

The Nine Lives of Pinrut the Turnip Boy

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Second Life

Chapter 1

The bulldozer growled as it tore up the ground. The earth shook, fruit trees toppled, fences broke like matchwood. A patch of turnips was crushed in a single sweep of the massive blade. Only one turnip stayed standing. The bulldozer backed up and changed gears. It roared. It charged. At the last moment the turnip pulled its head out of the ground and fled.

"Hey!" shouted the driver, thinking he was hallucinating. But the turnip didn't hear; the bulldozer was too loud and he was too terrified. He hadn't been ready to be born, not yet. In another week or two, maybe. He felt premature. He ran out the garden and down the street. There were bulldozers everywhere, chewing up the landscape.

On he went, shuffle-shuffle-shuffle on his leafy stalks into town. Everything was shuttered. It was too early. He saw a greengrocer. It was shuttered too. It looked familiar somehow, but he couldn't say why. Why would a greengrocer be familiar?

As he wandered down the street he met a pretty girl walking smartly along. Her heels clicked on the concrete.

"Hello-hello!" she exclaimed, eyeing him up and down. "I've never seen such a turnip boy before. What are you doing out and about so early?"

"I'm running away from bulldozers," said the turnip boy. "I just pulled my head out of the ground. It was scary."

"Aw, poor you," said the pretty girl, taking him by a leafy hand. "Perhaps you'd better come with me."

They walked up the street to a bus stop and waited.

"What's your name?" asked the pretty girl.

"I don't know," said the turnip boy. "I can't remember my last life. It's all foggy."

"That sounds mixed up," said the girl.

"I suppose," said the turnip boy. "What's your name?"

"J J," said the girl, smiling. "Perhaps we should call you Pinrut," she said after a moment. "That's turnip spelled backwards."



"Sounds good to me," said Pinrut, pleased with the name.

A bus came along. It said, 'Airport Shuttle', and they got on board.

"Where are you going, Turnip Head?" asked the driver.

"He's with me," said J J. "And don't be so rude—I think he's cute."

On the bus ride J J said Pinrut should go on a little holiday and relax. He agreed. They got off the bus at the airport and walked to the terminal. They whooshed through the sliding doors and into departures.

"There's your ticket counter," said J J, pointing. "Just ask for a ticket and away you go. Nice to meet you!" and she click-clacked away.

Pinrut went to the ticket counter.

"Hello, young man," said the ticket lady. "What do you want?"

"A ticket," said Pinrut.

"Where to?"

"Anywhere," said Pinrut. "As long as it's fun."

"That would be Hawaii, definitely," said the lady. "What's your name?"

"Pinrut," said Pinrut.

"And what's your last name?"

"Umm," said Pinrut. "I don't have one."

"Hmmm," said the lady. "Let me see your passport."

"I don't have one of those either," said Pinrut. "I'm just a vegetable."

"I thought you looked kinda turnipy," said the lady. "Let me check on turnips flying."

She typed on her keyboard and scanned the screen.

"No," she said, "vegetables don't need passports. But you must have a last name. You can't fly without a last name."

"Ummmm," said Pinrut, scratching his head. "Ummmm ..."

"How about 'Turnip'," said the lady. "That's Pinrut spelled backwards and you do look like a turnip. 'Pinrut Turnip' sounds good."

"Lovely," said Pinrut. "Let's use that. It feels like it belongs to me."

"Wonderful. Where's your money?"

"I don't have any," said Pinrut. "I only pulled my head out of the garden this morning."

"I see, I see," said the lady. "In that case I'll give you a baggage tag. That should get you to Hawaii."

She printed off a baggage tag and wrapped it around Pinrut's neck. She picked him up and put him on the baggage belt.

"Bye! Have a wonderful life!" she called as the belt trundled around the corner and into baggage handling.

Suddenly suitcases were being grabbed left and right and thrown onto carts.

"Hey! What are you doing here?" cried a handler.

"Going to Hawaii," said Pinrut.

