



PART 17

STORY

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best children's stories

Teller



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STORY Teller

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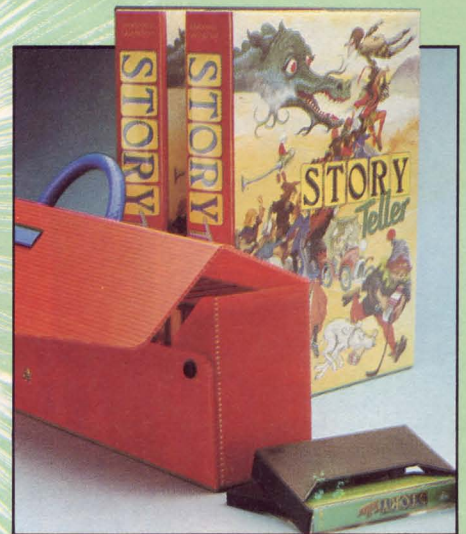
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This story is reproduced by kind permission of Barbara Ker Wilson, who has been compiling collections of short stories for children for thirty years. Here she tells a tale of her own invention about three sisters who can marry a prince — provided they keep his secrets.

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THE BOOK

Editors: **Richard Widdows & Nigel Flynn**

Art Editor: **Andrew Sutterby**

Editorial staff: **Geraldine Jones,**

Brenda Marshall, Tessa Paul,

Jane Edmonds & Lucy Stothert

Designers: **Paul Morgan, Fran Coston**

& Kim Whybrow

Illustrators

William Tell: **Francis Philipps**

I Saw a Ship a-Sailing: **Lyn Cawley**

Pinocchio: **Francis Philipps**

Anansi & the Fancy Dress Party: **Tony Ross**

Jojo's Jigsaw Puzzle: **Peter Wingham**

Can You Keep a Secret?: **Mike Codd**

The Lion & the Peacock: **Malcolm Livingstone**

THE TAPE

Recorded at The Barge Studios,

Little Venice, London:

Produced & Directed by **Joa Reinelt**

Engineered by **John Rowland**

A Creative Radio Production

Readers

William Tell: **Tom Baker**

I Saw a Ship a-Sailing: **Carole Boyd**

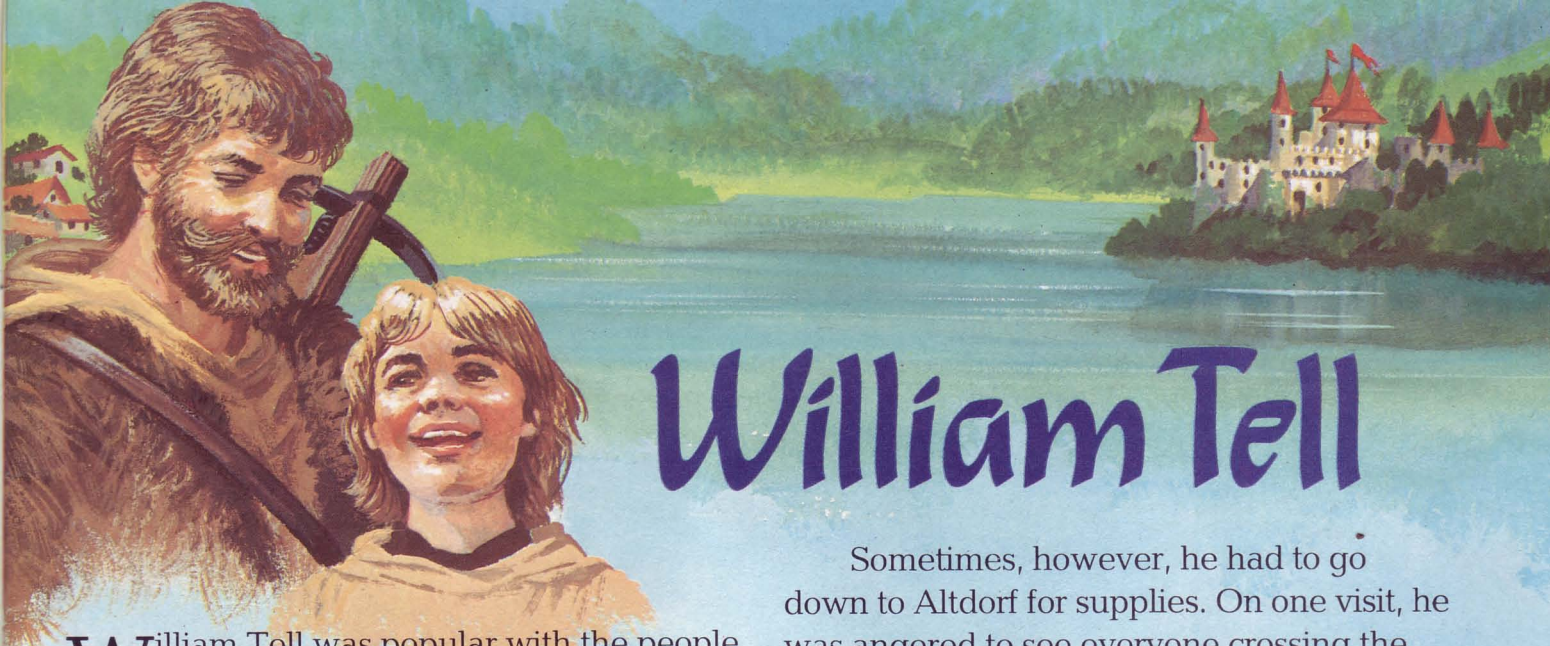
Pinocchio: **Ian Lavender**

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Can You Keep a Secret?: **Carole Boyd**

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William Tell

William Tell was popular with the people of his lakeside town of Altdorf in Switzerland. He was the best sailor on Lake Lucerne, and the finest archer. And he hated the cruel Duke Gessler who had been sent by a foreign power to rule and plunder the district.

Tell's courage and skill made him a hero to the local people. For that reason, Gessler both hated and feared him. So to keep out of trouble, William Tell went to live in the mountains with his young son whom he loved more than anyone in the world.

