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WELCOME TO SMILE

By

Gordon Thompson

It's dashed important to smile, it keeps your wrinkles right

Preface

The Remembering

The babbling brook had been gurgling down the mountain, revealing the Earth's truth for millions of years. And the birds had listened. They knew that for the world to stay in balance they had to sing the *Water-wisdom* to the trees upon the plain so they too would understand. 'Every living thing,' burred the brook 'has the right to live a full and happy life.' This was just one of their many enlightening proverbs. And even though the world's animals drank in this earthly wisdom whenever they stood on the water's edge, the birds sang to them too, singing from dawn until dusk, sharing the gift of the Earth's wisdom.

But the world changed and creation suffered when one of the beasts began to think of themselves as superior. With their big brains they thought they were better, smarter; more important than other life forms. But were they really? The humans were clever, there's no denying that but were they truly the pinnacle of evolution? They certainly thought so as they raced around the planet pumping poison into the air from their cars; trains and planes. They had their machines and their science to make them feel important but the brook knew of the damage they were doing. Over and over, every day it told them they must change their ways but the lordly humans were too busy believing they knew everything to listen to the *mumbled ranting* of water sloshing over rocks. They had forgotten that they too were a part of nature. If only they would sit and listen, they might remember that the brook's *babble* contained the wisdom of millions of years of evolution but no, they were too busy building cities and waging wars and posting no end of social media posts to waste time on such things.

And all the while their farmers churned the soil, took water from the rivers and sprayed toxic chemicals in their haste to feed the hungry hordes. But by taking the water they had sucked the lifeblood out of the brook; weakening its flow until it barely had the strength to whisper. The brook lay dying and as it shrivelled into the mud it saw the future getting darker and darker. Things were not looking good. If the world was to survive, someone had to go in search of a brighter future, *right this very instant*, so it tried one last time to make the humans understand. ‘There’s...a...brighter...future...in...Smile,’ it burred, and, just as the last drop dried: a human finally remembered their way out of the shadows.

Chapter one

In search of a brighter future

The sign said, “*You’re* Welcome to Smile” and so the new arrival grinned from one great big floppy ear to the other. And they continued to beam as they looked up at clouds that sparkled like dish wash liquid. They felt fantabulous. Everything here in *wherever- this -is* was so much brighter; more colourful in a picture book kind of way. The world of Smile was so warm and inviting it made their three squishy big tummies tingle.

But how had all this happened?

How had a regular Joe Blogs from the realm of Reality been dropped here into this strange smiley place? If only they had some way of knowing but unfortunately the memory of how they’d been bobbed into this wacky land was still scrunched up tightly inside their head. They could have dropped from the sky they supposed but it’s a long way up. Besides, if that’s what happened, how did they get high in the sky in the first place? Unfortunately the only remember-y they’d managed to hold onto from their life in Reality was a list of all the terrifying, irresponsible and utterly stupid things humans were doing to the planet. Everyone knew the world was getting hotter and that animals were dying in their millions; with more and more species becoming extinct every day. Scientists had been talking about it for years

but people it seemed just didn't want to believe in climate change. But then, how dumb could the human race be? They only need look on social media to see all the fires, floods and mega-storms that were raging across the planet. And people knew that to bring an end to these disasters, they had to stop chopping down trees. In fact, they should have been planting trees like crazy but instead, humans just kept on taking and taking.

Life in Reality had gotten way too scary.

The new arrival wanted the world to change, and as they thought of how much brighter the future could be if only they could find a way to help people to become one with nature once more, the inside of their head had gone "pa-ting-whizz-zing-pop" and they had felt themselves dropping down and down and further down still, falling head over heels into the wonderful land of Smile.

