



PART 13

STORY

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Teller



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STORY Teller

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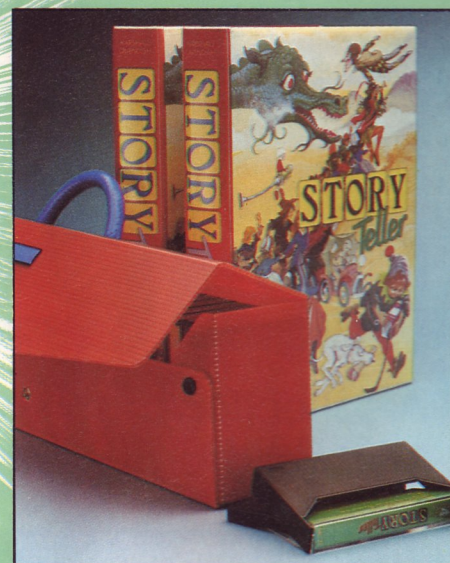
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The TINDER-BOX

A soldier was on his way home from the wars, whistling a merry tune, when he saw an old woman sitting under a large oak tree. "Listen, lad," she called. "I can make you richer than you ever dreamed possible."

The soldier's whistle faded on his lips as he approached the old woman. She was so ugly he was sure she must be a witch. "Oh, yes?" he cried. "Tell me how I can become so rich."

The old witch tapped the oak tree. "This oak is hollow," she said. "I'm too old and stiff to climb down it any more. But I can tie a rope round your waist and lower you down to the secret chamber. There you will find three doors. Behind the first door stands a sea-chest which is full of copper coins. It is guarded by a large dog who sits on its lid. But there is no need to be afraid. To open the chest, all you have to do is lay my apron on the floor and put the dog on it."

"But copper won't make me rich," said the soldier. "What's behind the second door?"

"Behind the second door stands a sea-chest full of silver coins. It is guarded by an even bigger dog who sits on its lid. But don't worry. Lift the dog on to my apron and you'll be able to take the silver."

"And what about the third door?"





"Behind the third door stands a sea-chest full of gold coins, guarded by a third dog . . ."

"*That's the one I want,*" cried the soldier, tying the rope round his waist and leaping to the lowest branch of the tree. "I suppose you want to share the treasure with me, old woman?"

"No, boy, you can keep it all," said the witch. "All I want is my tinder-box. I left it behind the last time I was down there. Here, don't forget to take my apron, or the dogs will bite you. And put each dog back on its chest!"

She lowered the soldier down

through the darkness of the hollow tree, and on down through the dark earth. Suddenly his feet touched the ground, and for a moment he was dazzled by the light of a hundred lamps. But then he saw that he was in a huge hall with three doors.

Slowly, he opened the first door. And there was a sea-chest, just as the witch had said. "Well!" the soldier exclaimed. "She told me a dog would be guarding each chest, but she didn't say the first one would have eyes as big as saucers." He carefully lifted the dog on to the witch's apron, and it licked his face and blinked its huge eyes. He checked that the chest was full of copper coins and then lifted the dog back to its usual position on the lid. He was eager to get to the second door.

Behind it stood another sea-chest — and a dog with eyes the size of dinner





plates. "The witch didn't tell me about your eyes," gasped the soldier as he struggled to lift the dog off the chest and on to the apron. "What a strange view of the world you

must have!" He checked that the chest was full of silver coins, lifted the dog back on to the lid, then hurried to the third door.

Behind it stood another sea-chest. And although the soldier had already seen two very strange dogs, he let out a gasp of surprise. "*Phew!* The witch might have warned me that the third dog would have eyes as big as cartwheels!"

The huge beast frightened the soldier. But he plucked up courage to heave it off the chest and struggled and



strained to lift it on to the apron. He lifted the lid up — and there inside was the gold he was looking for.

He crammed gold coins into his pockets until he could hardly move. He had to really struggle to lift the massive dog back on to the chest. His trousers and jacket were bulging with gold. When he found the witch's tinder-box, he had to tuck it under his hat!





The old witch took a long time to haul him up through the hollow oak tree. The moment his feet touched the road again, she told him to hand over the tinder-box.

"Why is it worth so much more to you than a sea-chest full of gold?" asked the soldier. "Tell me the secret of the tinder-box, or I'll keep it for myself."

"You won't! You won't!" screamed the witch, and she grew so purple with rage that she burst into a thousand pieces . . . and blew away like a pile of autumn leaves.

By the time the soldier reached town, he had forgotten all about the witch and her silly tinder-box. All he wanted to do was start spending his gold.

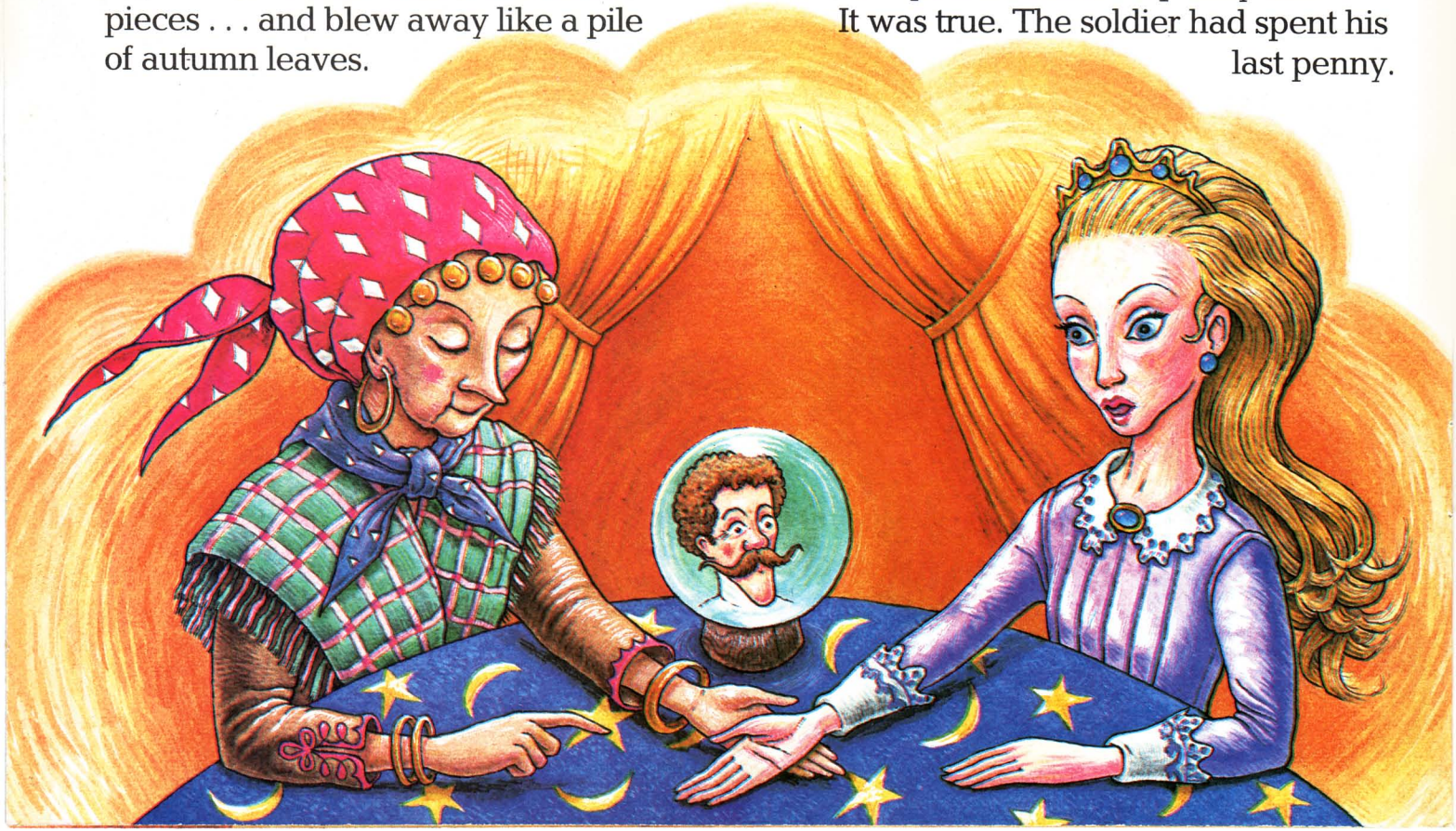
Now, suddenly, he was the richest man in town. He could buy anything — houses, clothes, horses, food. He held parties every day, and he gave away gold to anyone who seemed to need it.

But there was one thing he could not buy — and that was a glimpse of the king's beautiful daughter. Nobody had been allowed to see her since the day a fortune-teller read her palm and declared that she would one day marry a common soldier.

"A common soldier!" cried the king. "I'd rather she never married at all!" And he shut her away in the palace.

"A common soldier!" screamed the queen. "Soldiers are so dirty and rough. And look how they throw their money away. Remember that rich soldier who came to town with pockets full of gold? Within a year he hadn't a penny left!"

It was true. The soldier had spent his last penny.





eyes as big as dinner plates spinning in its head. It quickly fetched the chest full of silver.

When the third dog appeared at the command of the tinder-box, it was so big there was no room for it in the little attic. It sat in the street outside and blinked through the window with its eyes as big as cartwheels.

He was living in an attic room without enough money to buy a single candle.

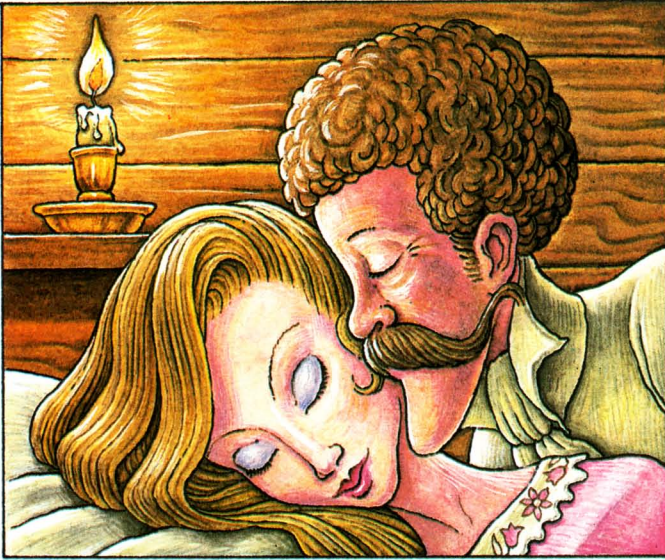
One cold night, he lay in the dark trying to keep warm when he suddenly remembered the witch's old tinder-box. He could strike a spark with that and burn a few wisps of straw to warm his hands. Yes, the box was still in the pocket of his old soldier's uniform! He struck it once and pale sparks flew up.