Sometimes, however, he had to go down to Altdorf for supplies. On one visit, he was angered to see everyone crossing the square, bowing to a tall pole with a hat on top!

"What's going on?" he asked a woman.

"The Duke has ordered us to bow to his hat every time we pass it."

"What nonsense! I'll bow to no man's hat — least of all Gessler's!" And he strode across the square, with his little son running to keep up.

"Halt!" With a clatter of armour, a group of soldiers sprang on Tell and dragged him and his son to the Duke's court. Gessler rubbed his hands with glee.





him this chance of freedom. The shot was difficult, but he was sure he could split the apple. So he agreed. They went to the end of a field where a young oak tree grew. The

Duke sniggered. "Now, tie the boy to the tree and put the apple on his head.

That should encourage our friend to shoot straight!"

Gessler grinned with pleasure as he saw Tell's face grow pale. He had guessed his weakness — he adored his little son. What would Tell do? Would he beg to be put in prison rather than risk the shot? William felt his hands tremble. What if they shook as he aimed the bow? How could he risk his son's life just to keep his own freedom?

Then a small voice rang out.

"You can do it, father. I know you can."

"William Tell, for the crime of not showing respect to my hat, I could throw you into the dungeons of Kussnacht Castle for the rest of your life."

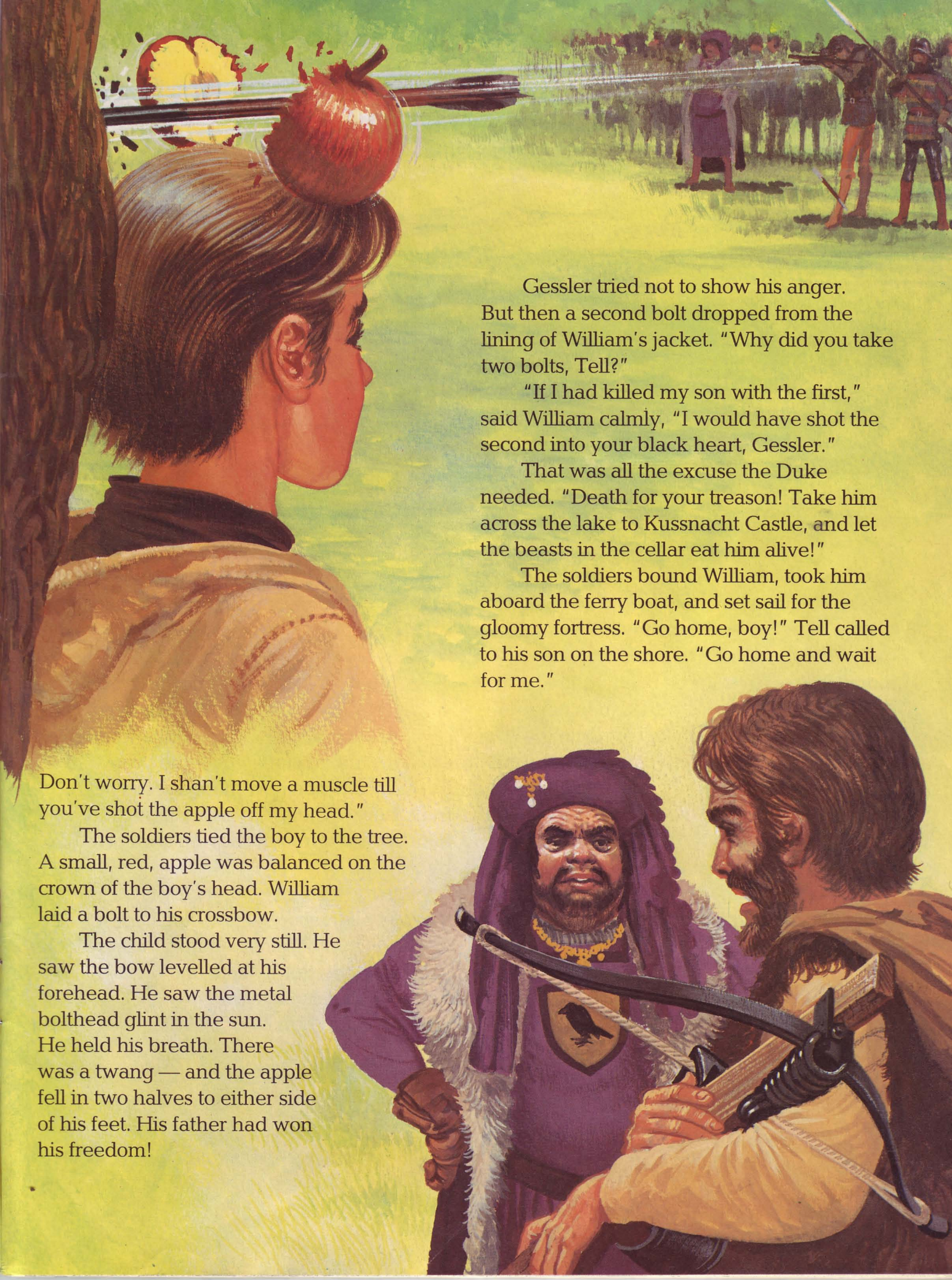
But William held his head high and looked at the Duke with a cool, calm gaze. Gessler seethed with rage. Was there no way of breaking this man's spirit? "Yes," he thought with a vicious grin, "perhaps there is a way." He sat back in his chair. "I've heard people call you the best archer in the land."

"Oh, he is!" cried Tell's little son.

"Then what a waste it would be for you to rot in prison. I'll make you this offer. If you can sink your bolt into an apple from a distance of two hundred paces, I'll let you go free."

William could not imagine why Gessler should offer





Don't worry. I shan't move a muscle till you've shot the apple off my head."

The soldiers tied the boy to the tree. A small, red, apple was balanced on the crown of the boy's head. William laid a bolt to his crossbow.

The child stood very still. He saw the bow levelled at his forehead. He saw the metal bolthead glint in the sun. He held his breath. There was a twang — and the apple fell in two halves to either side of his feet. His father had won his freedom!