For quite some time their mind danced dizzily around, refusing to believe they had turned all squishy-big and heavy-ish. They still felt like a human being and not the purple, fun-ified *other-thing* their eyes were telling them they had morphed into. It didn't seem possible and so their brain would have to see their reflection in a full length mirror before it would accept that they now looked like a cross between a purple elephant and an oversized ant with three bobbly bellybuttons. They held up a podgy appendage and looked curiously at their sparkly pink toenails. Then they had looked down their schnoz which of course, had stretched into a long, skinny trunk and they thought their eyes were certainly making a good case for a bona fide bobbling, but what exactly had they been bobbled into? They couldn't go around calling themselves an elephant, slash ant cross thingy with purple skin. Maybe they could shorten it? But how they wondered? Yes, the word elephant did sound a lot like L.F. Ant: and the name L.F. Ant did have a nice ring to it. It was such a bright and bubbly sound, it made them want to dance. Say, what if they had been bobbled into a belly dancing L.F. Ant, wouldn't that be

cool? Of course their brain would still want to see what they looked like through someone else's eyes, just to be sure their own peepers weren't playing tricks on them but a belly dancing L.F. Ant was what they thought they looked like and so a belly dancing L.F. Ant must surely be what they had become.

So now they had come to grips with their new look, the L.F. Ant turned their attention to asking the all important question; 'what in the whizzicals were they doing here?' Of course the answer was pretty obvious when they thought about it. Because the land of Smile was so much more colourful than their home realm of Reality, it was the perfect place to go in search of a brighter future: but in which direction did this wonderful new future lay? They looked around and took in their surroundings. To the left of the Welcome to Smile sign grew a patch of the prettiest flowers the L.F. Ant had ever seen. They grew tall and proud, with beautiful blossoms that fluttered in the wind and looked so much like real insects, they could have been living, breathing, brightly coloured butterflies. The petals even flapped as they twirled around on the tips of their long twisty stalks. These *Flutter-flowers* were a delightful sight to see but looked so incredibly delicate that the L.F. Ant dared not sneeze in case they blew the petal-wings away. Maybe that was why they had decided to wander off into the thicket of bright yellow bushes. After all, they were still a little unsteady on their stumpy, little legs and didn't want to risk accidentally stomping on something that could be so easily squished. Besides, going by all the twists and turns, the L.F. Ant had reckoned that the roads in Smile weren't in much of a hurry to get to wherever they were going so why should they not take their time too? There were so many wondrous things to explore in this fantastical place. Things like the crazy puffed up, fluorescent frogs that bounced like rubber balls across the rolling hills; the sparkling toadstools that were popping up everywhere and the *Feel-better* trees that dotted the countryside, hugging everyone who came close enough to get lovingly wrapped in their branches. Smile sure is a smiley place: the perfect place to find a bright new future and as far

as the L.F. Ant could see, this shiny new future could be found in pretty much every direction and so they kept on walking deeper and deeper into the field of bright yellow bushes.

Chapter two

The bedazzling in Fizzpop Fields

‘Diddle me donut, diddle me do,’ sang the pigtailed porcupine as he half danced his way across the field of bright yellow bushes. Bobbing along, the chipper little chap squiggled his way in and out of the strange looking shrubbery, twirling as he kicked up his heels.

With a bing-bong he bounced, casually flicking at tiny bubbles that plipped and plopped from the flowers. Stopping once or twice, he tried to catch a bubble or two. ‘Boy them sure are bouncy little fizz-pops,’ he said to no one in particular. ‘They're extra sparkly too ain’t no mistake.’

And so the belly dancing L.F. Ant watched him as he danced along, his pigtails clinking and clanking, he twirled between the bushes. A number of times he skipity-hopped around, bouncing back the way he’d come, sniffing at the ground as he went. He bopped along quite quickly too and before they knew it he was right there, standing in front of the L.F. Ant, grinning like a...well, like a skipity-hopping pigtailed porcupine.

‘Well hello there,’ he said, twisting his head to the side as he looked curiously at the new arrival.

‘Hello,’ replied the L.F. Ant.

