

## **Glossary of Characters**

*Bacchus Rosewood. (Buttons) Pixie*

*Fitzwinkle Rosewood. Pixie, brother to Buttons*

*Maudia Rosewood. Buttons and Fitzwinkle's mother. Pixwix (Half Pixie, half Witch)*

*Peter Rosewood, Father. Pixie*

*Shadbolt Thistlewick, Grandfather (Maudia's Father) Warlock*

*Drezzil. Maudia's pet. Cross between a dragon and a snail. Secretes green slime from under its tail and eats toads*

*Sam Jamieson. Human son*

*Elle Jamieson. Human daughter*

*George Jamieson. Human Father*

*Susan Jamieson. Human Mother*

*Reverend Gene. Keeper of the code.*

*Amelia Dapheen. Friend. Pixie*

*Helena Dapheen. Friend. Pixie*

*Fenwick (Fen) Dapheen. Friend. Pixie*

*Master Aquilla Quinn. Principal Rooksville School*

*Healer Elwood Finch. Pixie Elder*

*Traveller Flavia Sparrow. Pixie Elder*

*Mistress Ernestine Singo. Deputy Principal Rooksville School*

*Elder Berrefod. Head Elder*

*Mr. Ross, Guidance Officer. Tansy School. Human*

*Miss Russell. Sam and Buttons Teacher, Tansy, Human*

*Mr. Brown. Football Coach, Tansy, Human*

*Mr. Johnson. Sports Head, Tansy, Human*

*Finnias Ragwort. Pixie and Mercenary*

*Simon and Molly Spanner. Human*

*Gorman. Pixie*

## **Chapter One. Prologue**

*"Come on Fitzzy, run!" The wind and driving rain whipped the words from Buttons mouth as he urged his brother forward.*

*“I can't run anymore” gasped Fitzwinkle, a tall, skinny lad, his enormous feet pounding a few metres behind his younger brother.*

*Buttons grabbed his arm, “Come on Fitzwinkle! Ma’s gonna be so mad. She told us not to go out while she was at work. This was your great idea. I don’t want to get in trouble for it.”*

*He pulled his brother close and screamed in his ear “Focus! Wands out! Celox agito!”*

*Fitzwinkle snapped to attention. In one fluid movement the boys executed a perfect spin roll, followed by a leap of almost five metres onto a thin tree branch, barely landing before throwing themselves forward into a body flip landing them 20 metres into the narrow pathway: their only hope of safety.*

*Buttons quickly scanned the precarious pathway. “It’s too dangerous” he yelled.*

*“We have to try. There is no other way” There was a massive flash followed by an earsplitting boom which shook the ground around him.”*

*“aaaah that was nearly a hit.” screamed Fitzwinkle.*

*Another lightning bolt struck the ground in front of them followed by a second chilling boom. The boys froze for an excruciating 5 seconds before powered by adrenalin and fear, in unison they screamed “Absum.”*

*The boys raced down the treacherous pathway across a narrow strip of land. A huge crack of lightning lit up the skies and forked earthwards towards them. An ancient tree behind them exploded into a charred heap showering them with daggers of kindling.*

*Thunder unfolded around them. A brilliant show of multicoloured shards of light raced across the sky. Jagged forks singed the ground with terrifying cracks and sparks of electrical energy.*

*Buttons orange curly hair hung in wet, scaggles barely hiding his pointed ears now purple from the freezing wind. His eyes wide with terror, his heart pounding in his chest, he caught sight of his brother, his clothes, saturated, mud splattered and torn.*

*Suddenly the earth buckled dragging them towards a huge crater in the ground.*

*“We’re going over” screamed Buttons*

### **Earlier**

Normally the little village of Rooksville bustled with activity, but today it was quiet and ominously empty. The main street flowed with mud and rain dripped from peaked roofs on rows of little wooden cottages. A school dominated by a plethora of brightly painted, multishaped structures surrounded by pools of dirty water sat at the edge of a cluster of old-style wooden shops with narrow verandahs in front of them. Each shop crammed to overflowing, with a quaint little tearoom, in the middle of the row, with the name Miss Hazels painted on the window.

At the end of the street was a cottage which looked derelict in comparison to the other smartly painted houses. A poorly maintained picket fence surrounded the house giving it a most unwelcome look. This was where Bacchus (or Buttons as he preferred to be called) and his pixie brother, Fitzwinkle lived with their mother Maudia. But the two boys were not home where they should be; they were over near the lake doing battle with one of the most ferocious storms ever to hit Rooksville. They were trying to make their way home after a very poor decision to brave the elements after being couped up in the house in what was turning out to be the coldest, wettest winter holidays on record.

The whole holidays had been a nightmare. Their mother, Maudia, worked in the Rooksville hospital laundry for most of the day and the boys were expected to clean the house and cook the evening meal. Maudia had been in the worst of moods after work, dripping rain all over the floor and cold from fighting the continual rain. Each night was the same as she screamed her anger and frustration at her sons, waving her wand which seemed to reflect her rage with hot sparks and ominous crackles. “A decent witch shouldn’t have to work for a living. If my father hadn’t been so stupid as to marry a pixie, I could have been the most powerful witch in the country. And as for your own father, that ‘good for nothing’ gave me two useless pixie sons, neither of you having an ounce of warlock about you. For two hoots of a white owl, I would put you in an orphanage.”

*‘She would never do that’...thought Fitzwinkle, ‘who would do the housework’.*

This particular morning had been worse than usual. Maudia woke in a foul mood, her head throbbing and cold symptoms brewing. Unable to scream she croaked out orders giving them extra chores for the day to *‘keep you out of mischief while I have to work to support you brats.’*

“You will polish the woodstove with boot black, chop and stack extra wood for the stove, clean the dust from under the beds and make sure you clean the slime trail Drezzil has left in the house. I want this place spotless and a decent dinner when I get home you little ingrates, or it will be all the worse for you.” She slammed out the door and shrieked her final abuse “No wands and STAY IN THE HOUSE!” pointing her wand at the door and locking them in.