Gessler tried not to show his anger. But then a second bolt dropped from the lining of William's jacket. "Why did you take two bolts, Tell?"

"If I had killed my son with the first," said William calmly, "I would have shot the second into your black heart, Gessler."

That was all the excuse the Duke needed. "Death for your treason! Take him across the lake to Kussnacht Castle, and let the beasts in the cellar eat him alive!"

The soldiers bound William, took him aboard the ferry boat, and set sail for the gloomy fortress. "Go home, boy!" Tell called to his son on the shore. "Go home and wait for me."





As the boat reached deep water, a breeze blew up, and then a wind. Soon a gale was lifting the lake into a mass of mountainous waves. The boat plunged and rolled. The soldiers were sick, then nervous, then terrified. "Only William Tell could sail a boat in this weather!" cried the captain, and the others took up the cry. "Get Tell to save us! Make the prisoner sail the boat!"

William was untied and he grabbed the tiller, turning the prow of the boat into the turmoil of black rain and spray. He could just make out the jagged

rocks of the shore tearing the water like savage teeth.

He heaved the tiller round, and a huge wave lifted the boat and dropped it on to the sharp spines of rock. The keel snapped!

Snatching a loaded crossbow from a soldier, William leaped over the prow into the branches of an overhanging tree, and from there to the safety of dry land. Behind him, the foreign soldiers were swallowed up by the lake.

On the far shore stood Gessler, watching in horror the fate of his finest soldiers. Dropping to one knee, William took aim across the stormy lake and fired — right into Gessler's heart.

Then, through the mist William climbed the wild mountainside towards the home where his son was waiting.

Within a few years, Switzerland too broke free of foreign rule, and its people recovered their peace and happiness.



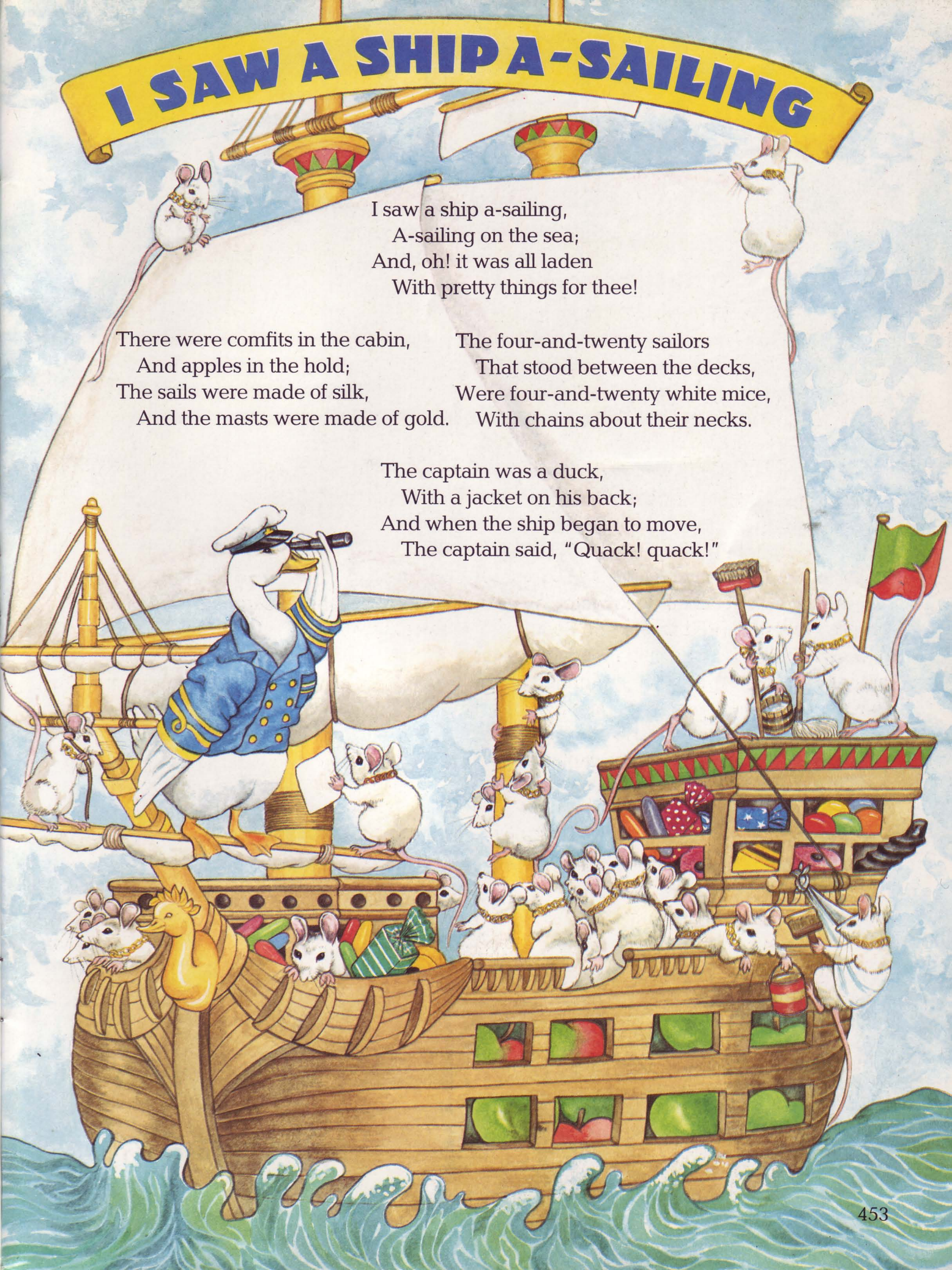
I SAW A SHIP A-SAILING

I saw a ship a-sailing,
A-sailing on the sea;
And, oh! it was all laden
With pretty things for thee!

There were comfits in the cabin,
And apples in the hold;
The sails were made of silk,
And the masts were made of gold.

The four-and-twenty sailors
That stood between the decks,
Were four-and-twenty white mice,
With chains about their necks.