‘I haven’t seen you here before,’ said the porcupine. ‘Just arrived have you?’

‘Umm... yes,’ said the L.F. Ant. ‘I fell from the sky...I think.’

‘From the sky you say?’ said the porcupine disbelievingly. ‘That must have hurt.’

‘Oh no, I didn’t feel a thing. At least I don’t think I did. But then, I don’t remember actually hitting the ground.’

‘You don’t?’

‘No, in fact, I don’t remember much at all.’

‘So you have developed a forgetting have you?’

‘A forgetting? Yes, I suppose I must have.’

‘You’re feeling dizzy too I suppose?’ said the porcupine.

‘Well, yes, now you mention it I do feel a bit dizzy.’

‘Then that explains it.’

‘Explains what?’

‘You’ve run into a Ticklebush haven’t you? Knocked yourself out and that’s why you’re remembering funny,’ said the porcupine. ‘But don’t worry; I’ll be looking after you.’

‘But...,’ stammered the L.F. Ant.

‘Tell me if it hurts won’t you?’ said the porcupine as he stood up on his hind legs and ran a paw over the top of the L.F. Ant’s head. He said ‘hmm’ and ‘hah’ a lot but soon seemed satisfied that there were no extra bumpy bits bobbing about the L.F. Ant’s head of the kind that might mean they had a seriously wonky remember-y. To be safe though, he waved a paw in front of the L.F. Ant’s face.

‘Can you tell me how many paws I’m holdin’ up?’

‘Just the one,’ said the L.F. Ant.

‘Good,’ said the porcupine. ‘Then it’s nothing too serious by the looks. You’ll be back to remembering in the sneeze of a Snosorus. In the meantime though, I think you’d best be coming along with me so I can keep an eye on you. You can help me with my looking if you

like.'

'What are you looking for?' the L.F. Ant asked.

'I'm on the trail of a fiendish chooken-napper.' And he bounced off among the bushes once again.

The L.F. Ant had to walk quickly to keep up as the porcupine skipity-hopped his way across the field of bright yellow bushes, twisting and turning as he squiggled amongst the shrubbery, darting this way and that. They were headed for the top left hand corner - at least that's the direction the porcupine told the L.F. Ant they were heading. It was pretty hard to tell though because they never seemed to travel in a straight line. It was quite odd. The L.F. Ant would be following along behind when all of a sudden, *zing*, the pigtailed porcupine would whizz off to the side, wander around a bush or two, turn around in circles and then just as quickly go back the way he'd come.

'Why do you keep doing that?' the L.F. Ant asked.

'Doing what?'

'Dipping to the side like that...and turning around in circles and such.'

'What, you mean like this?' said the porcupine darting to the left.

'Yes, like that,' said the L.F. Ant.

'Oh, I'm following my nose,' said the porcupine.

'You're what?'

'I'm following my nose.'

'Ah... Why?' the L.F. Ant asked.

'Because you get to go to lots more interesting places that way.'

'Yes I suppose you do,' the L.F. Ant replied as they followed the porcupine for the third time around the base of a large yellow tickle-bush. 'But if you wouldn't mind standing still for a moment, I'd like to ask you something.'

‘Would you indeed,’ said the porcupine as he bopped to a stop and spun around. ‘And what exactly would you like to ask me?’

‘Well,’ said the L.F. Ant, ‘the thing is I’m pretty sure I’ve been bobbled here to look for a brighter future for my home realm of Reality and I’d really like your help.’

‘Oh, you don’t want my help,’ said the porcupine.

‘Yes I do.’

‘N-a,’ said the porcupine.

‘Please. I really do.’

‘Oh, but I can’t help you,’ said the porcupine in the most serious of voices. ‘What you’re asking is way beyond my knowhow. If you want help brightening the future of some other REALITY you’re gonna to have to get yourself some expert help.’

‘Expert help,’ said the L.F. Ant, ‘from whom?’

‘The Solution of course.’

‘The Solution?’

