



THE  
EPICALLY  
AWESOME  
**ODYSSEY**

AS TOLD BY NANNY PIGGINS



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PENGUIN BOOKS



## THE BACKSTORY

This book is the story of *The Odyssey* as told by Nanny Piggins. Now, my publisher is a penguin and therefore a little timid. If you don't believe me, look on the spine of this book. There is a picture of her there in an orange oval at the bottom. Anyway, she is worried that *you*, the reader, will have no idea who Nanny Piggins is. I rolled my eyes at this suggestion. She's called Nanny Piggins – and she's a nanny who is a pig! It's all pretty self-explanatory. You're an intelligent young person. Of course you could have figured that out for yourself!


But, as is often so annoyingly the case, I could see that my publisher (again, imagine a worried penguin sitting at a desk) was probably right. It's always so irritating when other people are right, because by extension that can often mean that you (in this case, *me*) are wrong. So, I will be a good author and obey my orange penguin overlord and fill you in on a little of the backstory.

Derrick, Samantha and Michael Green were the luckiest children in the world. Their mother had disappeared in a boating accident several years earlier. Obviously, this was not lucky. In fact, it is as unlucky as you can possibly get. But, because their mother was missing, their father had to hire a nanny. And Nanny Piggins had applied for the job.

No human was interested because Mr Green only paid ten cents an hour. Whereas Nanny Piggins was a flying pig who used to be blasted out of a cannon seven times a night at the circus. And the Ringmaster didn't believe in paying his staff anything at all. So, Nanny Piggins thought that the ten cents Mr Green was offering was a wonderful pay rise and she was very happy to take on the job. She was sure that looking after three children would be a lot easier than being blasted out of a cannon.



The Green children soon realised they had the best nanny in the entire world. Aside from being an impossibly glamorous circus star, Nanny Piggins also believed it was perfectly reasonable to serve chocolate for all nine meals of the day. (That was another wonderful thing about her. She believed there were nine meals in the day – breakfast, second breakfast, elevensies, lunch, second lunch, afternoon tea, dinner, second dinner and midnight snacksies.)

Nanny Piggins and the children had wonderful adventures on a daily basis. For further information, you can read about them in *The Adventures of Nanny Piggins*. But at the end of each of these days, and sometimes in the middle of the days too, Nanny Piggins would often tell the children stories. And that is where this book comes in. Because this book is her account of *The Odyssey*, a tale from Ancient Greek mythology that is so long and wonderful, she had to break it up into episodes to tell it to the children over many days.



I hope that answers your questions. Now you can sit back and enjoy reading this book. If it hasn't answered your questions, don't worry. Just start reading. Stories should be enjoyed. Just let it wash over you. It all happened 3,000 years ago. There are no 'facts', just memories, and memories can be very malleable. It's better to enjoy them than to think about them too much.

PS I forgot to mention Boris. Boris is Nanny Piggins' brother. He is a ten-foot-tall, seven-hundred-kilogram, ballet-dancing bear from Russia. He missed his sister dreadfully when she ran away from the circus, so he ran away too and now lives in Mr Green's garden shed. (Mr Green has not noticed this. He is not a very observant man.) Boris is very in touch with his emotions and prone to weeping, but that's okay. Boris is so in touch with his emotions it means that everyone in his vicinity can leave it to him to handle all the weeping for them as well.





# ODYSSEUS

‘Nanny Piggins, what’s an odyssey?’ asked Michael.  
‘Why do you ask, my dear boy?’ asked Nanny Piggins.  
‘They’re not trying to teach you spelling again at school, are they? If they are, I’ll be very cross about it. I was planning to teach you how to bake a really good chocolate brioche tomorrow. How can I do that if your brain is tying itself in knots trying to remember what order to put letters in?’

‘Oh no, it’s nothing that serious,’ said Michael. ‘It’s just that I was talking to the bus driver this morning on the way to school –’

‘Were you asking him how he came to have such a wonderful job?’ interrupted Nanny Piggins. ‘It’s so much power and responsibility to drive a ten-tonne bus around. There are so many possibilities. Just think how many chocolate bars you could fit in a bus. It would be hundreds of thousands, possibly millions.’



‘Where would the children sit?’ asked Samantha.

‘I suppose the children could be allowed to be inside the bus too,’ said Nanny Piggins. ‘Children don’t take up that much space. Although, they’d have to be prepared to put several thousand chocolate bars on their laps. And they’d have to learn how to use scuba gear because there would be so many chocolate bars inside the bus that it would be very difficult to breathe otherwise.’

‘We wouldn’t want anyone to stop breathing,’ said Boris.