And there, winking at him through the darkness, was the dog with the eyes as big as saucers. "Hello, old friend!" the soldier exclaimed. "I turned up my nose at your treasure of copper coins. But I wish I had just one copper penny now, to buy myself a candle!"

The dog with eyes as big as saucers gave him a lick and bounded off. In a few minutes it was back carrying the sea-chest full of copper coins.

The soldier struck the tinder-box again and the second dog appeared, its





"You three dogs have made me rich again," said the soldier. "Can you make me happy too? I long for a glimpse of the beautiful princess." The huge dog immediately disappeared. When it returned, the princess was riding on its back — fast asleep. "She's even more beautiful than I imagined," sighed the soldier, and he kissed her gently. Then

the dog carried her back to the palace.

The next morning, the princess told the king and queen: "I had a lovely dream last night. I dreamed I was carried through the town by a huge dog and then kissed by a soldier."

"A soldier!" cried the king.

"A soldier!" screamed the queen.

"I hope it was a dream." But just in case it had not been, the queen made a silk purse, filled it with fine flour and pricked a hole in the bottom. Then, secretly, she tied it to the princess's nightdress.

That night, the dog came to fetch the princess again. As he ran through the streets, he did not notice that a trickle of flour was escaping from the silk purse. And the next morning the king and queen were able to follow a white trail — straight to the soldier.

"No common man can see my daughter and live!" said the king.

"Tomorrow morning you will die." And





he had the soldier thrown in prison.

At dawn, a huge crowd gathered outside the prison to see the soldier hanged. As the hangman put the noose around the soldier's neck, he turned to the king. "May I smoke my pipe before I die?" he pleaded.

The king agreed to his request, and the soldier took out his tinder-box and struck it . . . once, twice, three times. "Save me, my faithful dogs! Save me!"

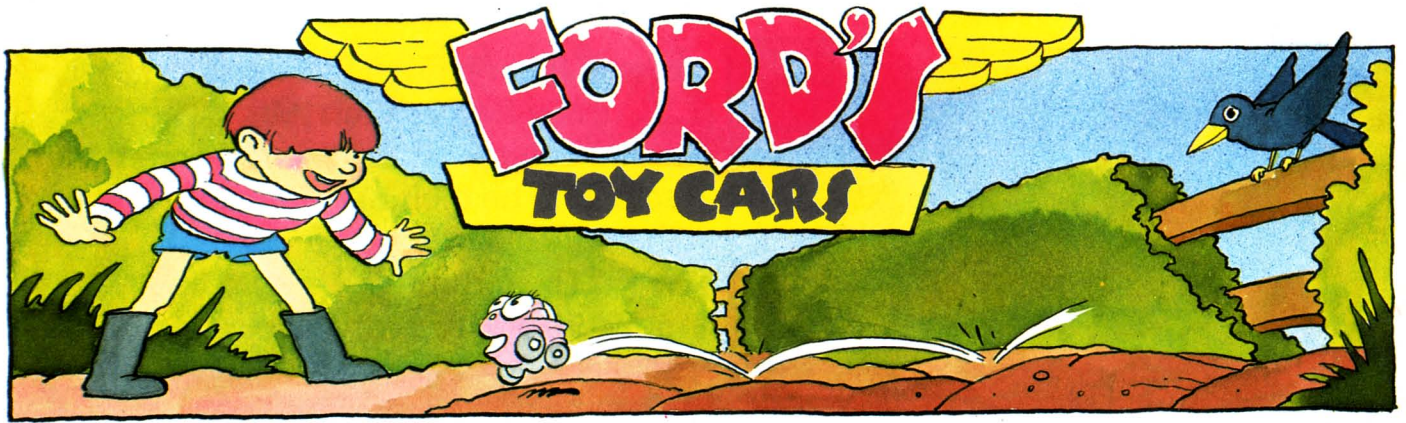
Everyone shrank back in amazement as three strange dogs bounded to the soldier's side. One had eyes as big as saucers. Another had eyes as big as dinner plates. The third had eyes as big as cartwheels. And all three pounced on the king and queen and

tossed them high in the air.

They flew so high that they never came down, and the crowd begged the soldier to be their new king and to marry the princess.

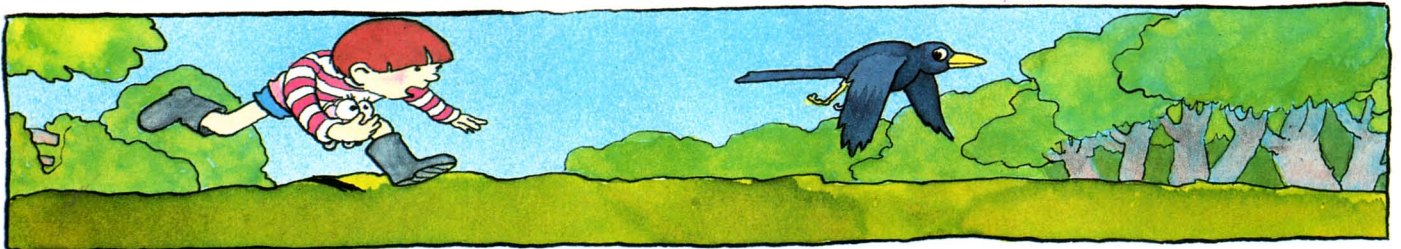
"The fortune-teller said that the princess would marry a common soldier — and so she shall," he said. Then he invited everyone to a banquet where the magic dogs were the guests of honour. And when the dogs saw the great feast laid out in front of them, their eyes grew larger than ever!





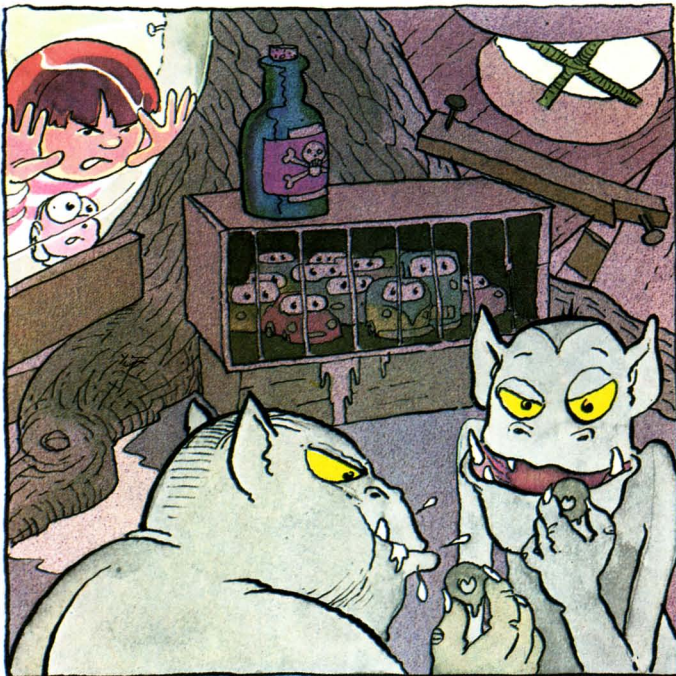
Ford was so happy when the blackbird dropped Bubbles down in the garden. "But where are all the others?" he asked. "What's happened?"

"We were grabbed by two goblins and stuffed into sacks and taken to the woods. And they are going to eat our tyres and goodness knows what else!"

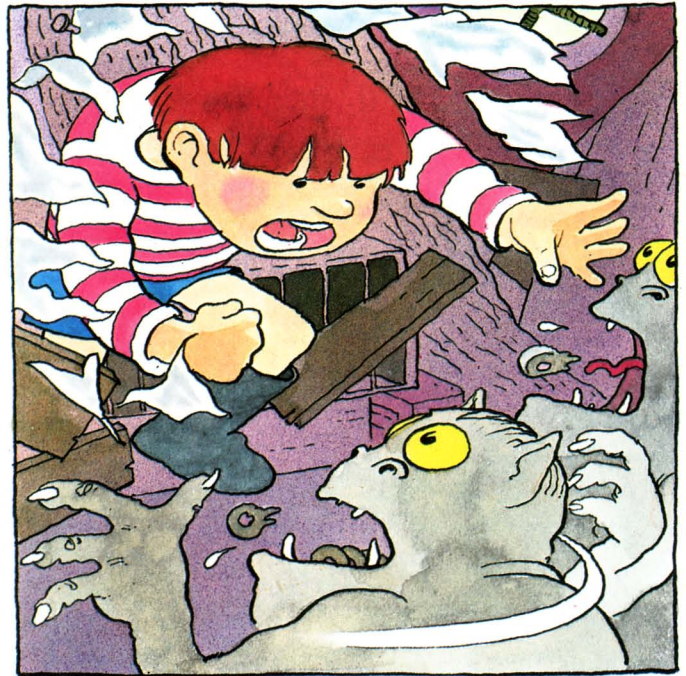


"Right, show me the way," said Ford as he picked Bubbles up under his arm.

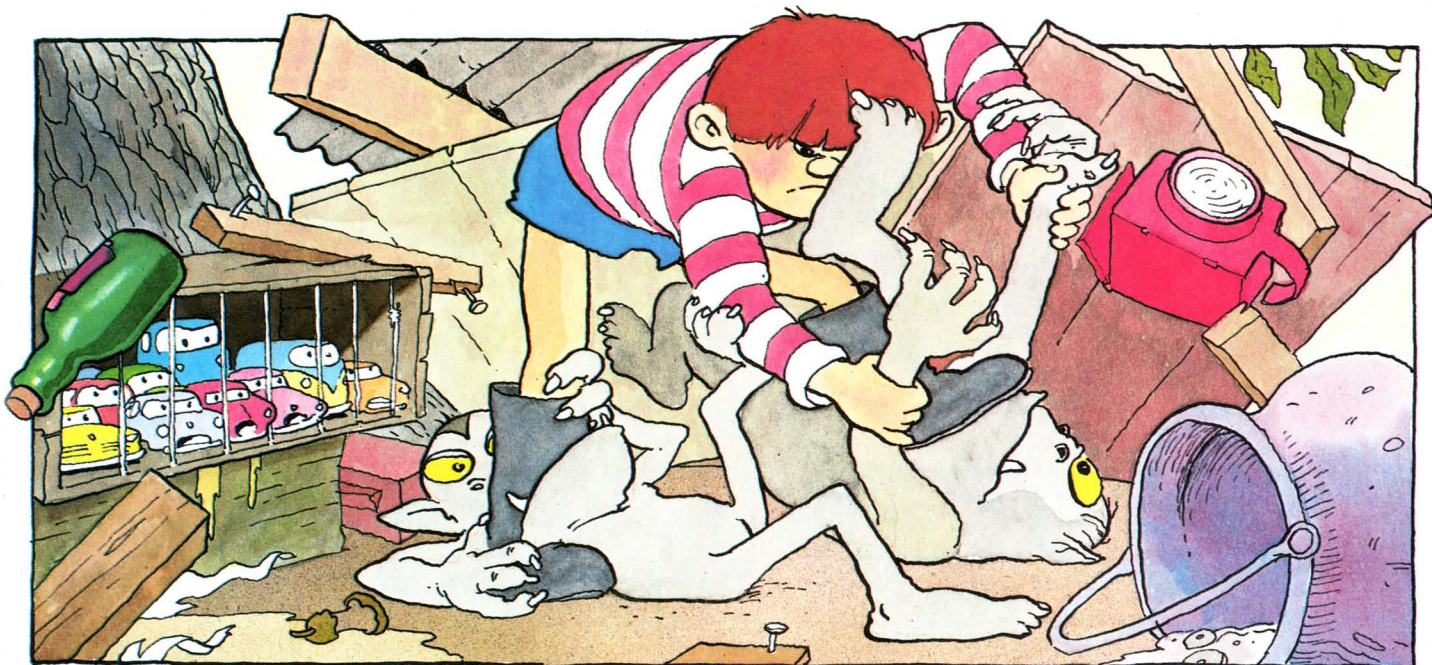
"Follow me!" called the blackbird, and the three of them set off for the woods.