Drezzil was Maudia’s pet and both boys disliked him immensely. He looked like a cross between an enormous snail and a dragon with all the worst genes of both. He didn’t breathe fire but his enormous jaw dribbled green slime when he was hungry. Green slime also constantly oozed from the pores under his long tail allowing him to slide like a snail along the wooden floors in the house. Cane toads were attracted to the green slime and crept into the house during the day only to find the goo they loved so much was nature’s way of attracting food for the Drezzil. One slurp of Drezzil’s long purple tongue and they were gone. He took delight in sliding across the floors where the boys cleaned and deliberately left the innards of the cane toads where Maudia would find them.

Fitzwinkle sighed loudly “Some holiday..... Rain. rain and more rain, Maudia’s anger to contend with, Drezzil sliding in and out of the muddy yard and to top it off, these assignments our teachers have given us over the holidays.” He grumbled pointing to their mess of books on the table.

Since the first day of the holidays, clouds filled the sky and rain tumbled down bringing with it the worst floods of the century.

It was the last day of the holidays and both boys sat beside the cold woodstove looking at each other with long faces and drawing sticks to see who would go out in the wet to get wood for the fire. Buttons looked at the house.... It was a mess again, Fitzwinkle’s assignment wasn’t finished and Drezzil was sliding all around the kitchen trying to catch a large cane toad. Buttons took one look at the cane toad and immediately began to heave.

“I just can’t take this anymore” he gasped as he retched into the basin they used for a sink. “I’d rather be at school than in this house a moment longer’.

Buttons was much smaller than his tall, lanky brother, pointed ears peeped out from under his orange hair, his green eyes wide giving him a look of constant surprise. Although he was thin from too much work and not enough good food Buttons was more in proportion than poor Fitzwinkle who looked like he had inherited the worst genes of both parents. At this moment he was wringing his thin brown hands and he looked ready to burst into tears.

Fitzwinkle peered out the window.

**It was flooded everywhere.** The garden was now a mud pile, the grass was covered in slush and in some places only the tops of the fences were showing through the water.

But to his delight a tiny ray of sunshine poked through the clouds and the rain lightened to a drizzle

“Hey Buttons,” he yelled dancing up and down. “The sun’s coming out. Forget the housework for now; let’s go down to the lake. It will be the highest we’ve ever seen it. It will be awesome.” he said excitedly.

“Oh Yeah” answered Buttons still staring at the cold stove. “Be real. Who’s going to clean up this mess and get the fire going? Anyway, Ma locked the door.”

Fitzwinkle grabbed his brother’s arm “Come on Buttons. You know your better at magic than Ma. You can unlock any door” he whined. “We won’t get another chance if we don’t go now, its school tomorrow. If we slip through the forest, we can be back before Ma gets home and use our wands to clean; she’ll never know. Oh, come on.... We’ve been stuck in this house all week. It’s the only chance we’ll get. It might never rain this much again. **Pleeeeeease Buttons.** I’ll cook dinner for you tonight and clean up the dishes... and clean up Drezzil’s mess.....” he added as a last resort.

That was too much for Buttons, he hated cooking dinner, he hated cleaning up after Drezzil and he knew it was his turn to do both.

“Alright, but you better not get me into any more trouble, and you better clean up this mess when we get home” he warned. “If she catches us using our wands, she’ll lock them up. You know how jealous she is.” Buttons in particular was out stripping Maudia’s skills with a wand as **his pixie skills increased daily.**

“Oh goody, goody, goody” chirped Fitzwinkle hopping up and down on one skinny leg immediately putting his grand promise out of his mind and forgetting the rule of doing the chores without magic. Maudia had never gone as far as breaking their wands as the school committee would have punished her severely, but she was capable of making them suffer.

“Let’s go then, wands in pockets in case we need them”

Taking much longer than usual, the boys fought their way through the slush and mud towards the lake.

“The storm looks like its building up again” said Buttons eyeing off the huge black clouds billowing like blankets just above their heads.

“Nah, it’ll be okay” said Fitzwinkle confidently “we can’t turn back now, we’re nearly there.”

“It’s getting awfully late” cautioned Buttons still trudging along behind him.

“Oh damn!” exclaimed Fitzwinkle stopping so suddenly Buttons crashed into him almost knocking him over. “Careful” he added.

“Now what?” said Buttons crossly.

“Look” said Fitzwinkle pointing in the distance to what looked like a raging river. “We’ll never make it to the lake through that. It’s flooding so much there’s now a river where our track used to be. Anyway, I’m tired, we may as well head back.”

“Wow” said Buttons. “I’ve never seen that much water..... Ever!”

A huge drum roll of thunder echoed across the sky. The boys looked up. The black clouds had become an ominous green.

“Oh my” yelled Buttons “**Hail!! Here it comes..... run!!!!**”

Fitzwinkle regained his energy spurred on by fear of the storm but more so the fear of his mother's anger at being disobeyed.

Maudia's evil temper created its own powerful electrical storm when she was angry, which was quite often and mostly directed at her two mischievous sons. Sparks flew from her orange hair, steam rings poured from her nostrils her eyes glowed red and dangerous as she raged at the boys before lashing out punishments they trembled to think about.

Both had spent many hours transformed into ugly cane toads, hiding under furniture so her hideous pet Drezzil wouldn't devour them in one gulp. Poor Buttons only had to think about toads to make him tremble until he was sick to his stomach.