‘That’s the fellow,’ said the porcupine, ‘but because he’ll be your Solution, I’m afraid you’ll have to find him all on your own.’

‘Him?’ the L.F. Ant asked. ‘What do you mean...him?’

‘Well, him or her, I can’t be sure. It’s quite hard to tell with Solutions. Now come on, we’ve got ourselves a chooken-napper to catch,’ and before the L.F. Ant could ask him where they should start looking for this Solution fellow the pigtailed porcupine had bounced away, and once again the L.F. Ant had to run really fast to catch up.

The belly dancing L.F. Ant finally caught up to him just as he reached the end row, next to the fence. He was snuffling his way towards the main gate - the one in the corner by the shed. But he didn’t lead them out of the field like the L.F. Ant thought he would. Oh no, instead the porcupine’s twitchy little nose led them twice around a stack of empty soda pop

bottles, up over the loading docks and around behind the packing shed onto a neatly mown lawn.

‘Let's have a look over there,’ said the porcupine as he turned hard right and snuffled his way across the freshly cut grass to a pile of dead leaves. The porcupine seemed very curious about this pile.

‘Interested in leaves are you?’ the L.F. Ant asked jokingly.

‘Yep,’ said the porcupine and without as much as a by-your-leave, he dived in.

It was a bit of a surprise. The L.F. Ant didn't expect the little fellow to burrow, deep in among the leaves. Was the L.F. Ant supposed to follow they wondered? Probably not. There wasn't much room in there. Besides, how would they know when to come out? ‘No,’ the L.F. Ant thought, ‘it would be for the best if they just wait where they were.’

And so they waited...and waited...and waited.

‘Whatever are you doing?’ called the L.F. Ant, at last running out of patience.

‘Rummaging,’ came a muffled reply.

‘Rummaging?’ the L.F. Ant said. ‘Whatever are you rummaging about in a pile of leaves for?’

‘Weasels,’ said the muffled voice.

‘You what?’

‘Oh sorry,’ said the porcupine as he burst out the top of the stack. ‘I forgot. You're having trouble remembering aren't you? Me and Oinkus is chasing...’

‘Um, Oinkus?’ the L.F. Ant interrupted. ‘Who's Oinkus?’

‘A friend,’ said the porcupine, jumping down off of the heap. ‘You'll be meeting him soon enough. He was right behind me when I went whizzing in amongst the ticklebushes, so he'll be back there somewhere: in Fizzpop Fields.’

‘Fizzpop Fields,’ said the L.F. Ant with a grin. ‘So that's what you call this place is it?’

The porcupine stared. 'So you've even forgotten about the bubble harvest have you?'

'Bubble harvest?' the L.F. Ant said. 'What's that?'

'Yep, you've forgotten alright,' said the porcupine, smiling. 'Fizzpop fields,' he said nodding towards the bright yellow bushes. 'Grow the best darn bubbles to ever tickle your taste buds. Lemonade wouldn't be lemonade without them. Jolly fine fizz and no mistaking. They're tricky things to grow too - bubbles. It takes several shades of sunshine to get the ticklebushes fully fizzified, but we've had a good season this year and so our bubbles are fizzed up to their fullest.'

'I see,' said the L.F. Ant.

'And they're almost ready for harvesting,' said the porcupine, 'so I hope we can be getting Mrs. Two-Sos' chookens back.'

'What, you've lost Mrs. Two-Sos' chickens?' the L.F. Ant said.

'Not lost exactly,' said the porcupine. 'They've been stolen.'

'Stolen?'

'Yep. It's that smarmy Weasel-Stoat Wally fellow who did the chooken napping. He knows we can't be bottling our bubbles without Mrs. Two-Sos' chookens.'

'Oh,' said the L.F. Ant. 'How come?'

'Because the chookens have been specially trained to peck the bubbles off the bush.'

'By Mrs. Two-Sos?'