The captain was a duck,
With a jacket on his back;
And when the ship began to move,
The captain said, "Quack! quack!"



Pinocchio

Home and Dry

Pinocchio was in such a hurry to escape from Playland and the drum-maker that he swam far out to sea, until all that could be seen of him was a tiny black speck on the horizon. He was so happy to be free that every now and then he swung his legs out of the water and waggled them above the surface, like a dolphin's tail.

He swam for hours, not really caring which way he went. Then, suddenly, he glimpsed a strange sight. Towering out of the waves was a rock of pure white marble, and on the top stood a beautiful little goat, which was bleating to him in a very friendly way, and nodding excitedly.

Most surprising of all, the goat's hair was blue! And Pinocchio realised that it was not a normal goat at all, but his Good Fairy in disguise, come to rescue him again.

His heart began beating at twice its usual rate, and he swam towards the goat with all his strength. But before he was half-way to the marble rock, a huge monster



shark reared up out of the water! Pinocchio felt himself drawn helplessly towards its massive mouth, and its three rows of enormous jagged teeth!

Just think of Pinocchio's terror! He struggled to change direction. He cried piteously for help. And the blue goat called out in anguish, "Swim quickly Pinocchio! The shark will get you!"

But it was already too late! Gigantic jaws closed around the wriggling puppet, and everything went dark. Pinocchio felt himself sliding down the monster's throat, and into its vast stomach — and then he blacked out.

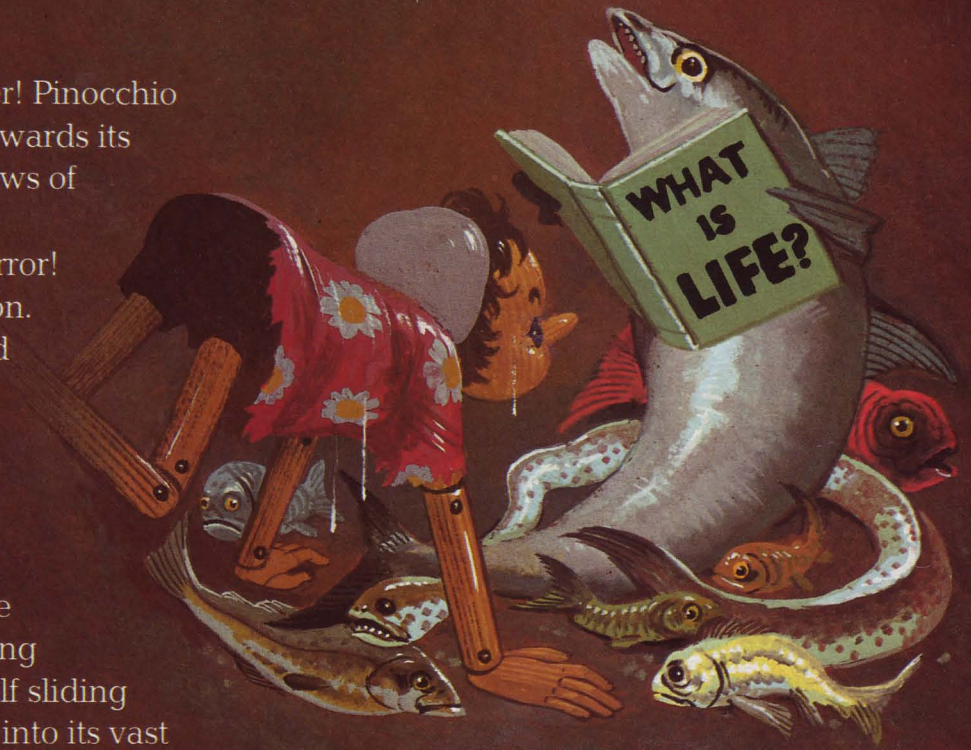
When Pinocchio came to, he was terribly scared. It was very dark, and eerily silent. From time to time there was a strange rasping noise, and great gusts of wind blew into his face. It was the shark breathing! Poor Pinocchio felt so lost and alone that he cried and screamed, "Help, help! Save me! Won't someone save me?"

Then, out of the gloom, came a low voice. "No-one will save you, unhappy wretch. You can do nothing but wait to be digested!"

"Who's that?" stammered Pinocchio, shaking with fear.

"It is I, poor Tuna fish, who was swallowed by the shark just before you. But I do not cry or yell. I am a philosopher. I count myself lucky to be eaten by a fish, and not by humans!"

"But I don't want to be eaten at *all*!" cried the puppet. "I want to escape! How



big is this shark, and where's the way out?"

"There is no way out," replied the Tuna, with a voice of doom. "The shark is a mile long — and that's not counting his tail!"

Left alone with the Tuna, Pinocchio might have given up hope, but while they were talking he saw a tiny light twinkling in the distance. So, saying goodbye, he groped his way along the body of the shark. It took a long time for him to reach the flickering light, but when he finally arrived, he could hardly believe his eyes.

He found a little old man, with a long white beard, sitting at a table with a lighted candle stuck into a bottle!





And who do you think the old man was? Yes, it was Geppetto, the wood-carver — Pinocchio's own dear father! The puppet was overcome with joy.

"Oh Daddy, Daddy, I've found you at last, after all this time."

And he did not know whether to laugh or cry at the old man's astonished face.