Dusk was falling as they sneaked up to the goblins' shack deep in the woods. Ford and Bubbles peered through the grubby polythene window. The greedy



goblins had already ripped off all the cars' tyres and were melting them down and eating them! Ford was furious, and he burst right into the shack.



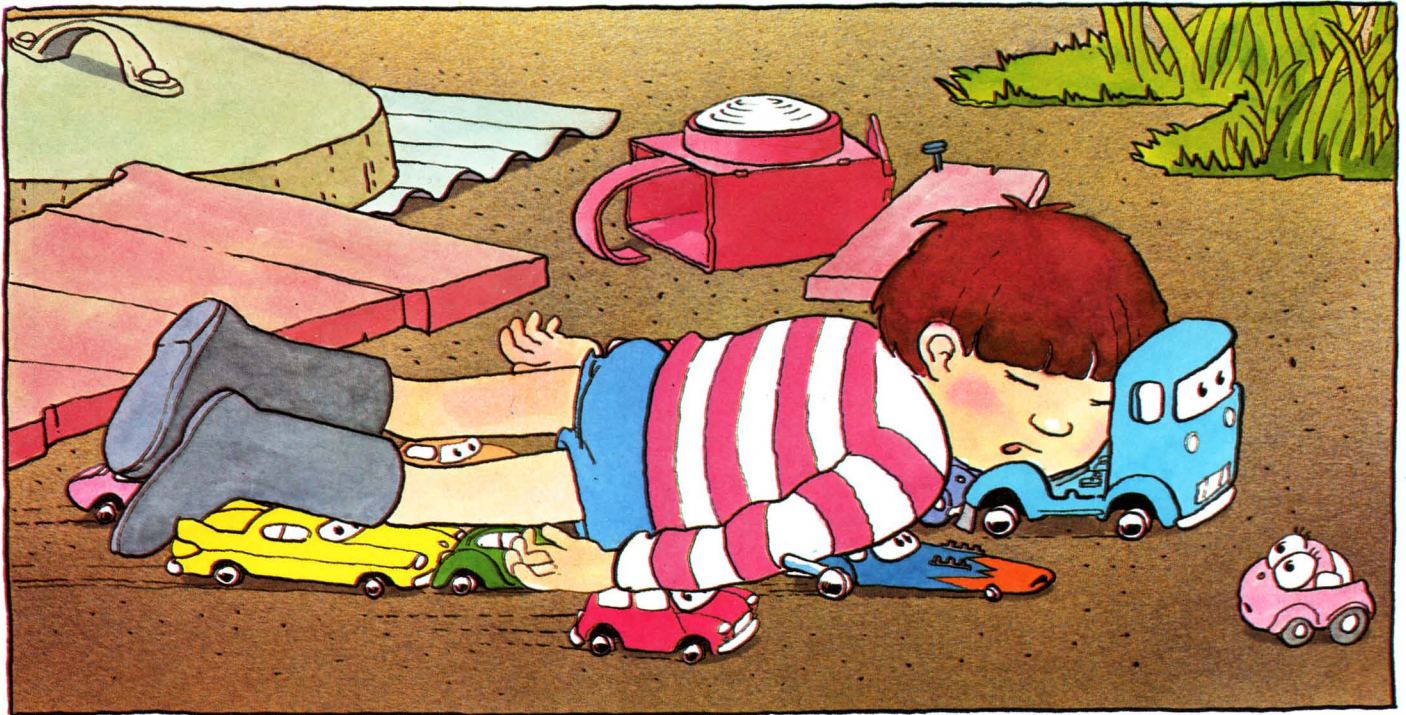
A terrific fight followed between Ford and the two goblins . . .

. . . with punching and kicking and shoving and biting and yelling.



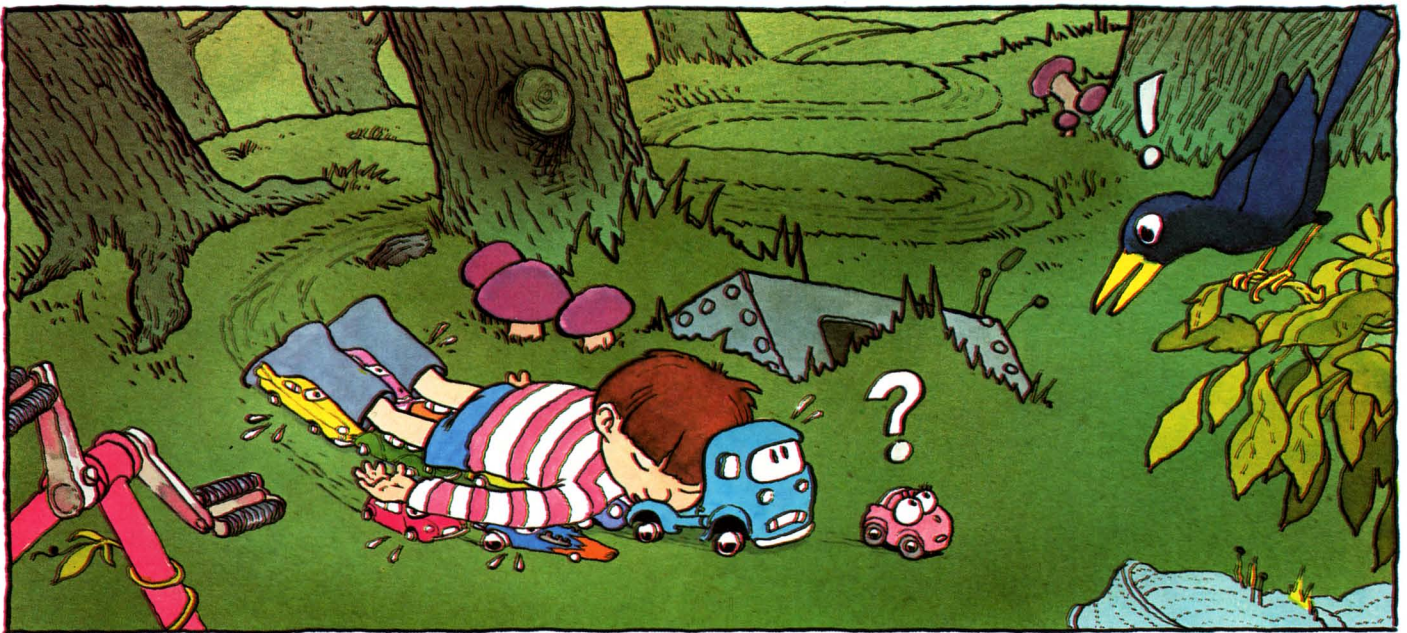
But Ford was so big that the tumbledown shack suddenly collapsed — and everyone was knocked out by the falling roof and bits of wood and metal.

The cage holding the cars had been battered and bent during the fight and they all climbed out. They could see Ford was unconscious, and tried to help him.



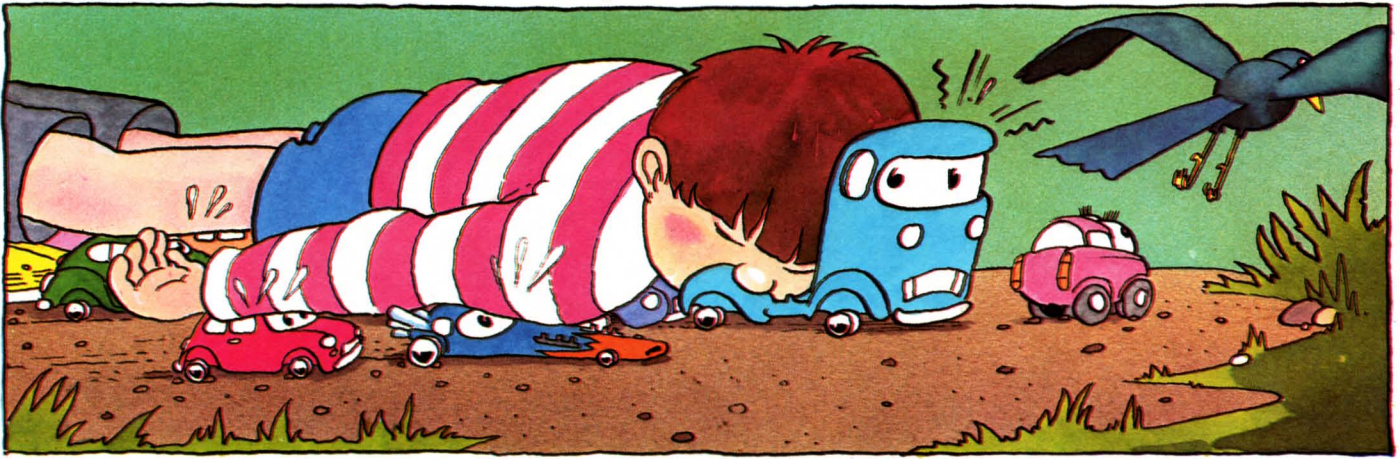
"We must get him to the house," said Minnie decisively. "But how?"
 "If we all got under him we could carry him along," suggested Kombi. "There's lots of us, after all."
 "Good thinking!" said VW.

Gradually, one by one, the cars eased themselves under Ford to form a carpet beneath his limp body. "One, two, three, *forward!*" shouted Lorry, and the strange procession began to move slowly away from the shack.