'Exactly,' said the porcupine. 'And Weasel-Stoat knows there can't be any bubble harvest without Mrs. Two-Sos' chookens and that's why he stole them.'

'So he can hold them to ransom?'

'Why aren't you a clever, young L.F. Ant. Course Oinkus and I, we knew he was going to try and take the chookens. We have our ear to the ground and so we hear rumours like that. We heard what the weasel was up to and so we planned to catch him at it. What we did was,

we arranged with Mrs. Two-Sos for me to go about her hen run, looking like a chooken. I'm pretty good at the fancy dress up stuff. I'm an expert at disguising so they say. Anyway, we planned to be taking Weasel-Stoat by surprise. I was to go clucking about the henhouse and when the weasel tried to grab me, I was supposed to nab him and tie him up. Unfortunately, he got wind of our plans. One of them chookens must have blabbed I reckon - told Weasel-Stoat of our scheming - for it was me who wound up getting tricked.'

'How come,' the L.F. Ant asked?

'Well... Weasel-Stoat, he did something unexpected. He didn't try and take the chookens one at a time, in a sneak attack like we thought he would. Instead he used the chookens to flush me out, so he could get me out of the way. Real sneaky he was too.

'He put on his top hat and tails and went strutting about the hen run shouting: ROLL UP; ROLL UP YEE CHOOKENS AND ROOSTERS. COME SEE WEASEL-STOAT WALLY AND HIS AMAZIN'LY WILD DISAPPEARIN' BOX THINGY; A ONCE IN A LIFETIME OPPORTUNITY. He yelled it out extra loud too and before I knew what was happening, he had those chookens all clucking up to see the show - pulling me along with them.

'Course, I know now what Weasel-Stoat was up to - but back then - well, I just walked straight into his trap. I sat in the front row and watched his pocket watch swinging backward and forwards, and backwards and forwards - and backwards and forwards and backwards and forwards. I watched it, and I listened to him saying that all us chookens were getting sleepy. We were getting sleepy and we were going to do what he tells us to. Then he clicked his fingers and said: "I command the chooken that's in disguise to be walking around like Mrs. Two-Sos." And what do you know if I didn't up and do it. Up I jump and do a goose step across the coop, strutting along singing: what's that you're doing you little so and so? And just like that, the smarmy weasel made me blow my cover.

‘Anyway, now that Weasel-Stoat knew which chooken I was, he kept glaring at me all through the show and when it came to the grand finale, he strutted in my direction. Closer and closer he came until he was standing just a few chookens to my left. He gave me a wink and a grin. Then he turns to the crowd and shouts: “A VOLUNTEER FROM THE AUDIENCE IF YOU PLEASE”.

‘Well all the chookens jumped up and down clucking picked me, picked me, but blow me down if the smarmy weasel doesn’t swing around and point his paw straight at me. “HOW ABOUT YOU THERE YOUNG CHOOKEN?” he says.’

‘Oh no,’ gasped the L.F. Ant. ‘You were volunteered?’

‘I surely was,’ said the porcupine. ‘And there was no escaping. With them chookens being such excitable critters, I didn’t stand a chance of backing out.’

‘I see,’ said the L.F. Ant. ‘So what happened next?’

‘Well Weasel-Stoat, he gets two of them chookens to put me in his box thingy and close the lid. They were a talkative pair of chookens too they were, and as they were flicking the latch shut I heard one of them say she’d seen the Incredible Weasel-Stoat Wally before - and that he was just, oh so good at making chookens disappear that there has never, ever been a chooken who’s come back again. Not ever. He’s truly amazing - so she said.

‘Naturally like everyone else here about, I’ve heard those rumours too so I can tell you, I was pretty scared.

‘Anyhow,’ he continued, ‘if it wasn’t for Oinkus smash landing into the box thingy, I think Weasel-Stoat would have disappeared me too. But thankfully Oinkus has a big bum and his aim was good. He hit the box thingy square on the latch and the lid popped open. I must say he smash landed just in time too because I was more than a bit wobbly in the noggin’ when I came rolling out of the box thingy behind the mash house.’