"Hawaii! That sounds like fun. Let me see your tag."

Pinrut showed the handler his tag.

"Yup. Hawaii it is," he said, and tossed Pinrut onto a load of suitcases.

The cart was towed out to the airplane on the tarmac. They stopped beside the hold. Pinrut didn't like the look of it. It was packed full of suitcases and there were no windows. Just then a

catering truck pulled up next to the plane. Pinrut jumped off the baggage cart and banged his head on the truck window.

"What do you want?" asked the driver.

"I'm a vegetable," said Pinrut. "I should be inside the plane with the rest of the food."

"I suppose," said the driver. "You do look kinda turnipy. Climb up the ladder with me," and they climbed onto the loading platform. The driver pushed a lever and the back of the truck went up and up on a pair of scissors until it was level with the plane door.

'Knock! Knock! Knock!' went the driver and the door opened. There stood J J, looking all fancy in an air hostess costume.

"What are you doing here, Pinrut?" she cried.

"Going to Hawaii," said Pinrut. "And I've got a last name—it's Turnip."

"What a surprise," said J J. "Hoodle-doodle! Let me find you a seat, Mr. Turnip, sir."

They walked up and down the aisle, but all the seats were taken except for one in first class.

"Looks like you're going first class," said J J, helping him with his seatbelt. "Hang on tight!" and off the plane took to Hawaii.

Pinrut had a wonderful time in first class. He was given caviar and champagne and his head went all woozy. He was brought to the cockpit and allowed to fly the airplane. He tried to make it do a loop-de-loop but the passengers started screaming. After that he fell asleep and woke up next morning as they landed in Hawaii.

"Aloha! Aloha!" cried the pretty dancing girls as Pinrut got off the plane. They put a lei around his neck. It was too long and he kept tripping on it.

J J took him to town in her taxi and dropped him off in Waikiki. He wandered the streets and window shopped until he began to get limp from the heat. He went into a fancy restaurant and sat at a table.

"Can I help you?" asked the waiter. He was dressed in a suit with a bow tie.

"Just a large jug of ice water to start," said Pinrut, and the water was brought.

As soon as the waiter's back was turned Pinrut climbed into the jug. It was yummy cool.

"Hey! What are you doing in the ice jug?" cried the waiter. "You can't do that!"

"Yes, I can," said Pinrut. "I'm a vegetable."

"Show me your money," said the waiter.

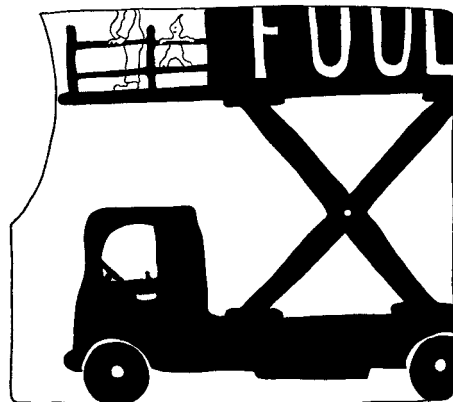
"Umm," said Pinrut, sticking a finger into his mouth.

"Out," said the waiter, pointing to the door. "Out—out—out—out—out!"

Pinrut climbed out of the jug and shook himself like a dog. He sprayed the waiter head to toe. He ran out the door but didn't make it; the waiter kicked him so hard he flew down the pavement and landed on his head.

"And stay out!" shouted the waiter, wiping the water off his suit.

Pinrut snuck onto a bus going to the countryside. Perhaps it'd be friendlier there. It was dark by the time the bus came to the last stop. Pinrut was tired. He shuffled into a field, stuck his head in the ground and fell asleep.



Second life ~ Chapter 2

In the morning Pinrut woke to the sound of surf pounding on the beach and the wind rustling the palm trees. He pulled his head out of the dirt and gazed about. He was in a pineapple field. Beside him was the loveliest pineapple girl.

"You're cute and tangy," said Pinrut.