Fitzwinkle knew this time they had gone too far. What would become of them? If the storm didn't annihilate them, their mother Maudia might well finish them off.

"Yow ow ouch. **Quick, we must find shelter.** Here under this oak tree."

The boys huddled under the tree as the hail hurled down leaving piles of ice in its wake.

"We can't stay here" warned Fitzwinkle "we might get hit by lightning."

"Well now what? Our way back is flooded. **We are trapped?**" yelled Buttons over the pounding of the hail, "anymore bright ideas?"

"Yes! This way. Over Forbidden Ridge" said Fitzwinkle, grabbing Buttons by the arm and pointing, "I've been this way before."

"No way, Forbidden Ridge is too dangerous and its still hailing." answered Buttons.

**"It's better than getting killed. Come on the hail is slowing now."**

Both boys peered into the darkness, trying to make out the narrow ridge between their village and the lake. Buttons knew they were forbidden by the elders to go that way, but it was their only choice.

"It's okay" promised Fitzwinkle, "I've been this way heaps of times."

Buttons looked back the way they had come. They had no choice; a river of water covered their tracks and was surging towards them. A few more minutes and they would drown or be swept away.

The boys started to run towards the ridge, slipping and sliding in the mud. They could just make out the narrow spit of land.

Fitzwinkle was tiring. Although he was the eldest at fourteen next to Buttons twelve years, he was also inclined to be the laziest when it came to the physical stuff. He slowed a little, taking time to glance down at his new green shoes and long rainbow-coloured stockings. They were covered in mud. Maudia was going to hit the roof. **She hated buying new clothes for them,** but poor Fitzwinkle had grown at an alarming rate and was already the height of a full-grown witch. Begrudgingly she had to buy him new clothes for school and Fitzwinkle, against his mother's orders had put them on this morning to impress his younger brother. Now he shuddered at the thought of what Maudia would do when she saw the condition they were in. *Any other time they would have laughed at the sight of each other, but for now they were caught up in the danger that flashed and boomed around them. Trees fell like dominoes while a huge torrent of water swept across the path between them and the safety of home.*

**"Come on Fitzzy, run!"** yelled Buttons again. "You got us into this now get moving and get us out of it"!

As if on cue an enormous display of lightning crackled around them; peals of thunder drowned all other noises; the ground shook beneath their feet with a terrifying tremble. Forked lightning drove to the earth one bolt after another. Trees exploded on either side of the ridge. Blinded by

rain they could hear the explosions and the deafening roar of the raging water close behind them.

The boys clung to each other in fear and horror staring at the fury of Nature, scared to go on and unable to turn back.

“I feel like I’ve fallen into a war zone or a monster fireworks display” trembled Fitzwinkle.

**Neither of them noticed a small figure paralysed with fear**, watching them with horror from the other side of the expanse of water as he held onto a young sapling as if his life depended on it.

Suddenly the earth buckled dragging them towards a huge crater in the ground.

**“We’re going over”** screamed Buttons

Unable to stop themselves, the boys began to fall. Faster and faster they slid, mud and trees following them.

Over and over they went tossing about like pieces of garbage, crashing into boulders, joining tree limbs as they raced down the mountain in a torrent of muddy water. The thick foul-smelling mud clogged their nostrils, filled their mouths, crushing the breath from their lungs. Torn from his brother and terrified beyond reason Buttons felt he would never survive. A blinding flash of light accompanied by his last thought before slipping into unconsciousness, was, wondering if his mother would regret their deaths.

Buttons could hear someone crying. **He didn’t know people cried when they were dead.** His body seemed awfully sore, and he could still feel light rain on his face. He opened one eye cautiously; he was in a large green forest surrounded by trees; many he didn’t instantly recognize. He opened the other eye as much as he could considering it was swelling very quickly and quite painful to touch. He appeared to be lying in a thick, sludgy pool at the bottom of an enormous mudslide. Fitzwinkle was sitting beside him sobbing like a baby and apparently very much alive.

“Where am I?” croaked Buttons. **“Am I dead?”**

“Oh, Buttons you’re not dead. I thought you were dead. It’s all my fault” he babbled hugging his younger brother and then quickly letting him go when Buttons winced with pain.

“Yes, I know it’s your fault, now stop blubbering and hugging me and tell me where we are?” he answered crossly

“I don’t know” sniveled Fitzwinkle, **“But I don’t think it looks like any place we’ve ever been before.** Are you okay?”

“I think so” said Buttons carefully sitting up and feeling all his bones to make sure nothing was broken. “I’m awfully wet and muddy though and gosh I’m so sore.”

“Yeah, well come on we better go and see if we can get cleaned up and find out where we are” said his brother taking command. He had recovered from his sobbing seeing Buttons wasn’t dead.

## Chapter Two. Where are they?

The boys trudged through the forest, the rain stopped, the sun came out warming the pair and drying the mud still caked on their clothes.

Buttons stopped suddenly “**How long was I unconscious Fitzy?**”

“Not long, just enough to scare me. Why?”

“The sun isn’t even midway through the sky. Its early morning here. We headed to the lake late afternoon. I’m really scared, something is off. Where have we landed Fitzy.”

“I don’t know Buttons. I don’t recognize any of these trees or plants either, I just want to go home, go to bed and forget this day ever happened.”

“**Yeah, like Ma’s gonna let us forget this**” said Buttons, reality starting to hit him.

“We are in so much trouble” he added.

But Fitzwinkle was too sore and too traumatized from the mudslide to comprehend reality.