‘Sounds like a close call,’ the L.F. Ant said.

‘Surely was,’ said the porcupine. ‘I’m really lucky to have a friend like Oinkus. Why, if he hadn’t smashed open the box thingy when he did, who knows where I might have been disappeared to.’

Chapter three

Good disguising

The purple pig flew backwards across the sky, his polka dot pyjamas fluttering in time to the rhythm he was strumming on his pants elastic. The snap of the trouser tops against his belly created an echo in his voice. It sounded hollow, as if he were singing, rather loudly into an empty bucket. The song he was singing was like none the L.F. Ant had ever heard before. It was a simple song; short, yes, but the kind of song that bounces around an L.F. Ant's head for days and then bursts forth whenever they got under the shower. The purple pig – the L.F. Ant could tell – was a musician of some note.

With his polka dots flapping in the breeze the purple pig whizzed several times around the top end of Fizz-pop Fields. The young L.F. Ant watched as he skimmed the tops of the ticklebushes, singing merrily as he went...and they watched as he flew backwards over the pack house and did a quick circuit of the lemonade crates in the corner...and they kept watching as he slowly turned his backside away from the main gate and; building up speed, he came whizzing towards the L.F. Ant like a freight train.

'Excuse me, young L.F. Ant,' the porcupine said with a smile. 'You do realize that Oinkus can't see where he's going when he's flying backend forwards don't you?'

'That's funny,' the L.F. Ant replied with a chuckle, 'I was just thinking that exact same thing.'

'And you're still standing? You're braver than I am,' said the porcupine. 'I wouldn't go playing chooken with those polka dot pyjamas...not for nobody.'

Thinking the porcupine was probably right the L.F. Ant dropped down, flopping as low as they could go and it was lucky they did for no sooner had they flattened themselves on the

ground than the purple pig went *whizzing* over the top of their head, almost clipping the tips off of their ears with his twirling bow tie.

‘Boy, that was pretty close to a ka-splat,’ said the porcupine.

‘It certainly was,’ the L.F. Ant said as they got slowly to their feet.

‘About as close as it’s possible to get I’d reckon,’ said the porcupine with a big grin. ‘But it’ll be something to laugh about later no doubt,’

The L.F. Ant smiled back. ‘Yes, I suppose it will be.’

‘But not quite yet,’ said the porcupine. ‘For now it’s time to meet Oinkus.’

‘Yes, but where?’ the L.F. Ant looked around and saw that the purple pig had stopped just a few ticklebushes away and was hovering in mid-air. Peeking back at them between his trotters, he gave the L.F. Ant a big grin and said, ‘Well hel-lo there.’

‘Hello Mister Oinkus,’ the L.F. Ant replied as they brushed the dust from their sticky-outy-bits.

‘Whoops-a-daisy, flying a bit low was I?’

‘Just a little bit,’ the L.F. Ant said with a grin.

‘Dashed sorry about that, I didn’t see you coming as I was going,’ he said, and quickly changed the subject. ‘An-y-way, you haven’t seen a Dorwg around here anywhere have you, only I seemed to have lost mine. Fluffy fellow...about so high...waggles his tail and woofs.’

The pig’s eyes smiled as he waited patiently for the L.F. Ant to answer.

‘Um, dog?’ the L.F. Ant said. ‘No, I haven’t seen any dogs, I’m sorry.’

‘Oh twiddle dits,’ said the pig as he landed with a wallop. ‘Dashed embarrassing you know, losing your Dorwg. Don’t get me wrong, I’m not jolly careless or anything. It’s just that Dorwg’s so dashed quick I can’t keep up with the fellow, and when he’s on the chase he’s extra belly swift. He was on the trail of that smarmy streak of weasel that’s kidnapped Mrs. Two-Sos’ chickens. Darn near had the fellow too by joves but then the dashed smarmy

weasel side-stepped. Whizzed into Fizzpop Fields and I couldn't keep up. I'm dashed if I didn't lose the pair of them, which is jolly embarrassing. Still not to worry, I'm up to being adventured. I can...'