They had puffed and panted quite a long way when Bubbles suddenly stopped. "Wait a minute," she said. "I'm not quite sure which way to go from here."

"Don't worry, I'll show you!" It was the friendly voice of the blackbird. "OK. Let's go!" yelled Lorry, and they set off again through the woods.



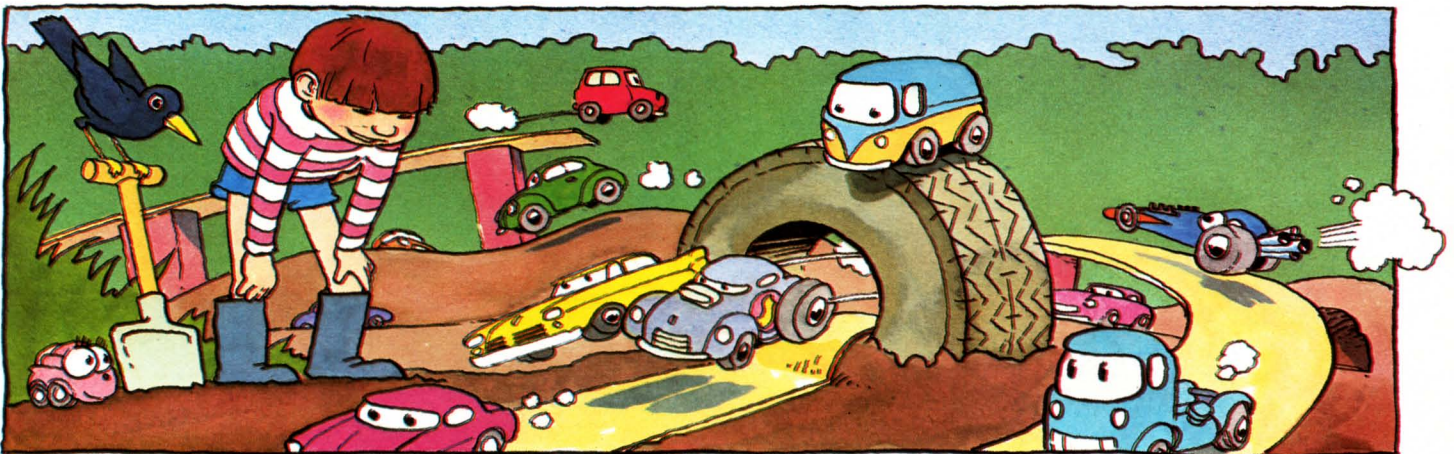
"My wheels hurt!" complained Dragger.
 "So do mine!" "And mine!"
 "Look you lot!" barked Lorry. "Just keep

moving. What if the goblins wake up!"
 So all the cars struggled on. But it was a
 long haul back to the garden.



When Ford finally woke up, safe and
 sound but with a nasty bump on his head,

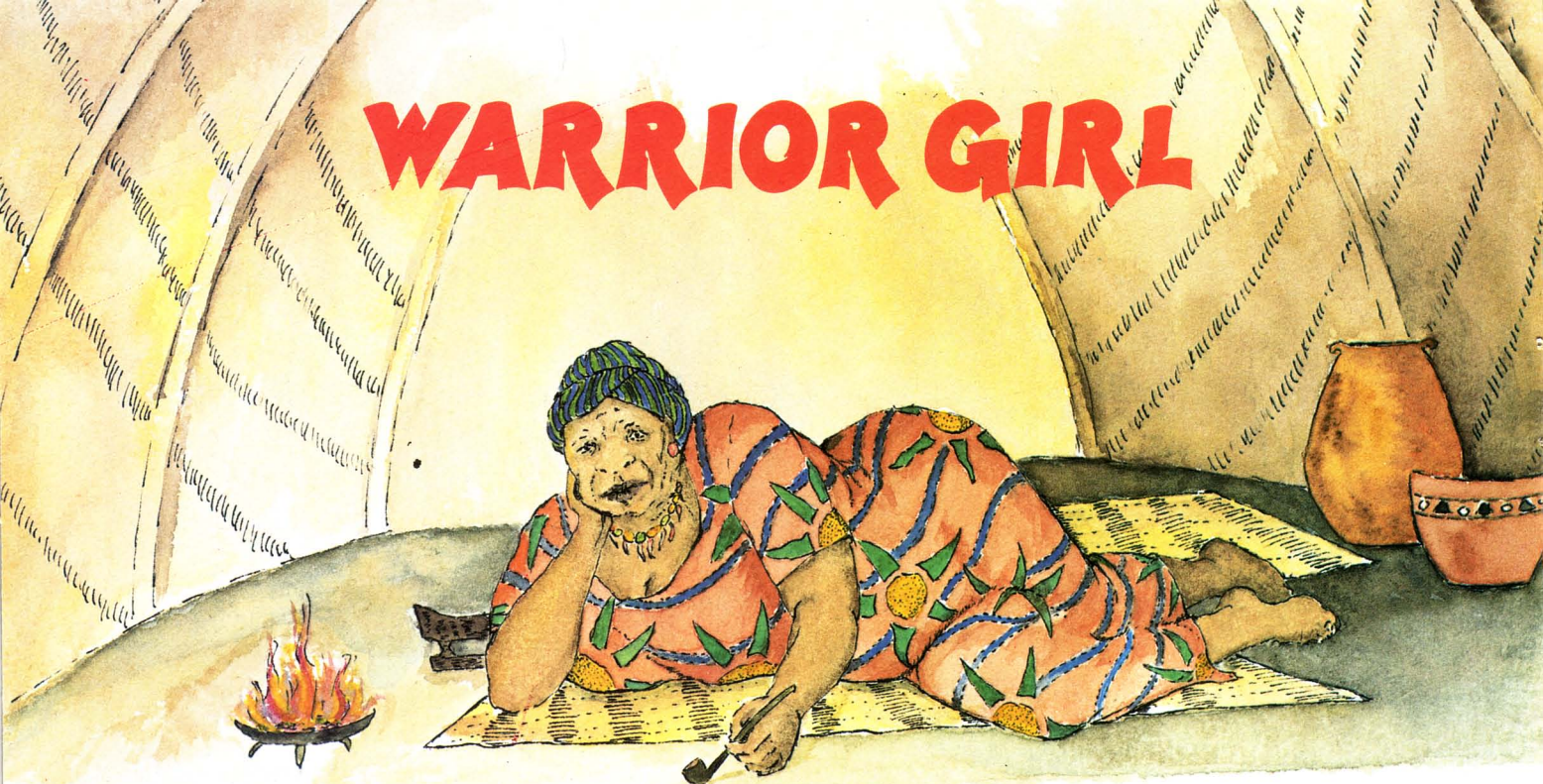
the cars all told him what had happened
 ... and how *they* had rescued *him*!



He was very glad to have such friends,
 and the next day he fixed all of them up
 with super new tyres, so they could
 zoom round the new adventure

playground he had built for them. And the
 goblins? Well, they were never seen again
 — not even by the blackbird, who knew
 every nook and cranny in the woods.

WARRIOR GIRL



It was a sad time for the tribe. Gorgu, the great mother of the tribe, heaved her huge body and sighed into the night.

The old king, her husband, had died and left behind only troubles. He had thirteen sons, and after his death, the boys had squabbled over the right to be king. Gorgu sighed again as she thought of her quarrelsome sons. All the omens, the bones thrown by the witch-doctors,

the position of the moon and stars on the night of the king's death, the call of the lion and the sound of the birds — all these signs demanded that Jabula, the youngest son of all, should be king.

But his brothers, envious of this most beautiful and wise child, refused to believe the signs or listen to the elders. Wicked in their anger, they had kidnapped Jabula and run off



with him to the distant hills.

Gorgu sighed again. Her twelve sons refused to return to the kraal, and instead sat in a cave and starved Jabula of food. No man dared to fight them, for they were the tribal princes and very powerful warriors.

As she lay awake with her troubled thoughts, Gorgu heard the sound of soft footsteps in her hut.

"Who is it?" she called.

"Hush, great mother, don't worry. It is only me, Tombi."

Tombi was a tall, beautiful girl who loved Jabula very dearly.

"Listen to me, Gorgu," she said.

"I want Jabula to come home. I am tired of the sadness in this tribe. I am tired of the drought. Have you noticed, Gorgu, that since the old king died, the rain has stopped coming? I have heard the birds

tell the clouds to stay away until Jabula is king."

"So, my child, you are tired of all this. So am I. What are you going to do about it?"

"I have a plan, Gorgu. I must keep it secret, but I must have your blessing."

The old woman smiled at the girl. "You have your secret and my blessing both, child. Now off you go — I need my sleep." Gorgu did not believe Tombi had a plan, of course. She was only a girl, and could do nothing to help Jabula.

But Tombi was a brave, clever girl, born of a long line of warriors. Among the other girls, she was leader and she had called them to battle. Ever since Jabula had been kidnapped by his brothers, Tombi had been making plans to rescue him. Now, she crept from hut to hut, waking her friends.





When they came near the cave where Jabula was being starved to death by his twelve brothers, the girls formed a circle round the entrance. Tombi stood in the middle.