After clambering over rocks, pushing their way through ferns and prickly bracken, and climbing endless hills, they came to a small waterfall which dropped down to a clear stream bubbling its way through granite grey rock pools. Cautiously they climbed down the bank beside the waterfall and looked at their reflections in one of the rock pools. Both boys were horrified at what they saw. **Mud, scratches cuts and bruises** covered nearly every inch of their bodies.

“We can’t walk around like this” exclaimed Buttons. “We have to clean up. No decent person will speak to us let alone give us any help if we look like this.”

Fitzwinkle's skinny legs, earlier so bright in his rainbow-coloured stockings, looked more like thick, brown camel legs, his green suede jacket had twigs, leaves and mud sticking out of all twelve pockets and his muddy three-quarter pants had a large hole in the back revealing slashes of bright red underwear. Buttons looked just as bad except he had a huge black eye which was slowly closing, and his orange hair was now streaked with mud and green slime. The purple boots and brown leather pants had fared better than Fitzwinkle's pants but were thick with mud and his green jacket was also covered in an array of flora and mud. Suddenly his dirty face paled and his good eye filled with terror.

**"What is it?"** whispered Fitzwinkle, "What's wrong?"

"My pocket, my pocket" stuttered Buttons "in my Jacket Pocket." He stood rigid as Fitzwinkle carefully felt in the pocket Buttons was pointing to.

Fitzwinkle screamed loudly making Buttons scream too.

**"Aaaaaah. AAAAAh."** They both stood there, screams echoing through the forest as Fitzwinkle bravely grabbed a large, slimy brown toad out of the pocket and threw it into the mudslide.

"Oh, that's too disgusting, too disgusting" Buttons said, heaving into a bush. "I hate toads, I hate toads so much.

"It's okay Buttons, it's gone now. Come on, stop spewing and let's clean ourselves up."

The boys looked around. There wasn't a soul in sight, so they stripped down to their bright red underwear and jumped into the icy cold stream just below the waterfall.

The cold water revived them instantly and for a few minutes the boys forgot their worries and played and frolicked like the usual boy children they were. They washed their clothes and lay them on some rocks to dry, Fitzwinkle felt around in pocket and pulled out a small, battered wand.

"I'll hurry the drying up" he told Buttons confidently, "I've seen Ma do it a thousand times" and waved his wand muttering a few words under his breath. But unfortunately, his magic skills were still developing and although the clothes dried quickly, he also managed to burn a hole in his jacket to match the one in his pants.

**"Oh no" he groaned, I'm no good at magic mending.** I can't possibly go around with my undies hanging out of my clothes."

Buttons laughed. "I'll do this" he said. "I got an A for magic mending this year. I certainly needed it with all the fights we got into. I think my wand survived the fall"

He pulled an equally battered wand from under his shirt, waved it over Fitzwinkle's clothes. Instantly the holes were covered but unfortunately with pretty pink material with bright yellow flowers.

"Great." Moaned Fitzwinkle **"you also cheated off Maisie Fairweather, didn't you?"**

Buttons blushed, "well at least you won't be flashing red undies at the world."

"Might be less embarrassing than wearing pink and yellow flowers on my clothes which match Maisie Fairweather's school skirt" Fitzwinkle muttered back.

"Oh, don't be a grump, come on, let's find someone who can help us. I'd even settle for finding a witch.... Maybe." Said Buttons and the two brothers dressed quickly heading off beside the stream down through the forest.

"I hope this lesson we learnt at school pays off. 'Always follow a stream if you are lost. You have a better chance of finding civilization'" quoted Fitzwinkle in Master Quinn's nasally voice.

Buttons laughed “you sound just like him. I wonder what he’ll say when Ma tells him we’ve disappeared.”

“Probably think she’s murdered us or something and have her incarcerated.” Fitzwinkle tried to picture his mother being dragged away by Enforcers and locked in the house with spells binding her to isolation. He shuddered at the thought of her anger.

Luckily both boys took after their full blooded Rooksville father. In fact, the only way you tell there was anything different about them was the bright orange hair like their mother and Fitzwinkle’s excessive height.

**“I wonder where Pa is these days”** said Fitzwinkle suddenly. Peter (their father) had disappeared when the boys were little after a terrible row with his wife Maudia. He had not been seen by anyone since. After a year long search for clues the townsfolk (and Maudia) had agreed that Peter Rosewood was “officially” lost or dead. Maudia was convinced he had run away with the boy’s music teacher as she had disappeared on the exact same day. Some believed Maudia had killed him.

“What made you think of him now?” asked Buttons curiously.

“I dunno. Probably because **we are lost and maybe he is too.**”

“He’s not lost” retorted Buttons. “He just wants us to think he’s lost. I just wish he had taken us when he disappeared.”

“I wonder if he will ever come back?” sighed Fitzwinkle.

Buttons laughed “Not if he’s smart.”

The boys walked on deep in these thoughts when suddenly Fitzwinkle tripped over and landed on a very hard surface.

“Ouch” he said, examining his scraped knee and a new hole in his now very clean rainbow stocking. “Ouch, what sort of pathway is this?”

They had stumbled out of the forest and onto a long narrow path made of a hard, black material. “I have no idea.” exclaimed Buttons. “Look it’s got a white line down the middle of it.” He ran over to have a closer look.

“Why would you have a wide path with a white line running down the centre?” he thought out loud.

Buttons heard the rumble first which seemed to get louder as it approached. It was heading towards the boys down the wide path which Fitzwinkle was standing on.

**“What is it Fitzy?”** shouted Buttons

“I don’t know. ... quick back in the bushes.”

The boys ran to the safety of the trees and watched in awe as a noisy contraption with four wheels and a tiny house mounted on them, loaded with strange looking men rounded the corner and disappeared into the distance. Fitzwinkle gazed after it for a moment and then spoke quietly to his brother.