"Do my old eyes deceive me? Is it really you, Pinocchio? I thought I had lost you forever." And he hugged his son as if he would never let go. "I have been in this shark for two years, since that fateful day when I set sail in my little boat. I saw the white dove leave you on the beach, and

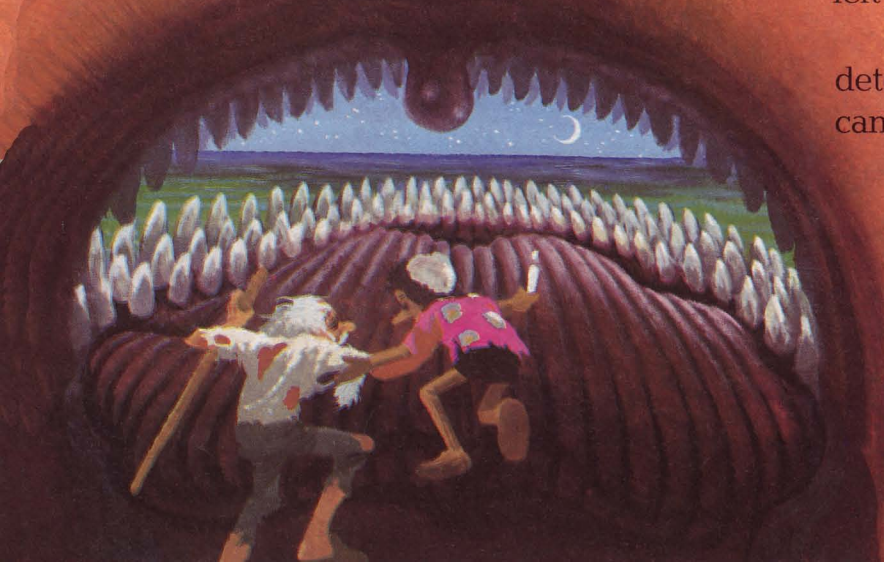
tried hard to return to shore. But the waves blew up and hurled me to the shark!"

"But how have you survived, Daddy?"

"In that same dreadful storm, a merchant ship was wrecked and the shark swallowed all its cargo. For these two years I have lived off the ship's supplies — corned beef, biscuits, cheese and sugar. There were even bottles of wine. But now I have nothing left and this is the very last candle!"

Hearing this, Pinocchio was more determined than ever to escape. Taking the candle in one hand, he led his poor father off into the darkness. For more than an hour they struggled along the belly of the shark, until they arrived at the back of the monster's mouth.

Peering through, beyond the jagged teeth, they could see the bright moon and a starry sky.





The shark was fast asleep, with his mouth wide open.

"Quick, Daddy, we must get out before the monster wakes!"

And, as the shark's snoring thundered in their ears, they climbed silently along its tongue, across its rows of teeth, and out on to its giant lip.

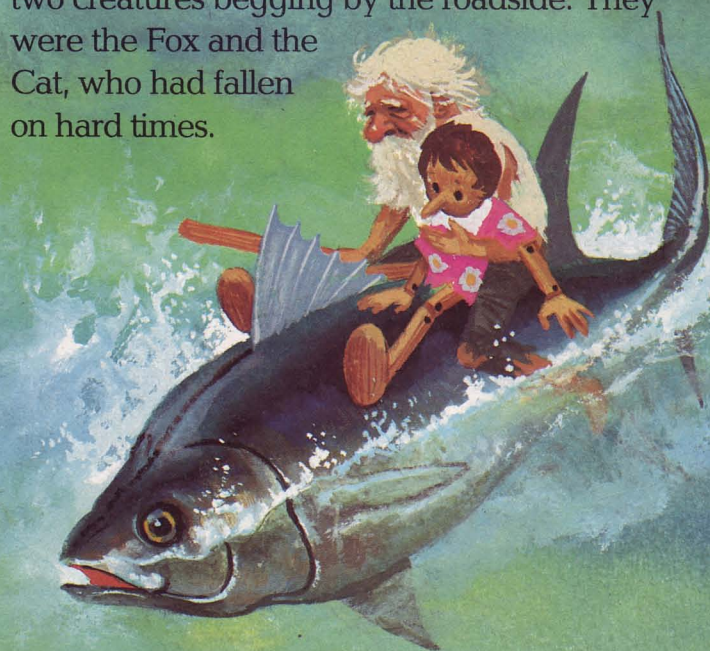
Then Pinocchio took Geppetto on his shoulders, leaped into the water, and swam away. The sea was calm and silent . . . and the shark was still sleeping like a log!

Pinocchio swam for hours, carrying his poor father — who could not swim a stroke. When dawn broke, the puppet was getting very tired and there was still no sign of land. Then, just as he felt he could move his arms and legs no more, he heard a familiar voice. "No need to panic. I will have you on dry land in a few minutes."

It was the Tuna. And as Pinocchio and Geppetto clambered thankfully on to his back, he explained how he had followed their example and escaped from the snoring shark.

The awful dangers were finally over. The Tuna left them safely on a sandy beach and Pinocchio thanked him again and again. Then the puppet and his father walked slowly inland, looking for food and shelter.

They had not gone far when they met two creatures begging by the roadside. They were the Fox and the Cat, who had fallen on hard times.



The Fox really *had* gone lame, and the Cat really *had* gone blind.

"Dear Pinocchio," whined the Fox. "Give a little charity to the needy!"

"Yes, my dear boy," pleaded the Cat. "Do help the aged and infirm!"

But Pinocchio and Geppetto ignored the wicked pair. "If you are poor now, you deserve it. You won't catch me out again!"





On they went, and a little further down the road they saw a pretty little cottage in the middle of a field. They walked across to knock at the door.

"Turn the key and the door will open," came a voice from inside.

So in they went — and there, high up on a beam, was the Talking Cricket! "Oh my dear little Cricket, how nice to see you," said Pinocchio, bowing politely.

"So! *Dear little Cricket*, is it? You didn't say that when you threw a mallet at me! You had no pity for me, but I will have pity on you. Just you remember from now on — it pays to be kind to people when you can!"

And the Cricket told Pinocchio that he had been given the cottage the day before by a beautiful blue-haired goat, who had gone away bleating in sorrow about a puppet that had been swallowed by a shark.

Deeply moved, and determined to be good, the puppet helped his tired father to lie down on a bed of straw, then went off in search of milk for him to drink. A nearby farmer offered him a jug, but only at a price.

Pinocchio had to do hours of back-breaking labour, drawing a hundred buckets of water from the well, to pay for the milk.