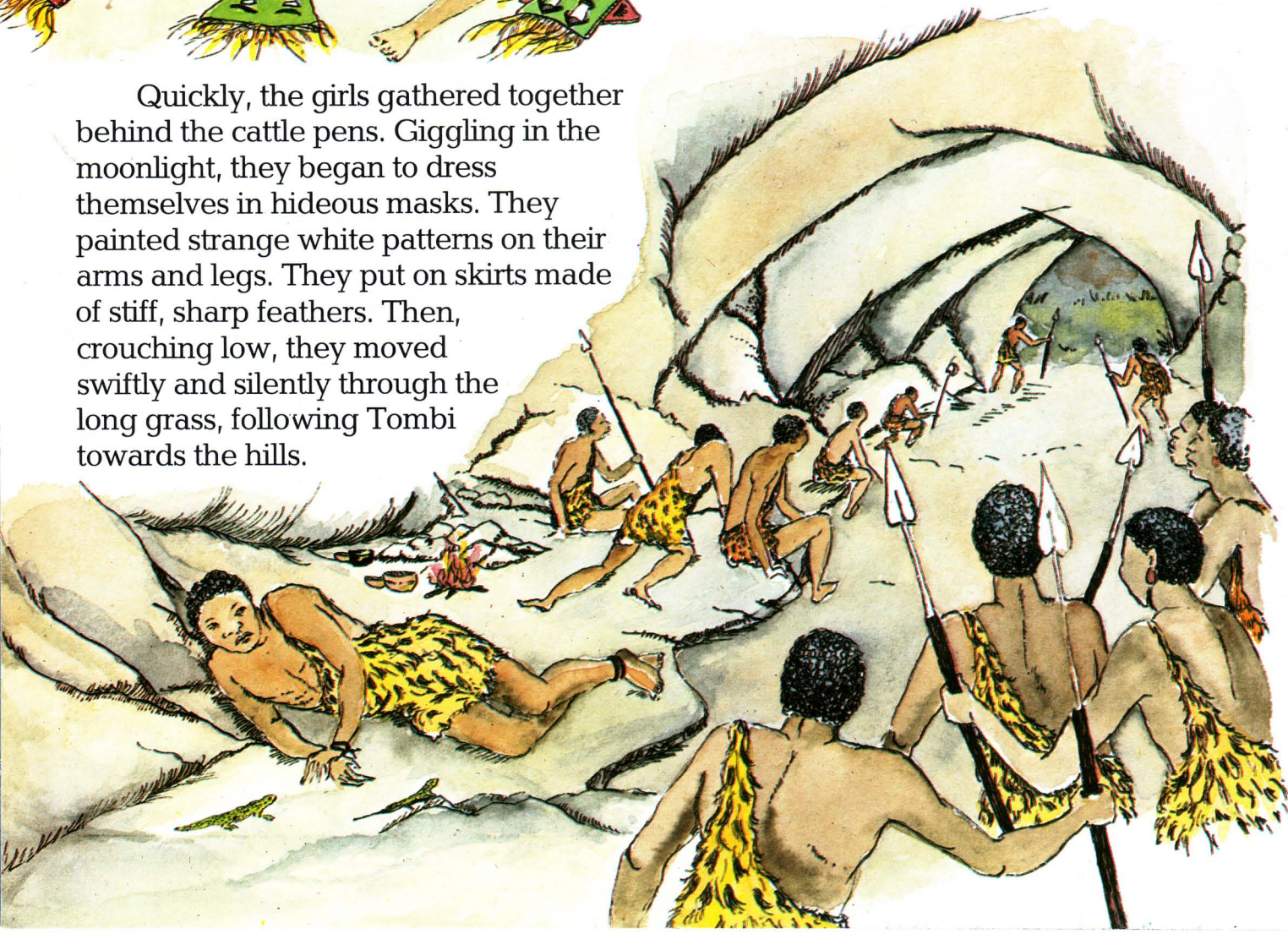
The night was thinning into the grey mist of dawn. Suddenly, a blood-curdling shriek woke the twelve sleeping brothers, and they grabbed their spears.

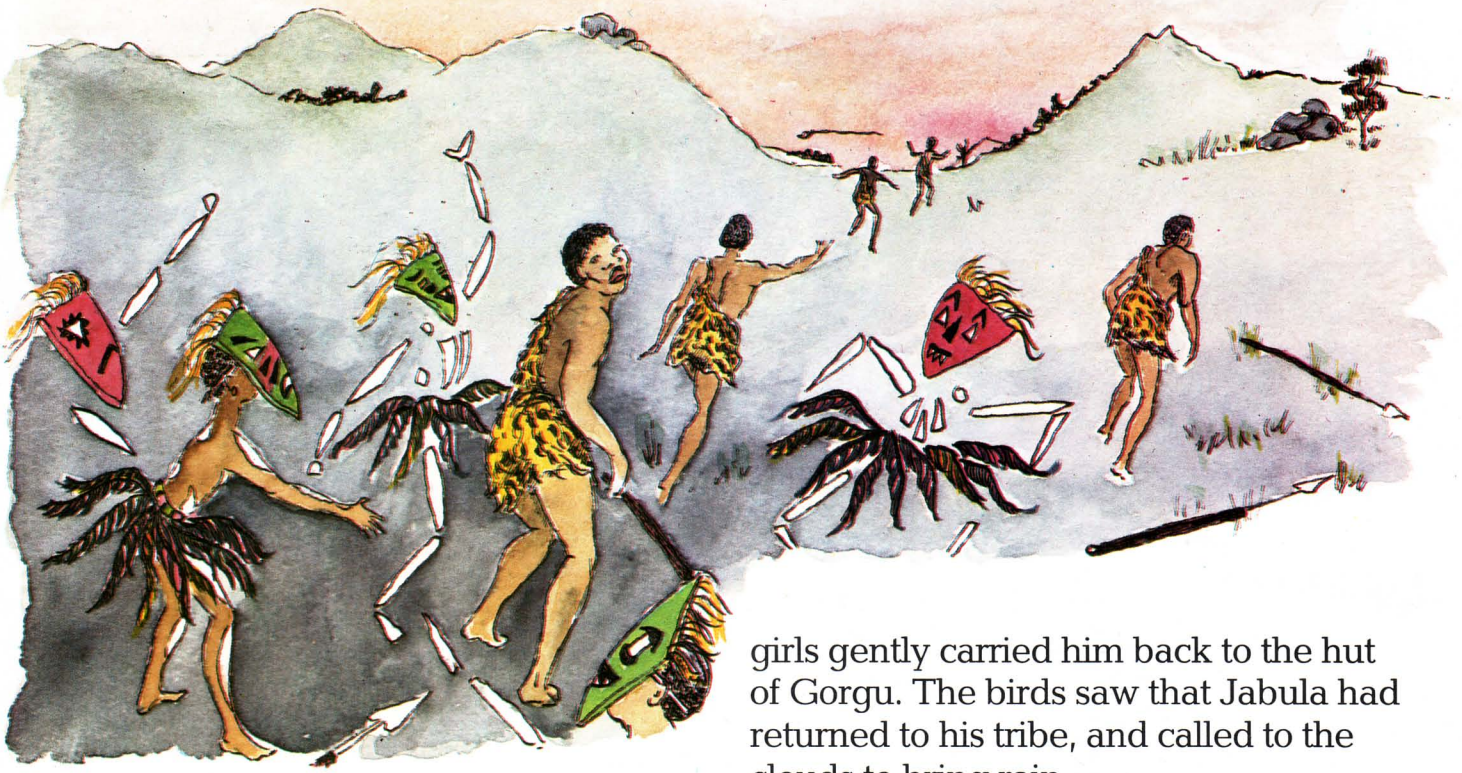
Then a spine-chilling voice called to them from the mist. "Come on out, you cowards. Twelve men to guard one young boy! Come on out — see if you can fight us."

"What is this?" shouted the eldest brother. "Who are you?"

Tombi and her girls gave a great war whoop in answer.

Quickly, the girls gathered together behind the cattle pens. Giggling in the moonlight, they began to dress themselves in hideous masks. They painted strange white patterns on their arms and legs. They put on skirts made of stiff, sharp feathers. Then, crouching low, they moved swiftly and silently through the long grass, following Tombi towards the hills.





Angrily, the eldest brother leapt from the cave. But all he could see in the dawn light were hideous faces and white bones and feathers. Shocked and frightened, he hissed at his brothers to join him. Then, hiding behind each other, the warriors squeezed out of the mouth of the cave.

Tombi and the other girls began to whine and scream in a ghastly way. They shook their feathered skirts and stamped their white painted legs.

The warriors gave a great moan of fear. Who were these weird creatures that taunted them? They did not dare ask again. Throwing down their spears, they rushed past their tormentors and fled into the distant hills. And they were never seen again.

The girls laughed until they were rolling on the ground. Never had they seen such foolish, frightened men.

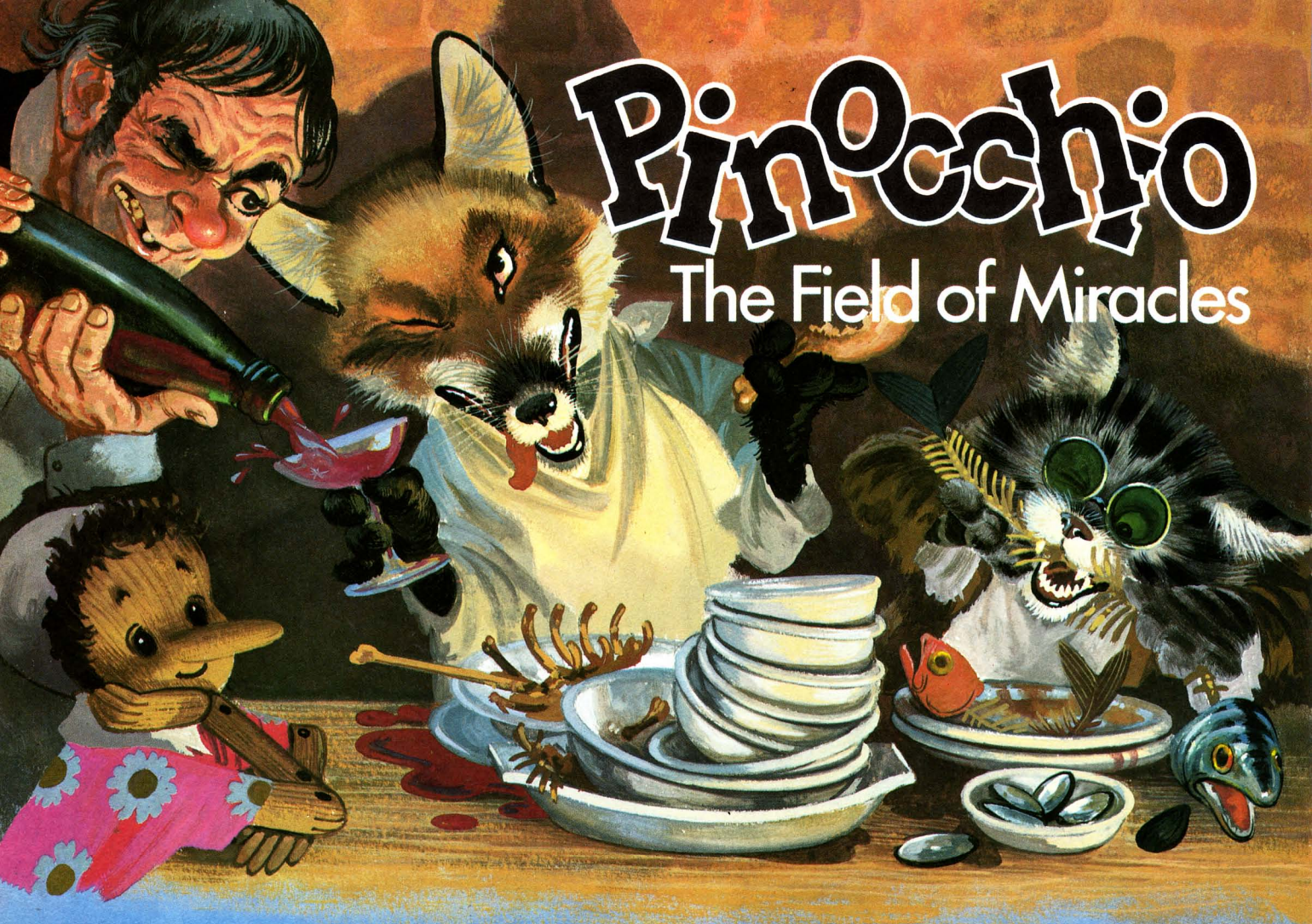
But Tombi went into the dark, stinking cave and tenderly stroked Jabula's head. He was weak from hunger, but still alive. Triumphant, the

girls gently carried him back to the hut of Gorgu. The birds saw that Jabula had returned to his tribe, and called to the clouds to bring rain.