“A travel machine, that’s what it is. I’ve heard of them. Master Quinn spoke of them after returning from a long journey and drew a diagram for us on the pink board. They travel up and down these wide paths taking people from place to place. I think he called them carps... or cars or something like that. Oh my goodness. Where are we, what have we done?”

“Are you telling me we are in a different world, Fitzy?” asked Buttons carefully.

“I think.. maybe... it’s possible. We must be very, very careful until we find out. Stay out of sight for a while and definitely off those hard paths. If one of those travel machines hit you...phoo, you’ll be history.”

The boys walked on keeping to the grass and hiding when they heard the rumbling sounds of the travel machines.

Once they saw a strange boy riding a fancy looking bicycle. He was a lot bigger than most boys they knew so they wondered if he might be a pixwix like their mother.

“I hope there’s not too many like him” shuddered Buttons at the thought. “But did you see that cool bike?”

People used bicycles or walked to move about. Masters whose magic had been developed at Advanced Education Schools were able to travel freely using their powers, disappearing and popping up wherever they wanted. Some like Master Quinn and Traveller Sparrow were explorers and travelled to places other pixies never heard of. Buttons wished he’d listened more carefully in classes of pixie exploration; he certainly would when he got back... if he got back.

Just as he started to feel a little morbid about the whole day again Fitzwinkle grabbed his arm “**Cottages**” he said.

Buttons looked ahead; sure enough there were some cottages. Not like the one he lived in but more like rectangular boxes with no chimneys, some with another house on top.

“I wonder how they cook?” he thought, immediately thinking of food.

“They are very straight” said Buttons, “and not many colours. I wonder if any of these inhabitants are friendly and if we could get something to eat?”

“Let’s try the first one,” answered Fitzwinkle.

“Ok but be very careful. See if anyone is around and if they look friendly.”

The boys peeped in the windows, silently sneaking around to the back of the house.

“I don’t think anyone’s home” whispered Buttons.

“Good” said Fitzwinkle “we can slip in and get something to eat and be on our way before anyone sees us.” And with that he went to open a wooden door beside the window they had just peered in. “It seems stuck” he said.

“Let me,” said Buttons. “There seems to be some sort of bolt on the door that stops it from opening. I can fix that” and he zapped the bolt with his little wand. “I am a bit worried what sort of people live here and why would they bolt the door?”

“**Stop worrying and find some food.**” Answered Fitzwinkle bravely.

The brothers wandered through the house stopping to examine strange looking articles of furniture and other items in the house.

“Hey Buttons, come and take a look at this.” Buttons followed Fitzwinkle’s voice into what looked like a cooking room with out a woodstove. He had opened the door of a white shiny cupboard which had ice vapour coming out of it.

“**Wow, a food place so cold IT STEAMS.**” Buttons said and there’s heaps of food in here. What would you like?”

“Corn beef, cabbage and potatoes. Let’s have that. I found some apples we can make a pie.” Fitzwinkle said quickly.

“But there’s no wood stove.”

“They must cook it somewhere.” Buttons answered standing next to a square metal white object and fiddling with knobs on the front. “What’s this? Ouch” he said “That’s hot. Hey, I think it’s some sort of cooking stove with out wood. It seems hot enough to cook on. How good is that? No chopping wood or anything”

Fitzwinkle being the better cook, quickly set about finding some pots to cook them both a much-needed meal.

Buttons wandered about the house, looking in cupboards and poking into corners. “There are some very strange gadgets here, I’m not sure what sort of people live in this house, but I am beginning to wonder if they are our sort of people at all.”

Buttons looked into the pots and said, “with a bit of my magic this food should be cooked, we can eat quickly, and be on our way again.”

There was a rumble outside in front of the house.

“Quick Fitzy, see what that is while I hurry this food up.”

Fitzwinkle ran to the window and looked out. “It’s one of those travel machines and it’s stopped right outside the house. There is a family getting out. Oh no, they don’t look like any family I’ve seen before.”

“Are they Witches or Pixies?” yelled back Buttons.

“They don’t look like either. I don’t know what they are, but they are coming up the path. Quick hide.”

“**What about food, I’m starving**” wailed Buttons.

“Forget the food, just find a place and hide. Quick!”

The boys ran around the house in a frenzy trying to find a place to hide. Finding a set of stairs, they ran up them hoping to find a way out but there didn’t seem to be an outside door. Buttons ran into a large bedroom with a huge bed in it.

“**I’m not being caught in a room with something that sleeps in a bed that big**” he panicked and ran in to another room further down the passage diving under a small bed with a bright red bedspread on it. He figured at least he had a chance against something smaller if it fitted in this bed, while Fitzwinkle crammed himself into a cupboard in another bedroom but had to scrunch down to avoid being seen through a window at the top of the door.

### Chapter Three. The pixies are discovered

No sooner were they hidden when the front door opened the three occupants of the vehicle Fitzwinkle had seen, walked in. The biggest was obviously the mother, had soft brown hair which curled gently around her gentle face; she was about 168 centimeters tall and had a well fed look about her body. Fitzwinkle couldn't see her, but her voice sounded pleasant enough to install a surge of hope they would not be killed on sight. The other two were children.

"What's that wonderful smell?" said the mother. "Dad must be home as dinners nearly ready. Oh, my goodness, he's even made an apple pie. I didn't know he could make apple pie. George... George dear, we're home. Children, go and get washed for dinner, I'm hungry and dinner smells great."

The two children ran upstairs to the bathroom washed their hands then came down and sat at the table in the dining room bickering and waiting for dinner.

A few minutes later their mother appeared with plates of food. Immediately one of the children started to whine "I hate corn beef, and I'm not eating that cabbage."