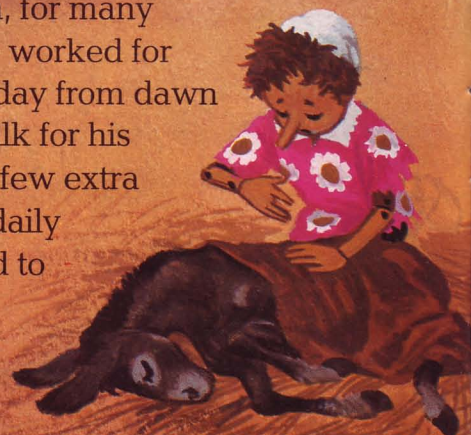
"Up till now I had a donkey to do this work," said the farmer. "I bought him a few months ago, at the market. But he was a lazy devil, always trying to dodge off. Then he fell sick, and now he's dying over there in the stable."

When Pinocchio ran over to look, he was amazed. For there, lying stretched out on the straw, was his old friend Candlewick. The poor sick donkey opened



his eyes for the last time, gave a deep, groaning sigh . . . and died.

From then on, for many months Pinocchio worked for the farmer every day from dawn to dusk, to buy milk for his father and earn a few extra pennies for their daily needs. He learned to weave baskets from reeds and,



whenever he could, he practised reading and writing. He worked so hard that after six months he had managed to save up fifty pence. So the next morning he set off for the market to buy himself a new shirt.

It was a beautiful day. The sun was shining and the birds were singing in the trees. The puppet was scampering along merrily, when all at once he saw a big snail, who called out to him, "Pinocchio! Stop!"

It was the Fairy's Snail, who had taken so long to let the puppet into her house the evening after he had been caught by the giant green fisherman!

"My beautiful Snail! What are you doing here? Do you know where the Fairy is?"

"Oh Pinocchio, the poor Fairy is very ill in hospital, and is likely to die! She has no money left to buy herself food."

At once the puppet snatched the fifty pence from his pocket and gave the coins to the Snail. "Quickly, take this money to the Fairy! I don't need a new shirt — these rags are enough for me." Without another word, the Snail raced off at high speed — quite unlike her normal self.

Pinocchio went straight back to the cottage and started work. Now he had two people to support — Geppetto *and* the Fairy. He slaved away making baskets until



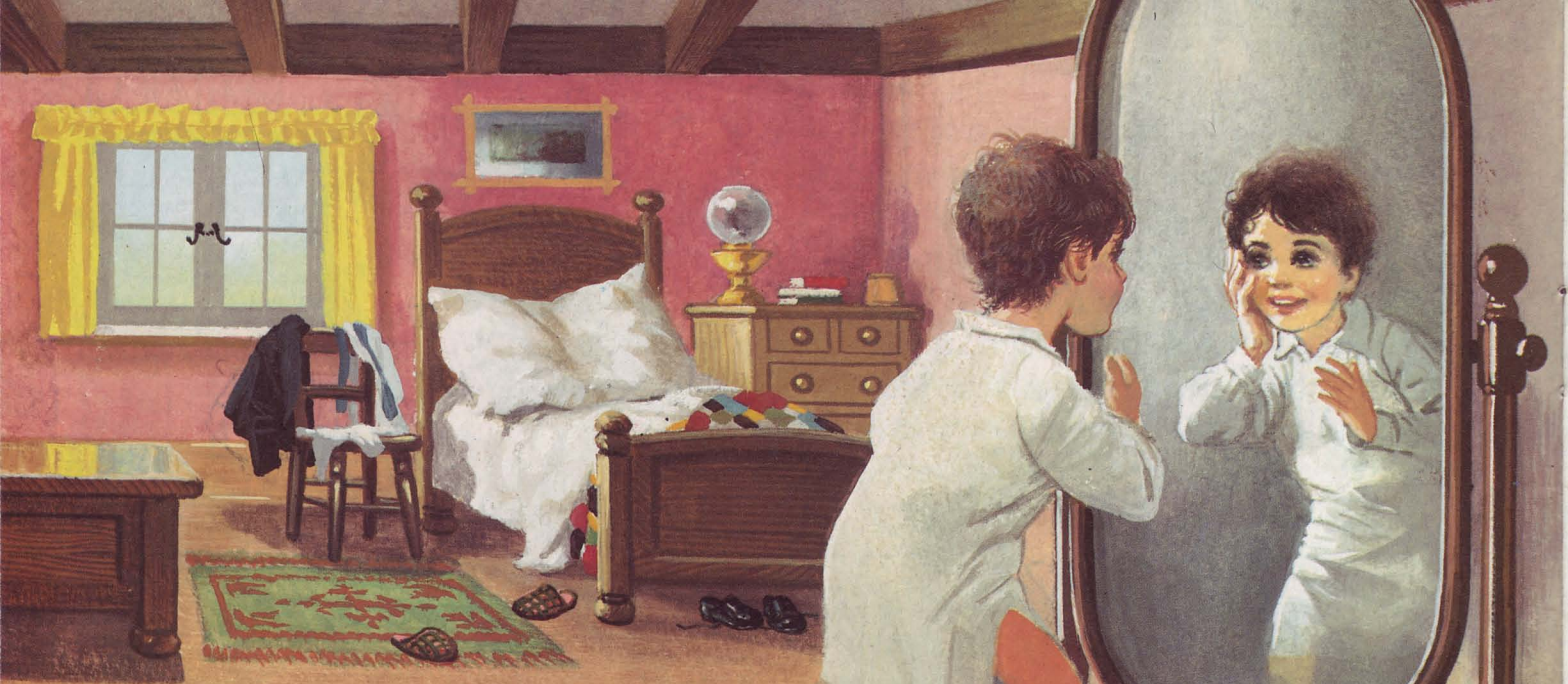
midnight, then curled up on his bed of straw and fell sound asleep.

And, as he slept, he dreamed he saw the Fairy. She was more beautiful than ever. She smiled at him, and kissed him gently. Then she said softly, "You're a good boy, Pinocchio. You have worked hard for

Geppetto and for me in our time of need.

I forgive you all your naughty past. And I promise you that if you are good in the future, you will always be happy."