The pineapple girl blushed bright orange. "And you're strange, but I like you," she said. "What's your name?"

"Pinrut," said Pinrut. "It's turnip spelled backwards, because I am."

"Sweet," said the pineapple girl. "What are you doing here?"

"I'm on holiday. Wanna go surfing with me?"

"I'd love to," said the pineapple girl, "but I'm stuck to my stalk."

Pinrut saw a shed at the edge of the field. He found a machete inside and cut the pineapple girl's stalk.

'Whack! Whack! Whack!' went with the machete.

The pineapple girl fell to the ground with a thud and rolled about.

"Weird," she said. "Everything's sideways."

"You have to stand on your leafy leaves," said Pinrut. "That's how you walk."

The pineapple girl stood on her leaves.

"Now everything looks upside down," she said.

"You get used to it," said Pinrut. "After a while you don't even notice," and off they shuffled through the field.

Just then the farmer saw them.

"Hey! You! Pineapple!" he shouted. "Come back! You can't walk off like that."

"Run!" cried Pinrut, and away they scampered. Along a row of pineapples, around a tractor, over a pile of dirt they fled, the farmer's footsteps thumping behind them. They found an overgrown ditch, tumbled down the bank and hid in the weeds. They stood stock still, pretending to be plants as hard as could be. The farmer marched past. He turned and marched past again. He was muttering about uppity pineapples; said he was going to call the pineapple seed company and complain. Finally he left.

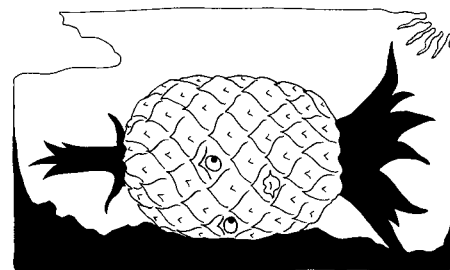
"Pfew, that was close," said Pinrut. "Now that you're on the run you'll have to have a different name. That way it'll be harder for people to recognize you as a real pineapple. How about Elppa Enip?"

"Sounds fine by me," said the pineapple girl.

Off they went to the beach. The waves were huge and crashing, and the sand was warm and golden. They lay on the sand and sunbathed until Pinrut began to wither. He was about to go for a swim when a man left his surfboard beside them and walked back to his car. They hauled the board into the water and it wasn't long before they were surfing the waves in tandem. They had talent.

"Yee-haw!" shouted Pinrut as they scooted down the waves.

"Oolaa-moolaa!" shouted Elppa Enip when they fell off and tumbled in the surf.



Finally the man returned and they brought his surfboard back.

Just then a police car cruised by—then another, and another. They were looking for someone. On their cars was a big badge. It said: 'Police Department of Fruit and Vegetables'. Pinrut and Elppa Enip covered themselves with sand until they'd gone. Then they found a creek at the end of the beach and lazed and lounged and loafed in the fresh water. They stayed there for a long time, drinking coconut juice and enjoying the freshness.

"What are we going to do?" asked Elppa Enip at last. "We can't just laze and lounge and loaf about like Walt Whitman. We're not leaves of grass, you know. A runaway pineapple is a dangerous thing to be in Hawaii. People eat us all over the islands."

"True," said Pinrut. "And we saw the police looking for you. How about we become sailors and get away from here?"

"Okay," said Elppa Enip. "Let's go tomorrow."

Second life ~ Chapter 3

Next morning Elppa Enip and Pinrut stood beside the highway. They were hitchhiking.

"Be ready to run if the cops come," said Pinrut, and Elppa Enip nodded.