"Come on Sam," said the mother. "Your father's been good enough to prepare a meal; you can at least have the decency to eat it."

"Where is Dad?" asked the other child, a female.

"You know your father; he's probably gone off on one of his scientific tangents and forgotten all about dinner. He'll be back when he's ready."

Buttons was in agony listening to the family devour the dinner he helped prepare. His stomach growled ominously, and the mother looked around.

**"Did you hear something?"** she said.

"No, and this cabbage is disgusting. Can I at least have the television on if I must eat it?" whined the boy.

"No, you can't Sam. You can do your homework first."

"Oh mu... um" he whined.

"It's no use whining. You know what your father said. Your report card this term was pretty close to terrible so it's a bit more study and a little less TV for you young man. Now do you want some apple pie before you go, or do you want it later?"

"I think I'll have it later" the boy said.

"I'll have some now thanks, mum" said the female of the two children.

Buttons could not believe his ears, not only were they eating the best meal he had seen in months and complaining about it, but this mother was also waiting on the children like they were royalty or something. What sort of place had they landed in?

He slid back under the bed as the boy came into the room and threw himself on the bed. A cloud of dust rained down on Buttons and he felt his nose start to twitch. He grabbed it hard with two fingers. **“Sneetch!”**

A face appeared under the red bedspread and two sets of terrified eyes stared briefly at each other. The boy opened his mouth to scream. As quick as a flash Buttons grabbed a sock from beside the bed, stuffed it in the boy’s mouth, dragged him under the bed and held him in a headlock. He silently thanked the boys who had bullied him and Fitzwinkle for years, for his speedy reaction to the imminent danger of being discovered.

**“Please don’t dob me in. I won’t hurt you”** whispered Buttons his heart pounding loudly. The boy continued to struggle in the headlock, his face pale and eyes reflecting his fear.

“Honestly, I’m lost, I’m scared and I’m starving. I only came in to find some food, but you came home before I could leave.” He decided wisely not to mention Fitzwinkle hiding in the cupboard in another room.

**“Please don’t give me away.”**

Buttons released his hold on the boy’s head but as soon as he did the boy jumped up and went to the door. Buttons felt defeated; he would be discovered by the mother and who knows what would happen to him. Two big tears welled in his eyes and trickled down his cheeks. He was hungry and scared but the terrifying thought of facing a mother was just the last straw. Instead of calling his mother the boy closed the door and turned back and stared defiantly at Buttons. **“Who are you? You’re a very strange looking boy. You look like a pixie in a fairytale, you have two minutes before I call mum.”**

“My name’s Buttons and I think **you** are a very strange looking boy. Are you a pixwix?” Answered Buttons.

The boy looked about the same age as Buttons but taller and definitely several kilos heavier. His hair was brown and cut very short showing tiny pink ears not at all like the normal brown pointed boy ears which Buttons was used to.

“No, I’m not a Pixwix. There are no such things as a pixwix.” Said the boy.

**“Is so!!** And if you’re not a pixwix, what are you?”

“I’m a human silly.”

“What’s a human” asked Buttons. “I’ve never heard of one and I’m not silly.”

“A human is what everyone is and if you’re not a human what are you.”

“I am a rooksvillian or Rook for short. Is a human a mortal? I have heard some of our explorers talk about mortals”

“Yes, mortals and humans are the same thing. Are you magic?” asked the boy.

“I’m learning at school. But I hate school. Everyone teases me because I’m different”

“Me too” said the boy sitting down on the bed next to Buttons. “Why do they tease you? I thought kids would think its cool having a rooksvillian in the class. Especially if you can do magic.”

“Its ‘cause my mother’s a half blood, the only one in the village. She’s a pixwix which make me part pixwix too and all the other kids are full blooded Rooks.” Said Buttons. “Why do kids tease you? Can you do magic”

**“Most humans are non-magic,** but I would love to learn some” Sam replied hopefully. “My father works from home and is a scientist. He is always inventing things, some work and some don’t. People don’t understand and think my dad’s a nutter, but he’s not. Just different. Are there really more like you?”

“Yeah. ‘Course there are. Everyone’s like me (mostly).” Buttons thought about his long lanky brother hiding somewhere in this human house.

“How did you get here?” asked the boy.

“In a mud slide. A huge mudslide in the middle of the forest.”

“**Hey this is so cool,**” said the boy excitedly, “**I can’t wait to tell my friends.**”

“Please don’t tell anyone, I just want to go home” said Buttons and started to cry again.

“Oh well,” hesitated the boy. “I suppose I can help. What should I do first?”

“I’m really starving,” said Buttons. “We..I just about finished cooking when you came home.”

“You cooked dinner?” said the boy in disbelief.

“Yeah, why not. Me and.... I mean I always have to cook.” He almost mentioned Fitzwinkle but caught himself at the last minute.

“Man, I can’t even cook toast. What’s with your mother, doesn’t she cook?”

“whew not our..... I mean my mother.”

“Well next time you cook forget the cabbage. It really sucks.”

“I would give anything for a plate of cabbage right now” and poor Buttons stomach growled loudly.

“Would you do my homework if I bring you some food?” asked the boy slyly.

“If I can. I’m pretty good at our school. I can see if your work is like ours,” said Buttons eagerly.

“Okay I’ll see what I can get from the kitchen. I haven’t had my pie yet so I can get you a piece too. I’ll see if I can get you some corn beef and cabbage as well. But you have to do my homework.” As he turned to go to the door he asked back over his shoulder “by the way, my name’s Sam, what’s yours?”

“Sam, that’s a pretty easy name to remember, mine’s Buttons.”

“**Cool**” said Sam “I’ve never met anyone called Buttons before.” And he disappeared out of the room closing the door behind him.