‘No,’ agreed Nanny Piggins. ‘For safety’s sake, I really think it would be easier if the children sat on top of the bus. Although, that would be a waste of chocolate storage space, and we can’t have that. So, on balance, it would be better if the children walked. I would drive the chocolate on ahead, unload it and then come back for them.’

‘No, we didn’t talk about that,’ said Michael. (He wasn’t sure how the conversation had turned to scuba gear but he wanted to get it back on track.) ‘The bus driver was saying that every time you catch the bus with us to school and the whole busload of children end up being delivered to the school three hours late, his manager at the depot never believes him when he says that a fabulously glamorous pig hijacked the bus and took all the passengers on an epic odyssey. He seemed very sad about it. So, I was wondering, what’s an odyssey?’

‘Oh, “odyssey” is just a word for a journey,’ said Nanny Piggins. ‘But a particular type of journey. One that is long and complicated with lots of strange things happening, often involving monsters.’

‘That makes sense,’ said Samantha. ‘The bus driver did think it was strange when you made him drive to the

Slimbridge Cake Factory because a worker on the jam-filling line had tipped you off that they were baking double fudge brownies.'

'And the truancy officer was monstrously angry when she chased you down the motorway with her siren blaring,' said Michael.

'I know,' said Nanny Piggins. 'Whoever allowed a truancy officer to have a siren?'

'The police sergeant lent it to her,' said Derrick, 'because she kept getting in traffic accidents when she was chasing you.'

'The word "odyssey" actually comes from the name of a great Greek hero called Odysseus,' said Nanny Piggins.

'Wow, that's cool,' said Michael. 'To have a word made out of your name.'

'I know,' said Nanny Piggins. 'The people at the Oxford English Dictionary have been badgering me for years to allow them to change the word "glamorous" to "Nanny Piggins", but I refuse to allow it.'

'Why?' asked Michael. 'You *are* glamorous.'

'Exactly! That's why,' said Nanny Piggins. 'If my name became the word for glamorous, then there would be no word to describe me. At the moment, I'm referred to as The World's Most Glamorous Flying Pig. But if I allowed the Oxford English Dictionary to have their way, I'd have to be The World's Most *Nanny Piggins* Flying Pig. And that wouldn't make any sense at all.'

'Right,' said Michael. *This* explanation made no sense at all to him, but he didn't think an explanation of the explanation would help.

'So, who was Odysseus?' asked Derrick. 'What did he do that made him so famous they named a word after him?'

‘Odysseus was unlike the other Greek heroes you have heard about,’ said Nanny Piggins. ‘When you think of Greek heroes, you think of Hercules, Jason and Achilles. They’re big strong men who were good at rushing into incredibly dangerous situations and fighting with whatever people or monsters that needed to be fought with.’

‘Yes,’ said Derrick. ‘Greek mythology was full of them.’

‘Odysseus was different,’ said Nanny Piggins. ‘Odysseus was really brave and good at fighting. But also cunning and good at coming up with clever plans, as well as being very charming and persuasive.’

‘Odysseus does sound more complicated and interesting,’ said Samantha.

‘But that shouldn’t be a surprise,’ said Nanny Piggins. ‘Because she was, after all, a Piggins.’

‘What!’ said Derrick.

‘Are you saying that Odysseus, the Greek hero so famous that the word Odyssey was named after them, was a pig?’ asked Derrick.

‘And a woman?’ asked Samantha.

‘But of course!’ said Nanny Piggins. ‘Odysseus was the only person in the entire Trojan army who, after ten years of fighting, had the idea that – instead of going out into a field and trying to kill each other every day – they could hide inside a wooden horse, trick the Trojans into letting them into their city and end the war in one night. It was a stroke of military strategy so brilliant that people still talk about it 3,000 years later. So, *of course* she was a Piggins.’

‘She came up with the idea of the Trojan Horse?’ asked Samantha.

‘Indeed,’ said Nanny Piggins. ‘And that was just the beginning. She also took a journey so epic and amazing that

people have used her name to describe epic, amazing journeys ever since. Which is exactly the type of thing my spectacular relatives do all the time.'

'It actually makes more sense,' said Michael. 'For a person to do all that would be unbelievable, but for a Piggins, it would simply be a regular day-to-day activity.'

'You're going to have to tell us the whole story,' said Derrick.

'All right, I will,' said Nanny Piggins. 'But first, let's whip up some baklava. It's so important to eat geographically appropriate snacks when you listen to stories. If I'm going to tell you an epic Greek tale, I'll need to eat an epic amount of honey pastries.'