The pig paused to ponder and the glint in his eye focused on the L.F. Ant. 'I say, are you up to being adventured, only I could do to team up with a jolly fine L.F. Ant such as yourself. What do you say eh? I'd be ever so grateful if you'd join in the chase.'

'Um...' said the L.F. Ant.

'Oh, come along, come along. A dashed good dose of adventuring - do you good. Chasing Weasel-Stoat Wally will be ever so much fun, by joves yes.'

'Yes...well...actually,' the L.F. Ant said. 'We're already...'

'We're...,' interrupted the porcupine. 'I'm...,' and he burst out laughing. And he kept on laughing. He laughed so hard the L.F. Ant thought he might pop a quill. Several times he tried to explain the joke but he just couldn't stop laughing long enough. Finally though, he managed to calm down and mumble through his chuckles, 'Oinkus, it's me...Dorwg.'

'Dorwg!' exclaimed the pig, 'no belly way.'

'I am too Dorwg,' said the porcupine. 'See.'

Oinkus landed beside the L.F. Ant and watched, spellbound, as right before their eyes the pigtailed porcupine undid his disguise. Quick as a blink he transformed, becoming all soft and fluffy and puppy-ish. It's hard to describe exactly how he did what he did. Sure they saw him arch his back and screw his face up tight. And they saw his quills pop – one at a time, all over his back until he was a big, round ball of fluff. They also saw his tail pop out of somewhere the L.F. Ant would rather not mention but that still doesn't tell you exactly how he did what he did.

Anyway, there he was all cream and tan. He was pretty much fully grown but he still had that soft fluffiness – that cutsie-ness which makes puppies so cuddly. His eyes sparkled and

his fun loving grin reflected, perfectly, his happy go lucky nature. The L.F. Ant smiled at the way his long floppy ears seemed to dangle off the side of his head. They were rather funny, the way they danced a merry jig every time he moved. And as if that wasn't funny enough, every now and then his left ear would tickle his nose, just to annoy him no doubt, but Dorwg doesn't anger easily. He's far too full of fun.

The L.F. Ant watched, curious as Dorwg took some sort of electronic gadget from his collar and scanned himself. 'Cute-sie counter,' he explained. 'It's real important I keep my cute-sie count high. It's how us puppies gets away with so much mischief see. Life just wouldn't be the same without my cute-sies.'

'I see,' the L.F. Ant said.

'Anyway,' said Dorwg. 'Young L.F. Ant - this here's Oinkus. Oinkus, this here is the young belly dancing L.F. Ant what I found wandering about in Fizzpop Fields.'

'Belly well pleased to meet you,' said the pig and he held out a trotter and shook the L.F. Ant by their bobbly-bits.

'The young L.F. Ant has developed a forgetting, Oinkus. Run into a ticklebush, I'd say.'

'Oh dashed bad luck. I've heard a forgetting can be belly tricky; especially when there's a ticklebush involved, but don't you worry young L.F. Ant, I do believe it's possible to make room for your rememberings. All you have to do is hold your hooter and blow. That will push some of those dusty old thoughts out your ears. Then you'll have a belly fine space to store a few more memories.'

Now if they were still living in Reality, the L.F. Ant would have thought such a thing to be silly; impossible even but because Smile was such a bright, bubbly and totally bizarre place, blowing old thoughts out of their ears actually made sense and so the L.F. Ant took a deep breath, grabbed the tip of their trunk and blew as hard as they could...and as their cheeks puffed out into purple balloons, their ears popped and wouldn't you know it, in the twiddle of

a twaddle-duck's tail a string of misplaced memories came flooding into their head.

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