With these words, the dream ended and Pinocchio woke up with a start. Everything was different! Pinocchio suddenly realised that he was no longer a puppet! He had become a *real* boy, just like other boys! The little cottage had become his old home, and his rags had turned into new clothes!

Just imagine how happy Pinocchio felt!

The Fairy had kept her promise! At last, Pinocchio was a *real* boy!

Pulling on his smart new trousers, he found a leather purse in the pocket. A note from the Fairy read: *Thank you Pinocchio, for the loan of fifty pence.* And inside the purse were fifty bright new shining coins!

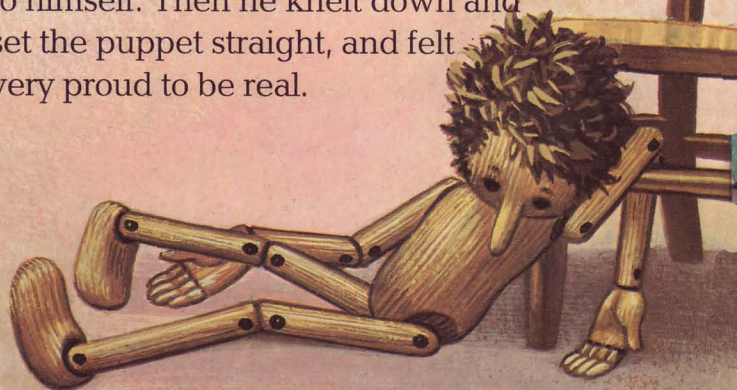
Bursting with joy, Pinocchio ran into the next room, and found Geppetto



working away busily at his wood-carver's bench. Everything was spick and span, and the tools were gleaming.

"This change for the better is all your doing," he told his son, giving him a hug. "When naughty boys turn over a new leaf, they make everything seem bright. Just look at that silly old puppet down there — aren't you glad you're no longer like that?"

Pinocchio looked down to see the crumpled wooden toy, leaning against a chair with its head on one side, and its arms dangling awkwardly. "How ridiculous I must have been," he thought to himself. Then he knelt down and set the puppet straight, and felt very proud to be real.



ANANSI AND THE FANCY DRESS PARTY

Anansi the spider-man scratched his head and sat down to have a good think. Like all the other animals, he had received an invitation to King Leo's fancy dress party. It was to be held at three o'clock that afternoon and a prize was to be given for the most unusual costume. But Anansi had a problem — he just could not decide what to wear.

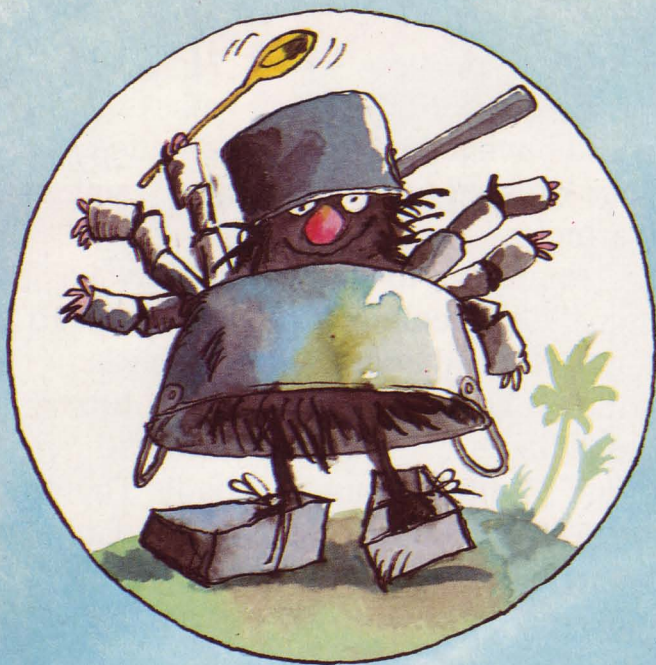
"Rabbit and Bear are bound to turn up in something *really* special," he muttered. "I'll have to find an absolutely fantastic costume if I'm going to win that prize."

He scratched his head and thought very hard.

"I have it. I have a brilliant idea. I'll go dressed up as a knight in a suit of armour."

Anansi set to work straight away. He took a wheelbarrow to a scrap-heap down the road and collected a huge pile of metal. There was an old wash-tub which had a hole in the bottom and would fit snugly round his body. There was a saucepan to put on his head and two square baking tins to wear on his feet. And there were lots of tin cans which he could use to cover his arms and legs by knocking out the bottoms and tying them together with bits of string.





By lunchtime the suit was ready for Anansi to try on. It looked perfect — but it had one drawback.

"I'll never be able to walk to the party in this suit," he thought. "It's much too heavy. What shall I do?"

He soon came up with the answer. He would put the suit in his wheelbarrow and push it to the field where the party was going to be held. He would hide the suit in some bushes and put it on just before three o'clock. Everyone would be so surprised that he would be certain to win the competition.

Anansi hid the suit and returned home feeling sure that nobody had seen him. He did not realise that at the very moment he pushed his suit into the hedge, Rabbit and Bear were standing on the other side.

"It really is excellent," said Bear. "It might have won the competition if we hadn't found it."

"Poor Anansi," said Rabbit. "How disappointed he'll be when he finds it's gone."



A few hours later Anansi returned to the hedge. He had decided that he would be too hot if he wore the armour over his clothes, so all he had on was a small sheet tied round his waist.

He had a nasty surprise when he saw that the suit was gone — but he quickly guessed what had happened to it. "Only Rabbit and Bear would have played such a mean trick," he thought, and he ran off to Rabbit's burrow.

He arrived in time to see the two friends struggling to get into their costume. It was an imitation donkey's skin. Rabbit was having trouble making his ears lie down so that he could put on the donkey's head. And Bear was finding it very difficult to squeeze himself into the donkey's back legs.

"Oh do hurry up," said Rabbit. "We're going to be late for the party."

"I'm trying to hurry," said Bear. "And anyway, there's no need to panic. We can take a short cut across Farmer George's carrot field."

When Anansi heard this he had a wonderful idea.

"I'll get my own back on those two rogues," he thought. "I'll tell Farmer George about the very strange donkey that's about to enter his field."