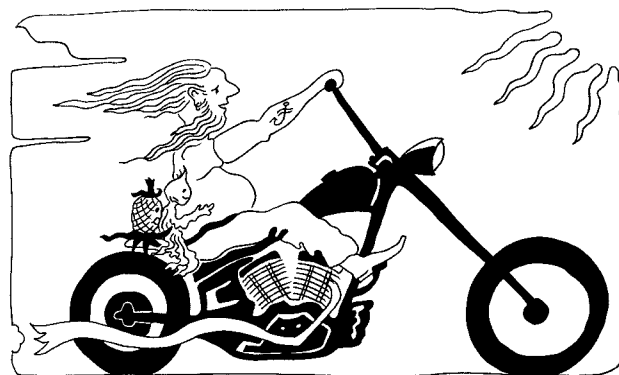
Car after car passed without even slowing.

"Let's stand in the road," said Pinrut, so they stood in the middle of the road and waved their arms. Along came a motorbike gang, their bikes roaring. They stopped and surrounded them.

"Where you going?" rumbled the leader. He had greasy hair, a long beard, and a hairy chest.

"We're running away from Hawaii," said Elppa Enip sweetly, giving the leader a fruity grin. "We want to be sailors."

"Then hop on behind me, Sailors," said the leader, and brumm-brumm-brumm they went whizzing down the highway. Pinrut and Elppa Enip hung on for dear life, their leaves blowing in the wind.



At the marina one hundred and two yachts floated in a sheltered, blueful lagoon, bobbing gently on the water.

"Do you need sailors?" asked Pinrut, working his way down the line of boats.

"No."

"No."

"No."

"Yes," a captain replied. "But I'm sailing to China. You'll need a passport."

"Vegetables don't need passports," said Pinrut. "I've already checked."

"Hmmm, I suppose—you do look kinda turnipy," said the captain. "How about fruit? Your girlfriend seems terribly fruity—almost like a pineapple turned upside down."

"Fruit don't need passports either," said Pinrut. "I'm sure of it. Besides, if the worst comes to the worst she can sit in your fruit bowl and pretend to be dessert."

"True," said the captain. "And the Chinese like pineapples, leastwise that's what I'm told, so it

shouldn't be a problem. Welcome aboard my merry yacht, Sailors—I'm Captain Bo Jangles," and he shook their leaves.

"Ow!" he cried when he grasped Elppa Enip's leaf. "You're spiky!"

"But sweet and delicious," said Elppa Enip, winking at him.

The next day the merry yacht sailed out of the blueful lagoon and into the greeny sea. The weather was wonderful, the sun shone every day and everything was fine until a storm came along. Pinrut was at the helm, steering the boat west by northwest, when a dark cloud appeared on the horizon. It looked scary.

"Ahoy there, Cap'n," shouted Pinrut. "Cloud ahead."

"Good, good," said Captain Jangles down below in the lounge, and he ordered Elppa Enip to make him another martini.

The cloud grew bigger. Now it was ominous and threatening.

"Ahoy, Cap'n," shouted Pinrut. "The cloud is bigger. It approaches."

"Lovely, lovely," said Captain Jangles. "It's time for a bit of shade."

The cloud growled and flashed lightning. The wind quickened and began to wail. The waters rose as tall as towers. The storm pounced like a panther. The boat was tossed about like a matchstick. Captain Jangles was spilled off the sofa and Elppa Enip rolled about on the floor. She banged her head. On the deck Pinrut hung onto the helm. Wave after wave crashed over him until he was washed out to sea. Miraculously, he was washed onto the boat again. The sails shredded. The main mast broke. The railings were twisted like cooked spaghetti and Pinrut survived only because he got tangled in a rope which stopped him from being swept out to sea a second time.

As quickly as it came the storm passed. The boat lay on its side, half filled with water. It took days to pump the water out and set the ship straight. Captain Jangles jerry-rigged a mast and added a crude sail. Luckily, no more storms blew, no gales galed or cyclones cycled. At last they sailed into the Yellow Sea and limped into the port of Shanghai.

"Who are these two?" asked the customs' man.

"Pinrut and Elppa Enip," said Captain Jangles.

"They look like a vegetable and a fruit," said the customs' man.

"We are," said Elppa Enip with a fruity smile, trying to look as pretty as possible.