The drought was broken, Jabula was king and the brave Tombi became his wife.

And Gorgu slept easily every night.





Pinocchio

The Field of Miracles

With his two shady companions, the Fox and the Cat, Pinocchio was still trudging along when the sun went down.

"Look!" said the Fox suddenly. "There's the Red Crab Inn. We can have a bite to eat, then press on at midnight to arrive at the Field of Miracles by dawn tomorrow!"

But when they sat down at the table, none of them, it seemed, had any appetite. The Cat could only squeeze down thirty-five helpings of fish and four helpings of tripe, while the Fox struggled gamely with a few dozen partridges, six rabbits and a hare. Pinocchio ate nothing at all — he could think only of the great day to come.

After their snack, the Fox ordered rooms for the three of them, and they all went off to sleep, leaving firm instructions to be woken at midnight. But when the inn-keeper shook Pinocchio awake, he had strange news.

"The Fox and the Cat have been called away early. They will meet you at the Field of Miracles at sunrise, if you make your own way there. Oh, and would you mind paying the bill for all three of you . . .?"

Pinocchio handed over one of his five precious gold coins and hurried on his way.



Dark clouds covered the stars, so he whistled to help keep up his spirits. Everything seemed very eerie. Then, as the road led through a dense wood, Pinocchio heard a rustle of leaves behind him! There in the gloom were two hooded figures — and they were chasing him!

The robbers were catching up fast, so Pinocchio popped the four gold coins into his mouth and scrambled up a tree. Surely he would be safe there! But looking down,

"So, you cheat! The money is under your tongue. Well, we know how to shake it out of there!" And with a horrible noise, like a Fox snarling, the taller of the two robbers pulled a noose from under his cloak and slipped it over Pinocchio's head. Seconds later, the poor puppet was dangling from the nearest tree.

The two robbers slunk away. "We'll be back tomorrow, when you'll be dead, with your mouth hanging open."

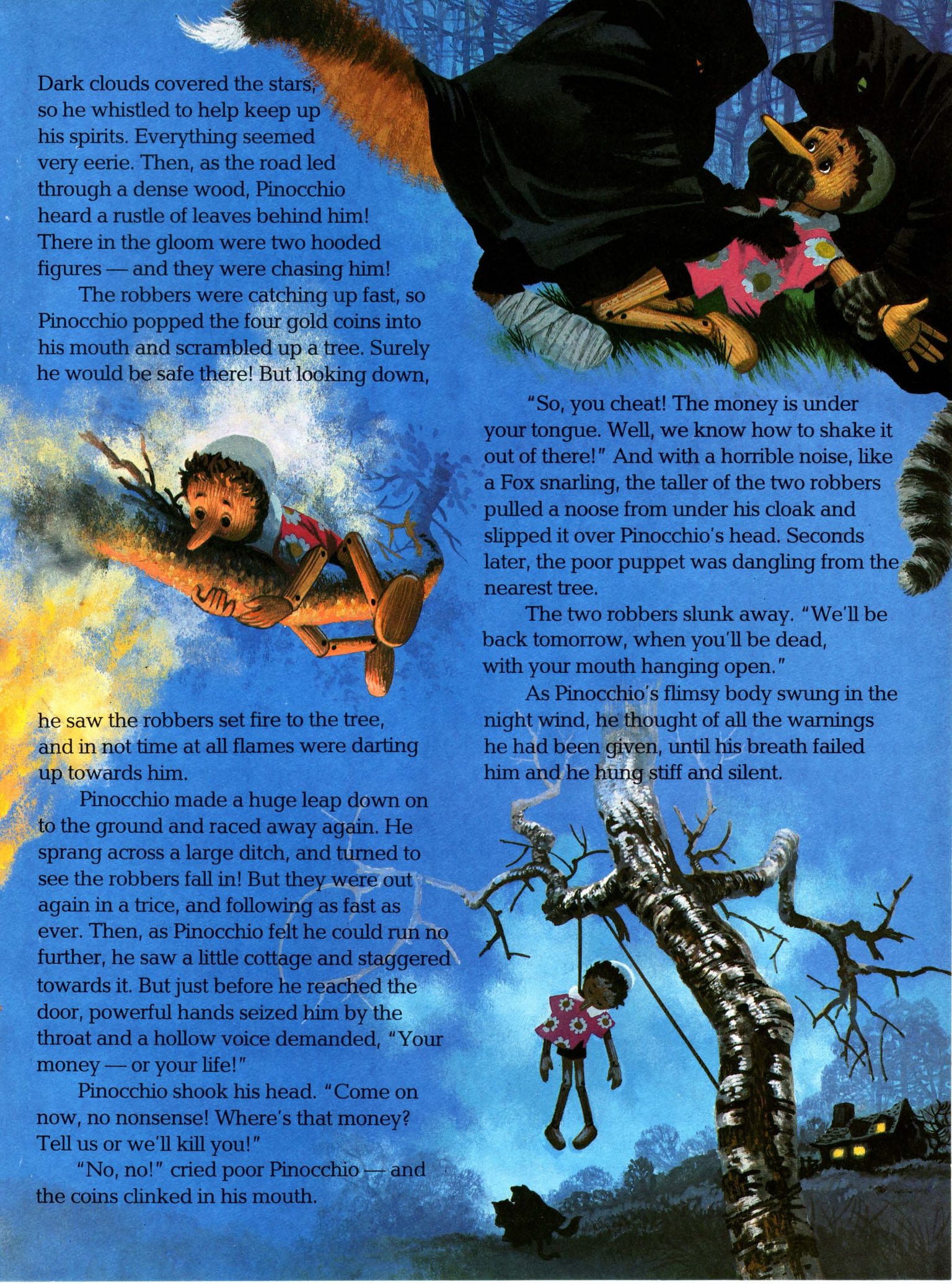
As Pinocchio's flimsy body swung in the night wind, he thought of all the warnings he had been given, until his breath failed him and he hung stiff and silent.

he saw the robbers set fire to the tree, and in not time at all flames were darting up towards him.

Pinocchio made a huge leap down on to the ground and raced away again. He sprang across a large ditch, and turned to see the robbers fall in! But they were out again in a trice, and following as fast as ever. Then, as Pinocchio felt he could run no further, he saw a little cottage and staggered towards it. But just before he reached the door, powerful hands seized him by the throat and a hollow voice demanded, "Your money — or your life!"

Pinocchio shook his head. "Come on now, no nonsense! Where's that money? Tell us or we'll kill you!"

"No, no!" cried poor Pinocchio — and the coins clinked in his mouth.





Now, the owner of the cottage was a beautiful Fairy, who had lived in the wood for more than a thousand years. And she had seen everything from her window. As soon as the robbers were out of sight the Fairy sent her very best carriage, driven by a poodle and drawn by a hundred pairs of white mice, to bring the limp body of Pinocchio to the cottage.

Soon, at his bedside, stood three worried doctors — an owl, a crow and a cricket — discussing their patient. And what should Pinocchio hear first as he woke, but the voice of the cricket. "I've seen that puppet before. He's a good-for-nothing rogue, a disobedient son who will make his poor father die of a broken heart."

Pinocchio burst into tears. But the sound of his sobs made the doctors happy, for their patient was obviously alive. "When a *dead* person cries, it is a sign that he is getting much better," droned the owl. "I think we may leave now, gentlemen." And out of the door they went.

Then the Fairy felt Pinocchio's forehead. He still had a high temperature and was very ill, so she made him some medicine. But because it was bitter, the puppet refused to take it. And when the Fairy gave him sugar to sweeten the taste, he crunched down the sugar and refused the medicine!

At that the door swung open and four black rabbits entered the room, carrying a coffin for Pinocchio.

"We have come to take you away," said the head rabbit.





"To take me?" squealed Pinocchio. "But I'm not dead! Fairy, oh Fairy, give me the medicine, please!" And Pinocchio downed the bitter liquid in one swallow.

"What a waste of our time," grumbled the rabbits. "That's another journey made for nothing." And they all trooped out of the room muttering.

A few minutes later, Pinocchio was well again. This is quite normal, you know. Wooden puppets are not often ill for long!

He told the Fairy the whole story and boasted about how clever he had been to hide the gold under his tongue.

"But where's the gold now?" asked the Fairy.

"Um, I've lost it!" said Pinocchio — and at once his nose began to grow!

"And where exactly did you lose it?"

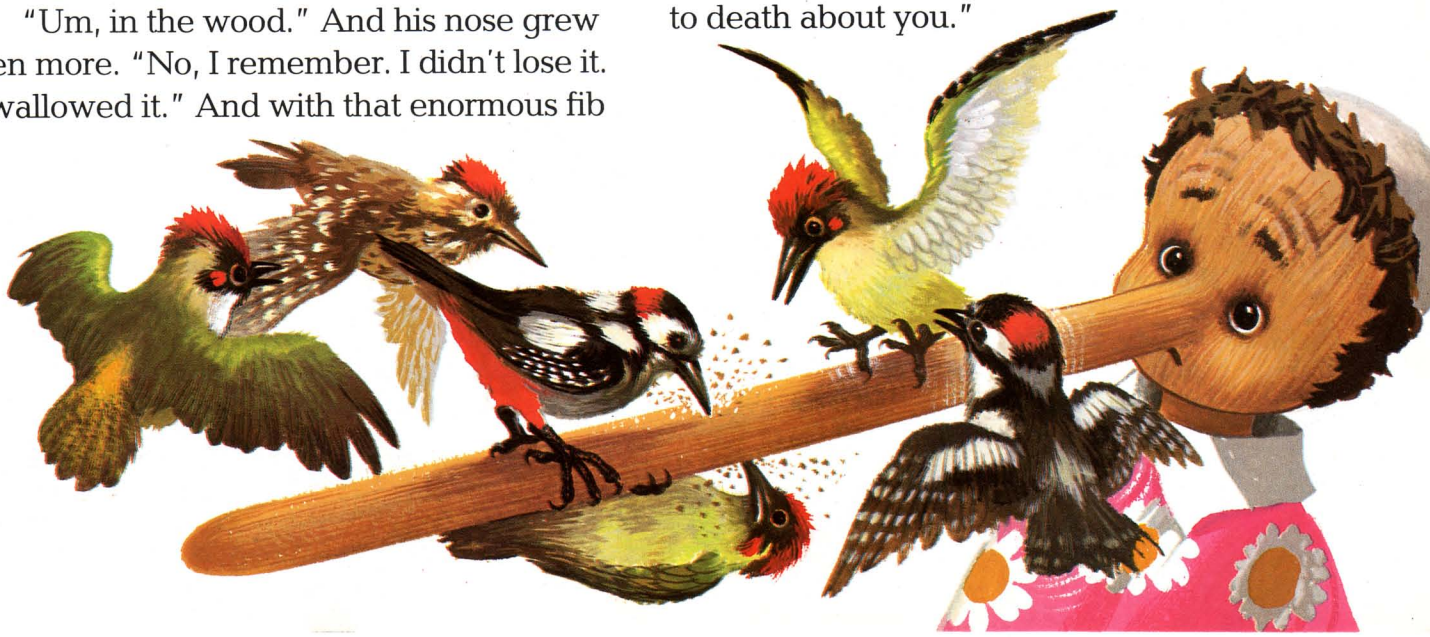
"Um, in the wood." And his nose grew even more. "No, I remember. I didn't lose it. I swallowed it." And with that enormous fib

his nose grew so long that he could not turn around. If he turned left, his nose struck the bed. And if he turned right it hit the window-pane!

