – unfamiliar because we'd only moved into my granddad's old house that very day, and he'd left lots of old furniture behind, and Libs had whined and whined until Mum and Dad shut her up by saying she could have Granddad's big, wooden sleigh-shaped bed in her room.

Anyway, there she was, surrounded by stuffed animals and princesses and all that rubbish, when suddenly. . .

Snuffle – snuffle —

There's a sinister snuffling outside her bedroom door.

"PIIIIIIIIG!!!" Lib shrieked from across the landing, with way more exclamation marks than I can be bothered to write right now. ***"PIIIIIG!*** In my BEDROOOOOOM!!! It's got a hat on! Big, fat, hairy ***PIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIG!"***



Luckily for the accuracy of this eyewitness account, that was when I woke up. Nine times out of ten, my automatic response would be to shout something brotherly like, **"LIB, SHUT UP AND STOP BEING SO DUMB!"**

But, on this one-tenth of times, I didn't.

Partly that was because I was in a strange bedroom too, and got confused 'cos I didn't know where I was for a few seconds. But mainly it was because I heard a throaty squeal carry above Lib's cries. And, fair play to her, it did sound *exactly* like the sort of sound a big fat hairy **'PIIIIIIG'** might make.

Nah, that's crazy, I told myself. Isn't it?

I checked my watch and saw it was after two in the morning. A split-second later I heard Dad throw open the door to his and Mum's room, which was next door to mine, and shamble outside.

"Something must've got in through the old cat-flap. . ." he said, sounding sleepy and confused. "I don't get it – I boarded the hole up with a piece of two-by-four, a good match for the door, it should've held, no problem. . ."

Dad is a bit of a Do-It-Yourself whizz – or so he likes to think. Eight times out of ten his DIY does it back to him.

But this was no ordinary night.

I was wide awake by now, and waiting for Dad to give Lib a roasting for being stupid, annoying, curly-haired etc and for making stuff up. But the next moment, *he* was shouting too!

"Bryony!" (That's my mum's name, sorry, should've mentioned that.) "Bryony, there really *is* a pig!"

I almost jumped out of my unfamiliar bed in shock. I heard more squeals and snuffling (by now it was hard to tell whether they were coming from Lib or the pig), quickly followed by a loud *thump* as Dad fell over.

"AAAGH!" he shouted. And then my mum joined in with the caterwauling. Or *pig*erwauling, I guess. Her conversation with Dad went like this:

Mum— "A pig?"

Dad— "Yes, a pig! It got past me, don't come out!"

"But, a PIG?"

"Yes! A pig. Must've got in through the—"

"You mean there's a **PIG IN THE HOUSE?**"

"YES, there's a massive pig up here, it's dressed up in—!!"

"Did you say **A PIG?**"

"YESSS!"

Their bellowed duet seemed to go on for ages; I can't be sure, because around then I zoned out. Why? Possibly because my unfamiliar bedroom door had suddenly burst open. . . Yellow brightness had flooded in like a strike of lightning. . .

And there was Liberty's pig, poised dramatically in the doorway. Weirdly, I saw that it was wearing a hat – a big, black top hat, like some posh type would wear maybe a hundred years ago. The pig even seemed to have a curly moustache under its snout (a trick of the light, right?!) and its pink, pudgy body was squeezed into a funny kind of coat.

Luckily, I'm not one to panic in the face of strange goings-on and weird events. I'm calm in a crisis, yeah? Stew Penders – the comic book king of cool heads. I stayed smooth and in control and I. . .

Oh, who am I kidding?

I yelled my bum off.