"I knew it!" said the customs' man, slapping his thigh. "There was something so pineapple about you—and turnip about him. Where are your passports?"

"Vegetables don't need passports," said Pinrut.

"And neither do fruit," said Elppa Enip.

"True. Very true," said the customs' man. "How smart! But the captain must have import papers. We can't just let any old fruit and vegetables come wandering into China."

So Captain Jangles filled out the import papers for one turnip and one pineapple.

"Good, good," said the customs' man, reading the papers carefully. "Now I have to stamp you officially," and he stamped Pinrut and Elppa Enip on the head.

"Ow!" said Pinrut.

"Ow!" said Elppa Enip.

"Have a great stay in China," said the customs' man.

They wandered down the quay.

"Why did we come to China?" asked Pinrut.

"To find the Marvelous Orange Mandarin Dragon," said Captain Jangles. "I've been hearing about him since I was little."

"Where does he live?" asked Elppa Enip.

"Somewhere far away," said Captain Jangles, breaking into song:

*"Far, far away
where the leaves are greenest
and the water cleanest,
that's where you'll find
the Marvelous Mysterious
Orange Mandarin Dragon."*

"Who told you that?" asked Pinrut.

"My mum," said the captain. "That's all she told me."

So off they set to find the Mysterious Orange Mandarin Dragon. They climbed high mountains, they trudged across valleys, they sailed down rivers and joined miners digging deep into the earth, but nowhere did they find the dragon. Finally they came to the Great Wall of China. It went on and on forever, and still the dragon was not to be seen.

One night Pinrut had a dream. He dreamed that the Mysterious Orange Dragon was sleeping; that he'd been sleeping for a long, long time—so long that the scales on his back had turned to stone. Once upon a time he'd been the fire-water dragon of the great river that flowed north past the island of Atlantis. Then, when Atlantis sank, he came to China as a memory and fell asleep for so long that the earth grew up around him. That's when the Emperor ordered the Great Wall of China to be built. They built it along the dragon's back, using his scales as stones. This weighed him down and kept him firmly under the earth. There the dragon dreamed, and in his dreams he heard the marching of men along his back but thought they were ants. He dreamed, and in his dreams he felt the weight of the stones piled up along his back and thought they were the leaves falling from the trees in autumn. He dreamed, and in his dreams he knew a spell had been placed upon him but there was nothing he could do as long as the master stone lay over his heart.

In the morning Pinrut told Captain Jangles and Elppa Enip his dream.

"That means we've been walking along the dragon's back for weeks," said Captain Jangles. "Now we have to find the master stone that holds the Wall together. If we lift the master stone the Wall will come crashing down and the Mysterious Orange Mandarin Dragon will be freed."

"And then what?" asked Elppa Enip.

"That's right," said Pinrut. "And then what?"

"Then that's that, I suppose," said Captain Jangles, scratching his head. "Except for the jellybeans."

"Jellybeans!" exclaimed Elppa Enip and Pinrut.

"That's what my mum said," said Captain Jangles.

"Okay," said Pinrut. "Let's find the master stone."



Second life ~ Chapter 4

On they marched along the Great Wall, asking everyone where the master stone lay. Some said to keep going east for the master stone must surely be there. Others said to turn around, for surely the master stone would be found in the west. Finally they met an old man dressed in purple. He was

sitting on a massive stone step. The stone was deep blood-red and passed from one side of the Wall to the other. The top of the stone was polished from the thousands of feet that had passed over it.

"What are you looking for?" asked the wizened old man with a long, pencil-thin mustache, sitting cross-legged on the blood-red stone.

"We're looking for the master stone of the Great Wall of China," said Captain Jangles. "We want to free the Mighty Mysterious Orange Mandarin Dragon. My mother told me I should, and Pinrut here dreamed that the dragon is being kept asleep under the earth by the weight of the Great Wall of China."