While all this was happening in Sam’s room, Fitzwinkle was getting more and more cramped in his tiny cupboard space, his long legs curled up around his pointed ears. It had been very quiet for about five minutes, so he gradually unraveled himself and poked his head up to the window at the top of the door. The glass was a little foggy from his breathing, so he pressed his nose flat against the glass as he endeavored to see what was happening outside the cupboard. He moved his nose around trying to see what was in the room. There were drawers, and toys and a bed and

“**Oh my Golly**” he almost screamed. Standing with hands on hips and feet akimbo was a small female, staring at him with a look of shock and disbelief. Her blonde pigtails and bright blue eyes twitched in unison as she turned to the door and shouted:

“**Mum. There’s a big, tall pixie in my cupboard staring at me.**”

“Yes dear, not now, My show is on.”

Sam suddenly appeared at her door.

“What did you say?” he demanded.

“Nothing” she answered.

“Did you say there’s a pixie in your cupboard?” he went on grabbing her by the arm.

“Yes, I did. And I don’t care if you don’t believe me, let go of my arm.” She cried.

“Are you two fighting?” yelled their mother.

“No mum, its okay. Watch your show. **Quick Elle, show me this pixie**”

Elle pointed to the cupboard, but Fitzwinkle had slid down in a tangled heap once more trying to stay out of sight and wondering how to get away.

Sam raced over and pulled open the cupboard door and Fitzwinkle fell out in a heap.

**“How many more of you are there?”** Sam whispered vehemently.

“Just the two of us, me and my brother.” Said Fitzwinkle shyly.

“Why did you think he was a pixie, Elle?” demanded Sam.

“He looks like the ones in my book only much taller.”

“That’s ‘cause my mother’s a pixwix” said Fitzwinkle.

**“What’s a pix wix?”** said Elle curiously.

“It’s half a Rooksvillian and half a witch and before you say anymore his brothers in my room. Come on and don’t make any noise. I don’t think this is a good thing for mum to see right now. Better wait till Dad comes home.”

Sam pushed Elle and Fitzwinkle down the passage and into his room where Buttons was just about to dive under the bed again.

The two brothers took one look at each other and hugged, dancing around in a little circle.

“Quiet you two” ordered Sam. “This is all a little crazy. What are we going to do with you?”

**“Feed us”** chorused the two boys.

“Okay, wait here. Come on Elle come and help me get some food for them.”

“I don’t want to...” she started.

**“I’m not leaving you here.** Come on” said Sam and he frog marched her out the door.

“Do you think they’ll tell?” said Buttons when they had gone.

“I dunno” said his brother. “I’m too hungry to care.”

Fitzwinkle opened the door a crack and listened. He could hear the two children in the kitchen; he heard the mother call out again.

“What are you two doing in the fridge already?”

I’m hungry again Mum, we played footy all afternoon at school. I’m just getting a bit more meat and a slice of pie. My cabbage has gone down now. Actually, it’s not so bad; I might even try a bit more.” Sam screwed his face up at the thought.

“Alright, but I don’t want to see you out here again until your homework is done.”

**“Okay. Okay”** he answered.

“And Elle you get ready for bed dear.”

“Yes, mum another 30 minutes please. I’m reading my school library book for a while.”

The children hurriedly dished up some meat and vegetables, cut three big slices of pie, poured a glass of milk and a glass of water before heading back to the room.

“What are we going to do with the pixies Sam?” asked Elle.

“I have no idea. **I don’t even believe in pixies.** They’re only in kids story books and now I have two in my room. Don’t you say anything to any one until I figure this whole thing out. Okay?” said Sam.

“I suppose so” said Elle a little doubtfully, “but you won’t hurt them will you?”

Fitzwinkle held his breath waiting for the answer and then sighed with relief as he heard Sam say, **“Not if they don’t hurt us.”**

The two pixies gulped down the food and shared the water. Sam almost retched as he watched them devouring the cabbage and apple pie together.

“Oh yuk, how can you guys eat that stuff, it’s disgusting,” said Sam

“Sometimes that’s all we get for weeks on end. It’s better than going hungry or being turned into a toad for complaining” said Fitzwinkle.

Elle looked horrified at the thought. **“Your mother turns you into toads if you’re naughty?”** she whispered. “She must be a very mean mother”.

Buttons stuck his finger in the milk.

“What’s this?” he asked suspiciously.

“Milk. You drink it.” Said Elle.

Buttons took a sip.

“Not bad. Where does it come from?”

“Out of a cow,” said Sam.

**“What’s a cow?”** Buttons asked putting the glass down hastily.

“You don’t know what a cow is? It’s a big brown animal.” Said Elle

Buttons looked horrified.

“It’s okay...All kids drink it. It’s very good for your teeth and bones.” She added

”Really” said Fitzwinkle quite fascinated “well maybe I could try a little.”

He took a sip **“Oh yeah I could get used to that.”**

“Next time I will put chocolate whip in it. You’ll really like it then.” laughed Sam.

“What’s chocolate whip?” asked Buttons.

“Enough questions just finish your food and then we need to make a plan.” Sam answered.

The boys finished their meal, tidied their plates and wiped their faces on their shirt sleeves.

Fitzwinkle sighed in appreciation “Ohhh that was wonderful. Gosh I’m a good cook.”

“Hmmp, only when it suits you, but I sped it up with my magic” answered Buttons.

“You can do magic?” asked Elle with eyes as round as saucers.

Buttons and Fitzroy both nodded and Elle beamed at them, all fear of the boys now forgotten.

“Well, the first thing you have to magic is my homework or Mum will be in here rousting on me. **You promised Buttons,**” Said Sam.

“Okay, fairs fair. Give me a look but I can’t promise anything.” Buttons replied.