"You're lying, Pinocchio," smiled the Fairy. And she explained to him that every time he told a lie his nose would grow. Poor Pinocchio was in misery, and the Fairy had to stifle her laughter. So she called a flock of woodpeckers to trim his enormous nose back to its usual size.

"How kind you are, Fairy," he said humbly. "I love you so much."

"I love you too, Pinocchio, and I will always look after you. But now you must forget all about the Field of Miracles and go home to your father, Geppetto. He is worried to death about you."





half a day, they came to a town called Trap o' Fools, where the streets were crowded with hundreds of poor beggars. And a mile further on they reached an empty field — a field that looked exactly like every other field they had passed.

"Here we are at last," puffed the Fox. "Now kneel down and dig a little hole. That's it, now put the coins in. Sprinkle this pinch of salt over them, and fill the hole again."

"Is that all I have to do?"

"Well, just pour on a little water. Good, that's perfect. We'll all go away now, but if you come back in two hours' time you'll find a thick bush poking through the ground, with its branches weighed down with gold!"

Pinocchio could not thank his friends enough. He wanted them to stay, and take at least a thousand of the new coins as a reward for their help. But the Cat would not hear of it. "We need no reward. It's quite enough for us to see you so wealthy and contented." So saying, they all shook hands and parted on the very best of terms.

Pinocchio walked back to Trap o' Fools

So Pinocchio kissed the Fairy goodbye and hurried off through the wood. But just as he was passing the tree where the robbers had strung him up, who should he meet but the Fox and the Cat.

"Why, here is our dear Pinocchio," cried the Fox, hugging him tight. "What are you doing here?"

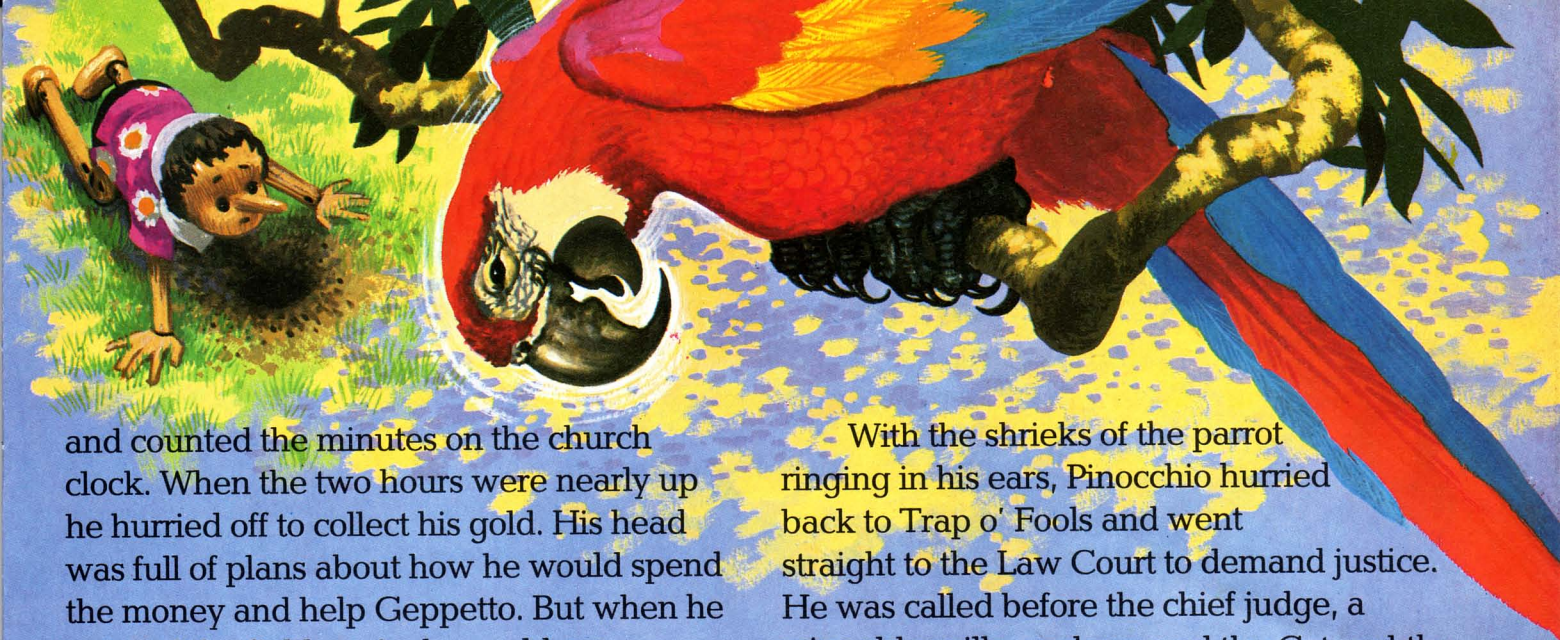
"Yes, what are you doing here?" asked the Cat.

Pinocchio told his story once again, while the two crafty animals pretended to be amazed. How sad they were to hear his tale! And how helpful they would be!

You can guess what happened. In no time at all Pinocchio had forgotten Geppetto and set off for the Field of Miracles with the Fox and the Cat.

After a long march, which took them





and counted the minutes on the church clock. When the two hours were nearly up he hurried off to collect his gold. His head was full of plans about how he would spend the money and help Geppetto. But when he entered the field again, he could see nothing. Absolutely nothing.

With an awful sinking feeling

With the shrieks of the parrot ringing in his ears, Pinocchio hurried back to Trap o' Fools and went straight to the Law Court to demand justice. He was called before the chief judge, a wise old gorilla, and accused the Cat and the Fox of fraud and robbery. When the judge had heard the evidence, he rapped his



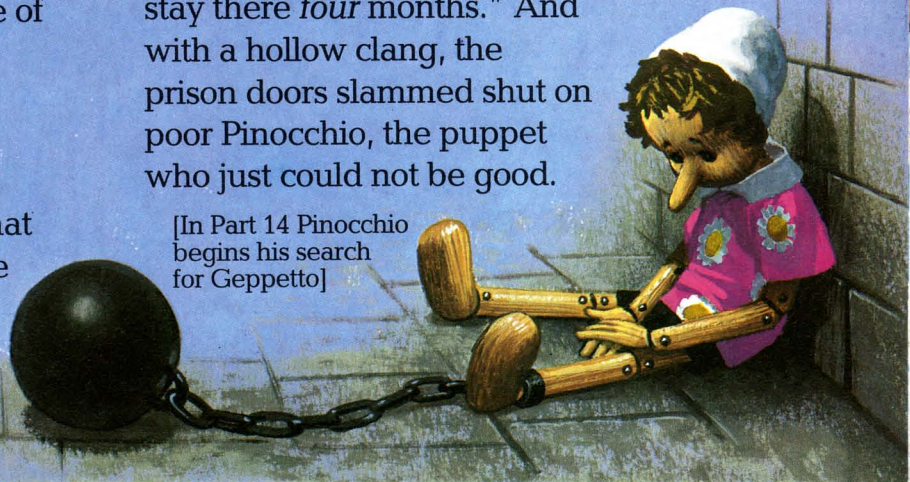
in his stomach, Pinocchio ran to the place where he had buried the coins. The hole had been dug open again, and was completely empty! As Pinocchio fell to his knees in despair he heard a low cackle of laughter from the tree behind him. Looking round he saw a large parrot, preening its feathers.

"Ah, what a fool you are, I nearly died laughing when I saw you plant that gold. That crafty old Fox and Cat came back while you were away, dug up the coins and fled like the wind!"

mallet on the table and passed judgement.

"You are a fool, Pinocchio, and fools must be trapped. Since you have lost *four* gold coins, you will go straight to jail and stay there *four* months." And with a hollow clang, the prison doors slammed shut on poor Pinocchio, the puppet who just could not be good.

[In Part 14 Pinocchio begins his search for Geppetto]



THREE BALD SPOTS



Marty invited me and all the other kids to his birthday party. My mother said, "I'll cut your hair before the party."

"Don't cut too much!" I said.

"But it's much too long," she said as she snipped.

When I looked in the mirror, she *had* cut far too much. And she had made three bald spots on my head! "Now I won't have any fun at Marty's party," I thought.

I covered the bald spots with my cowboy hat and went out to play.

"Why are you wearing your cowboy hat?" asked Joe.

"Because I want to," I said.

"But it's hot," said Diane. "Your head will sweat."

"It's good for your head to sweat. Sweat makes your hair grow faster, doesn't it?"

"We're going to buy a present for Marty," said Diane. "Come with us."

"Okay." But I said to myself, "I might not go to Marty's party now that I have three bald spots and have to wear a cowboy hat."

All my friends were at the store buying presents for Marty.

"Why is he wearing that cowboy hat?" asked the man behind the counter.

"So that his head will sweat," replied Diane.





"Sweat makes your hair grow faster," said Joe and Diane together. *(I have good friends. They always know what to say.)*

I even wore my cowboy hat to school. "Why don't you take off your

hat?" asked my teacher. "I can't," I answered. "*I have to cover my bald spots,*" I added, but only to myself.

I wore my cowboy hat to the dinner table, too. My father said, "Take off that hat at the dinner table." Dad's got a large bald spot. I looked at it, and decided that I couldn't explain, so

I took off my hat. After dinner I went to my bedroom, locked the door and looked in the mirror to see if my hair had grown. It hadn't. "*If I wear my cowboy hat to bed,*" I thought,

"my head can sweat all night and maybe my hair will grow."