"T'is true. T'is true," said the wise old man with the white goatee. "But when you move the master stone the whole wall will crumble and the people will be changed. See, the Wall goes on for hundreds of miles but encloses nothing. Yet it acts like a circle and keeps people huddled and muddled together under ideas that are gobbledygook and soggy noodles. That's the magic. That's why the Mysterious Orange Mandarin Dragon was put under a spell: to keep the people in chains of nonsense."

"That's not what my mum told me," said Captain Jangles. "She said that when I found the Mysterious Orange Mandarin Dragon I could have all the jellybeans I wanted."

"The dragon is much more than jellybeans," chuckled the crinkled old man with wide purple sleeves, "but it is true that when you eat them silly things change."

"All of this is silly unless we can find the master stone," exclaimed Pinrut. "Only then can we free the dragon and Captain Jangles have his jellybeans, if there are any."

"T'is true. T'is true," said the wrinkled old man wearing silk slippers. "The master stone is the one that sits over the dragon's heart. It's the one that keeps him asleep and under a spell. But first you must recognize it."

"I think it must be as red as blood," said Elppa Enip. "A master stone that sits over the dragon's heart must be red."

"And big," said Captain Jangles. "It has to be big—maybe as wide as the whole Wall."

"Just like the stone you're sitting on," said Pinrut. "Is that the master stone?"

"Smart boy," said the wise man with bushy white eyebrows, patting him on the head. "You're not as cabbage headed as you're turnipy looking. It is the master stone."

"How will we move it?" asked Captain Jangles.

"Only you can decide," said the old man with a pigtail. "But you have to be quick, the full moon is rising tonight."

Captain Jangles led them to the nearest town. They bought rope, levers and a cup of tea. They decided to move the stone at midnight when the moon was full and high in the sky.

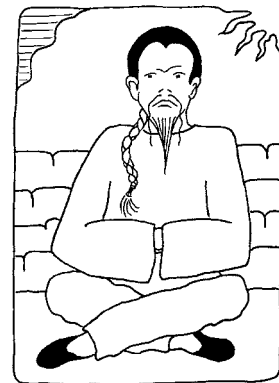
As night fell they marched back to the Wall. Captain Jangles went to the guards.

"Halt! What are you doing here?" demanded the guards. "No tourists are allowed on the Wall at night."

"Why not?" said Captain Jangles. "My mum told me it was okey-dokey to come to the Great Wall of China at night."

"Your mum cannot be from here," said the guards. "You look like a sailor from Hawaii."

"I am, indeed," said Captain Jangles, and on he chatted, telling the guards about his mum and sailing in Hawaii.



Meanwhile, Pinrut and Elppa Enip snuck to the Wall under the cover of trees. Pinrut climbed up with the rope, tossed one end down and hauled up the levers. Then he pulled Elppa Enip up.

"We have to be quick," whispered Pinrut. "We don't have much time. The guards will be patrolling the Wall in a moment."

They stuck the levers under the blood-red stone and hauled hard. The stone groaned and moved an inch. The whole Wall trembled, as in an earthquake.

"What's that?" cried the guards, grabbing their guns.

"Just an earthquake," said Captain Jangles. "We have them all the time on the Big Island. Let me tell you about volcanoes."

Pinrut and Elppa Enip reset the levers and hauled hard again. The blood-red stone cracked in two with the sound of thunder. Again the earth quaked and rolled under their feet.

"Yikes!" shouted the guards in alarm.

"Just a little thunderstorm and another earthquake," said Captain Jangles. "I've heard and felt worse. Let me tell you about the storm we battled on the way to China."

Pinrut and Elppa Enip levered half the blood-red master stone over the edge of the Wall. When it hit the ground a mighty shout went up, as of gongs.

"Who was that?" cried the guards, looking about.

"That's just the orchestra warming up," said Captain Jangles. "I brought one from Hawaii for the town to hear."