Sam reached into his backpack and pulled out an exercise book and a sheet of paper handing them both to Buttons.

Buttons read through the work sheet and looked at Sam. “What else do you have to do?”

**“What else? What do you mean what else?”** said Sam excitedly, “Isn’t that enough?”

“It doesn’t seem like much. I’ll have this finished in a flash. Where’s your quill?”

“My what?” said Sam.

“Your Quill.” repeated his sister. “He needs a pen you dummy.”

“How do you know so much about Rooksvillians?” retorted Sam handing Buttons a pen.

**“Reading.”** Elle said raising her eyebrows scornfully. “Something you don’t do very often, and I still think they are pixies”

“Who reads when you can watch TV?” retorted Sam.

“What’s TV?” asked Fitzwinkle.

**“What! You don’t know what TV is?”** answered Sam with a horrified expression.

“I don’t know what TV is either and I certainly don’t know what this weird thing you gave me is when I asked for a quill.” Buttons interrupted.

“It’s a pen. You write with it.” explained Elle. “Look I’ll show you.”

She took the pen, clicked the end making the nib appear and wrote her name on the outside of the exercise book.

**“Hey that’s really cool”** said Buttons taking the pen and writing his name and then Fitzwinkle’s next to Elle’s.

“Stop writing on my book and do my homework” grumbled Sam.  
“Sorry” said Buttons “but it’s neat. I’d love to take one of them home.”  
“I’ll give you a whole handful of them if you’ll just finish my homework.” said Sam.

Buttons opened the exercise book and started writing. He wrote quickly and quietly for about five minutes and then handed Sam the book.

Sam gasped when he saw the work. Beautiful calligraphy all neat, well spelt and math set out in a unique but understandable fashion.

“**This is great**” but then his face fell. “No one will ever believe I did this” he said.

Buttons looked through the book; Sam’s work was careless, misspelt and untidy.

“Tell your teacher you’ve been studying, and later Buttons can show you how we write” suggested Fitzwinkle.

“When are we going home?” said Buttons starting to look worried.

“Not for a while” said Fitzwinkle, “there are too many good things to learn, and we don’t know how we will get there yet.”

“Dad will know,” said Elle. “He’s a scientist.”

“I’m not sure even Dad will know, Elle.” said her brother. “Come on it’s time for bed. You boys better sleep in here, I’ll figure out a good time to tell the parents.”

“That’s not fair,” said Elle. “I found Fitzwinkle, he’s, my pixie. I want him to sleep under my bed. I want to see some magic”

“They are no one’s pixies and they are both boys. Dad will not understand if he finds a one hundred and seventy centimeter tall, male anything in your bedroom. He’ll probably call the police.” said Sam.

“I s’pose” grumbled Elle.

“See you tomorrow little one” said Fitzwinkle waving his hand and making tiny stars sprinkle down his arm.

“**Wow**” said both Sam and Elle at the same time. Fitzwinkle tapped Elle gently on the nose sprinkling her with stars, before she reluctantly left the room and, still smiling, climbed into bed.

“You two will have to sleep under the spare bed until I tell the parents. It’s better than them finding you in the middle of the night. Mum sometimes still comes in and kisses me good night. Even though I am too old” he added hastily.

Buttons looked sad. “I wish I had some one to kiss me good night” he said wistfully, then rolled under the bed and fell straight to sleep.

#### **Chapter Four. Maudia discovers her sons missing**

Maudia arrived home from work in a fearsome mood to find Drezzil having the run of the house and neither boy in sight.

The hospital laundry had been busier than usual, and she had arrived home expecting the house spotless and a meal waiting on the stove. The tiny kitchen was cold, schoolbooks were scattered on the kitchen table, the woodstove looked like it had gone out hours before and not a sign of dinner cooking. Disbelief then anger followed by rage at the boy’s blatant disregard for her rules. Maudia’s orange hair sparked and crackled lightning bolts, while her breath sent smoke rings from her nostrils.

**“Oh ho, you brats are gonna suffer when I get my hands on you”** she screeched. “You’ll spend the rest of the year as vermin at the mercy of Drezzil, you’ll get cabbage water for dinner. you’ll.. you’ll” she was so angry spittle ran from the corner of her mouth as she slammed from room to room looking for her sons.

The pixies’ bedroom was empty, and beds unmade, her room was just how she left it. The laundry door was open where Drezzil had pushed his way into the house after the boys disappeared, letting the rain in.

Outside in the dark she screeched their names... **“Fitzwinkle you son of an Ass. Bacchus Rosewood, get your backsides in here immediately”** but her voice was snatched away by storm and wind, and no one replied.

Angrily she pointed at the small wood stove **“Lumen”** she screamed, and the stove immediately burst into flame. The pot of water sitting on the stove began to hiss as Maudia threw dried herbs, a few withered vegetables and a small piece of dried meat into the bubbling mass.

She muttered a few words over the pot and a swish of her wand, removed the pot to the side, before turning the stove to try and warm the freezing house.

“A mother works all day then has to come home and feed herself, why does she bother to have brats of kids. It’s not like I need them or even like them for that matter. They are trouble that’s what they are, just trouble.” she muttered to herself. **“Well, no more Mrs. Nice Guy. Dammit...** where are the little blighters. Just wait until they get back here. I hope they’re freezing their butts off out there somewhere in the flood”

With that she dished herself up a plate of murky looking stew, took her wet pointy shoes off and sat down in a rickety wicker chair in front of the little woodstove and began to eat.

After Maudia finished her meal she threw the dishes in the sink with the lunch ones, locked the front and laundry doors and disappeared off to bed.

**“They can stay out all night, that’ll teach them”** she muttered just before she dropped into a fitful sleep.