But first thing in the morning I looked in the mirror — and I could *still* see three bald spots.





Joe and Diane came round to my house. "Are you ready for the party?" asked Joe.

"Yes," I said. *"But I won't have fun,"* I said to myself.

"Are you going to wear that cowboy hat?" asked Diane.

"Yes," I answered. And, I said to myself, *"No-one goes to a birthday party with three bald spots."*

We all walked to Marty's party — first Joe with Marty's present, then Diane with Marty's present, then me with Marty's present — and my three bald spots.

We rang Marty's doorbell and his mother let us in, but she looked very cross. "Everyone's here, but Marty won't come out of his room!"

I went upstairs and peeked into Marty's bedroom. Marty was looking in the mirror and crying. "Aren't you coming to your party?" I asked.

"No," said Marty. "I look funny."

Marty was wearing his best clothes, and I thought he looked quite good. "You don't look funny to me."

"Mother cut my hair and made bald spots," said Marty.

So I looked closer, and Marty did have bald spots! Marty has a mother like mine. She had snipped too much!

I laughed, took off my cowboy hat, and showed Marty *my* bald spots.

"Happy birthday, Marty," I said — and he laughed too!

So we went downstairs with our bald spots and had fun all afternoon.





THE UGLY DUCKLING

It was late Spring, and the sun shone hot on a brown duck beside the farm pond. But she did not stir. She was sitting on her nest of eggs, patiently waiting for them to hatch.

Tip-tap, crick-crack. A pretty little duckling struggled out of its shell. And by midday, five downy ducklings were cheeping around their mother's feet. But the sixth and largest egg was still whole. "It's very big," thought the mother duck. "I suppose it will take longer to hatch than the others."

Then, with an enormous crack, the shell broke in two — and out spilled a bundle of scruffy feathers and beak and feet, almost as big as the mother herself.

"You can't be one of *mine!*" she

quacked, staring at the ugly duckling.

His brothers and sisters all stared, too. "You're not one of us," they said, and began to laugh at the size of his flapping feet. Their father, the drake, paddled across the pond towards his new brood of children.

"Oh dear," said the mother, trying to hide the sixth duckling behind her. "Whatever will he say when he sees you?"

The drake beamed at his children and wagged his stumpy tail proudly. "Well done! What a fine family you've given me. Good grief! That's not one of *mine!*"





"Of course he isn't!" quacked their mother sharply. "We'll go for a swim on the pond to prove it. Turkeys can't swim."

The ugly duckling was not a turkey. He swam just as well as his brothers and sisters — faster in fact, because his feet were so big. But the farm animals all gathered round the pond and passed rude remarks about mother duck's very large child.

The ugly duckling stumbled forwards, with loving flicks of his short wings. But the drake turned his back and waddled off, shaking his head in disgust. The mother spread her wing comfortingly over the ugly duckling, but she could not help wishing he was prettier.

"Perhaps you'll be clever," she said. "Your head is big enough, after all."

The farmyard chickens came by to cluck over the duck's new babies. "Oh what little darlings!" they gabbled. "But what's *that*? You've hatched a turkey, my dear. Get rid of it, do-do-dooo!"

"He's a turkey, Mama!" jeered the other ducklings, dancing round their large, ugly brother. "He's a turkeyling!"



A tear began to trickle down the ugly duckling's beak and he swam to the far side of the pond, and wished he had never been born at all.

One day the farm children came to feed the ducks on the pond. As they tossed scraps of bread to them huge, long-necked, white birds flew overhead. "Swans! The swans are leaving!" they cried. "Oh, aren't they *beautiful*!" But when they caught sight of the ugly



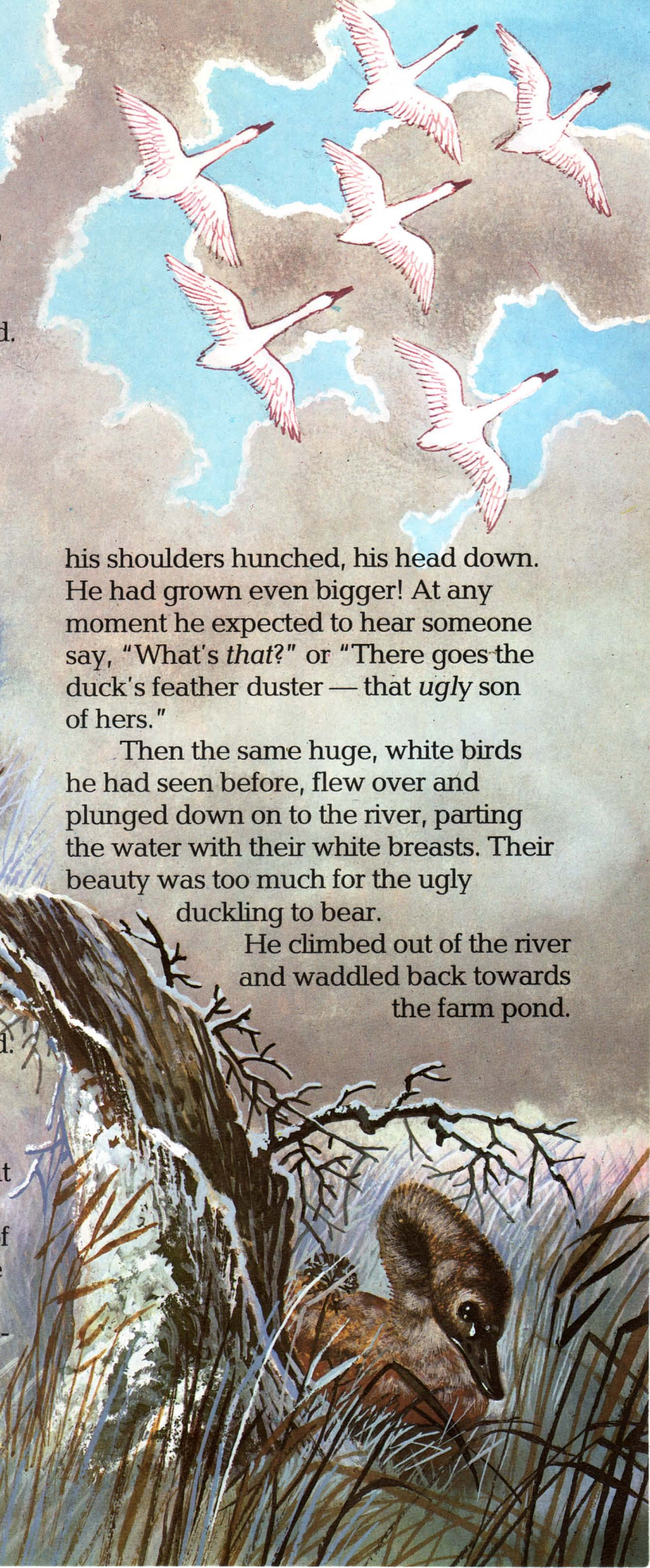
his shoulders hunched, his head down. He had grown even bigger! At any moment he expected to hear someone say, "What's *that*?" or "There goes the duck's feather duster — that *ugly* son of hers."

Then the same huge, white birds he had seen before, flew over and plunged down on to the river, parting the water with their white breasts. Their beauty was too much for the ugly duckling to bear.

He climbed out of the river and waddled back towards the farm pond.

duckling, the children laughed out loud. "I bet he grows into a whopping great duck and we eat him for Christmas! Let's catch him and show Mum!" And they splashed the water and clutched at the ugly duckling until he was beside himself with terror. He scrambled out of the pond and fled over the fields, to the banks of the wide river.

And there he hid, deep in the reed-beds, day in, day out, although the weather grew colder all the time. At last Spring came. The ugly duckling ventured out on to the flowing river,





As he approached the pond, he saw his brothers and sisters. They were almost fully grown ducks now. They stared in amazement as he passed the farmyard gate. "Mama! Mama!" they quacked, open-beaked.

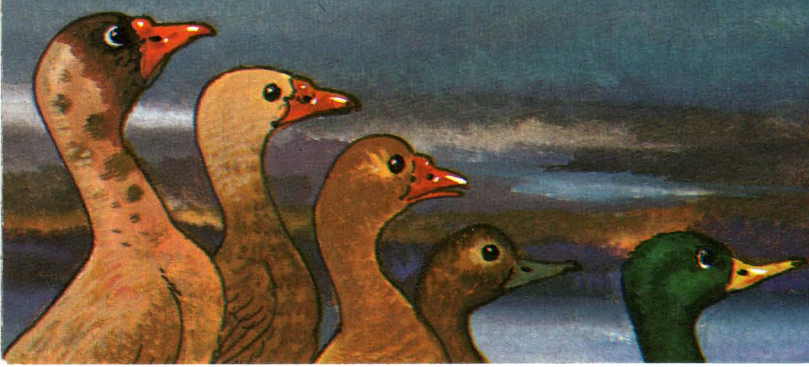
The mother duck and the drake were tail-up in the water, dabbling for food. The mother lifted her head and a juicy snail dropped from her beak. "Look, father. I do believe it's . . . it's our *ugly son!*"

At that moment the door of the farmhouse burst open and the children rushed out to play. They caught sight of the ugly duckling, stopped and pointed.

"Oh look!" they all cried. "What a *beautiful swan!*"

Reaching the brink of the pond, the duckling looked down at his reflection in the still water. He saw a long, white neck and a delicate white head. "A swan!" he cried, and his voice whistled through his elegant beak. "*I'm a swan!*"

In his surprise and delight he gave one flap of his white wings — and lifted himself into the air to soar and glide, with outstretched neck, towards the river and his own family — the swans. And everyone said he was the most handsome swan of all!





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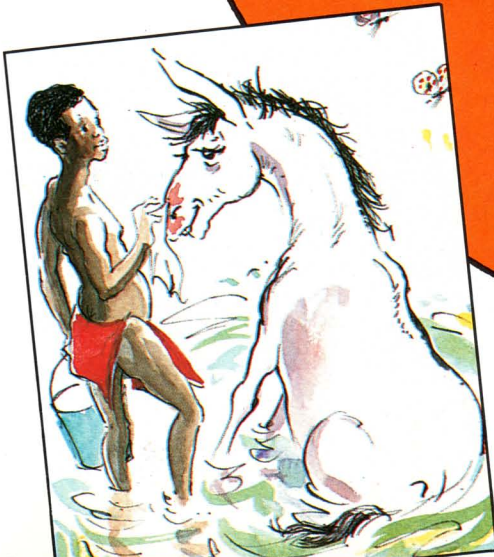
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