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# The Railway Rabbits: Wisher and the Runaway Piglet

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Conjuring cosy childhood memories of such traditional series as ?Little Grey Rabbit? and ?Blackberry Farm?, there?s a sweetly old-fashioned feel to these new animal tales which centre on the bunny brethren of the Longears family: Barley, Mellow, Bramble, Bracken, Berry, Fern and Wisher. The parameters of their world ? The Ripple River Valley ? are defined by a map at the front of the book, which recalls no less an animal classic than Winnie-the-Pooh, with its Spooky Pine Forest and Very Boggy Place.

Wisher is the youngest of the five Longears siblings ? a dreamy little rabbit with soft silvery fur and a yen to discover the wider world beyond the comfy family life of her burrow, where only the occasional sighting of Burdock the Buzzard has the rabbits running for cover. Guided by her new-found friend, Parsley the Mole, Wisher claps nervous eyes on the fearsome Red Dragon, the monster which roars along the valley on strange iron rails, belching clouds of smoke. There is no time to be scared however. Adventure soon has Wisher in its clutches as she runs into a piglet named Foster who has escaped from the nearby Farm Park. Lost and alone, Foster has wandered right into the path of the terrifying Red Dragon itself. Wisher must prove herself a very brave bunny indeed if she is to face down the Dragon and rescue Foster from its clutches.

There is certainly nothing revolutionary about this series, from its choice of rabbits for its main characters to the unadventurous use of names: Mrs Woolly for a matriarchal ewe; Daisy for a duck down by the river. But Wisher?s eagerness to explore the world around us reminds us of how exciting the most ordinary things seem to the very young. The sense of only gentle peril provoked by this conventional story is not to be sniffed at. Sometimes snug does very nicely.

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