Pinrut and Elppa Enip levered the second half of the blood-red master stone over the other side of the Great Wall of China. When it hit the ground lightning shot along the length of the Wall. The earth heaved, the stones crumbled, and the Mighty Mysterious Orange Mandarin Dragon awoke under the earth. He arched his back, his head flashed fire, and his tail swung from side to side, knocking silly people on the head and greedy people on the tummy.

"Jellybeans!" roared the dragon, and his voice was heard throughout the land.

"Jellybeans!" roared the dragon again and all the evil ones fled from his voice with trembling knees.

"Jellybeans!" roared the Mighty Mysterious and Dangerous Mandarin Dragon a third time, and he flew into the air. He roared over the land and wherever he flew jellybeans rained down. People rushed to eat them, and whoever ate them lost the scales from their eyes and saw. They saw and they saw and they saw. Finally, the dragon soared higher and higher. The clouds lit up in gorgeous orange as he winged his way into the heights and vanished from sight.

Captain Jangles ran to Pinrut and Elppa Enip. They collected as many jellybeans as they could carry and raced back to Shanghai.

"Ah, there you are," said the customs' man. "We were wondering when you'd come back for your boat. What's that in your pockets?"

"Jellybeans," said Captain Jangles.

"From the Great Mysterious Orange Mandarin Dragon?" asked the customs' man.

"Yes," said Pinrut. "We are the ones who set it free."

"Hurray!" cried the customs' man. "Good for you," and he thumped them on their backs.

"Ow," he said when he thumped Elppa Enip. "You're spiky!"

"But tasty and fruity," said Elppa Enip, giving him a smile.

Off they sailed in their merry yacht, out to the Yellow Sea, into the East China Sea, down to the Philippine Sea and onto the Pacific Ocean. There they sailed and ate jellybeans to their heart's

content. They were delicious! And the more they ate the more they were enlightened. Soon they had so many thoughts running around in their heads that Captain Jangles decided they had to choose one thought and one thought only. They'd stick with it until they really understood what it was about—only then they could choose another jellybean. Captain Jangles chose 'catnaps', Elppa Enip chose 'fruitiness', and Pinrut chose 'reincarnation'. Captain Jangles got to choose a new jellybean after five minutes. Elppa Enip got to choose a new jellybean after five days. Pinrut never got to choose a new jellybean for the rest of this life.

Second life ~ Epilogue

They sailed and sailed to a far-off land called New Guinea. There they found that it wasn't new at all and had been around for ages. Captain Jangles sank his boat by accident and got a job selling fake arrowheads to scientists. Pinrut and Elppa Enip bought a garden and were married. They had two hybrid children. One was called Turple and the other Pinnip. One looked like a turnip but tasted like a pineapple, and the other looked like a pineapple but tasted like a turnip.

Finally Elppa Enip became overripe. Her firm skin got soft and spongy. She smelled like she'd been drinking and staggered about.

"Bye," she said one morning and crawled into the compost heap. They never saw her again.

Pinrut lived a while longer, but the tropical climate made him soft in the head. In the end he too began to get spongy. He gathered his children to him and told them it was time for him to bolt. He had to do it now or else there would be no seeds for the future. Pinnip and Turple shed tears, but told him to bolt as quickly as possible.

The next day a slim stem appeared. It grew rapidly and soon a bouquet of flowers was to be seen. They were yellow, four petaled and pretty. Bees came flying from all directions. The flowers set seed pods, and when they were ripe—the whole thing only took a week—Pinrut shriveled up and died.

Captain Jangles buried Pinrut in the compost heap along with Elppa Enip. Pinnip and Turple told him to take their dad's seed to a land with a cool, moist climate where turnips like to grow. So Captain Jangles stole a canoe and paddled to New Zealand. He landed on the south island, bought a cottage, dug a garden and planted the seeds in the fall. All winter they lay in the cool earth, soaking up cosmic rays.

In the spring, the seeds sprouted, but Captain Jangles never saw what happened. He went out paddling one misty, moisty morning and his canoe hit a rock. He was knocked overboard and accidentally swallowed by a sperm whale.