A few minutes later a very odd-looking beast stumbled into Farmer George's carrot field. The front legs were much shorter than the back legs and the head was only a few inches above the ground.

"Just look at all those lovely carrots," Rabbit said, smacking his lips.

"You know I can't see anything," said Bear. "What's more, we really are going to be late if you don't get a move on."

At that moment Farmer George crept up behind the strange donkey. He was holding a big, strong stick and he was very angry.

"That Rabbit and Bear are always after my carrots," he thought. "Well now, I'll teach them a lesson they'll never forget." And he brought the stick down hard on the donkey's back.

"Ow," yelled Bear as he stumbled forward. "What was that?"



"Don't push," said Rabbit. "I'm going as fast as I can."

Then Farmer George struck again. He struck the donkey's back so hard that Bear collapsed on top of Rabbit.

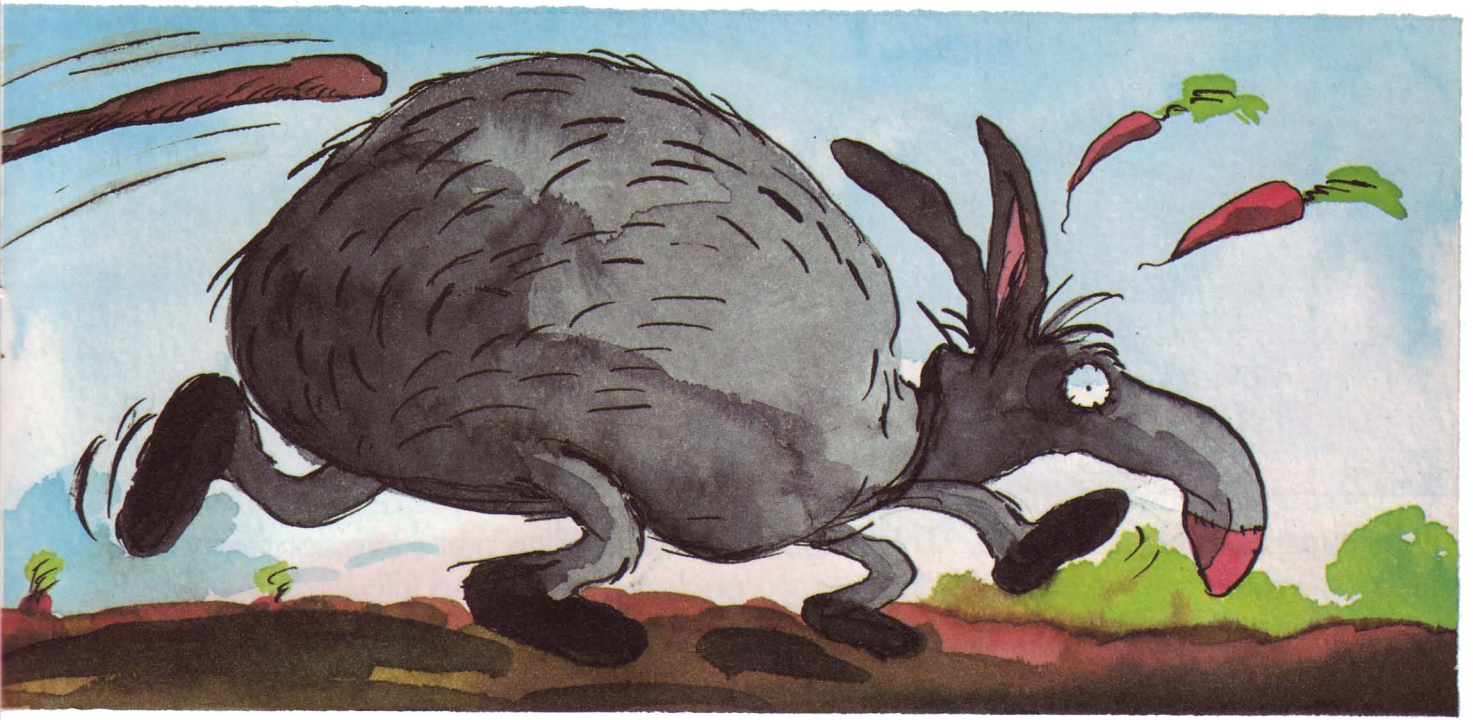
"What's the matter with you?" gasped Rabbit as he tried to wriggle away from Bear. But then he got a great blow on his head — and Bear got yet another on his back.

"Help!" cried the two friends together. "We're being attacked by a madman."

As the blows came thick and fast, they frantically struggled to get away. The donkey was a writhing mass of limbs until finally the skin split in two and the friends ran as fast as they could across the field.

Anansi had never seen anything so funny. Bent over with laughter, he walked away — heading straight for the field where the party was being held! The next thing he knew was that a lot of animals in fancy dress were all laughing at him.

"Just look at Baby Anansi," Monkey



cried. "Where's his dummy?"

"He's too young to be here on his own," chortled Snake.

"You'd think he'd be cold in just his nappy," sniggered Pig.

Anansi hung his head in shame. All the animals thought his sheet was a nappy! How he wished he had never thought of making a suit of armour.

But then King Leo spoke. "Nobody but you, Anansi, would think of dressing as a baby. Your costume is so unusual, you deserve to win the competition."

The other animals agreed. After all, the spider-man had given them their best laugh for weeks.



JOJO'S JIGSAW PUZZLE



"It's no use, Scruffy," said Jojo. "This last piece just won't fit. It's completely the wrong shape — *and* the wrong colour. It should be blue, not red."



Jojo stuffed the piece into her pyjama pocket and climbed into bed. "I wish it would fit," she thought as she drifted off to sleep. "I *do* wish it would fit."



That night something very strange happened. "Hey, Scruffy, look! The bed's moving. Look, we're flying!"



And so they were, flying high among the stars. "I do hope this bed knows where it's going. I'd hate to be lost up here!"



They flew on at great speed, on and on into deepest space, amazed at all the strange things they saw.

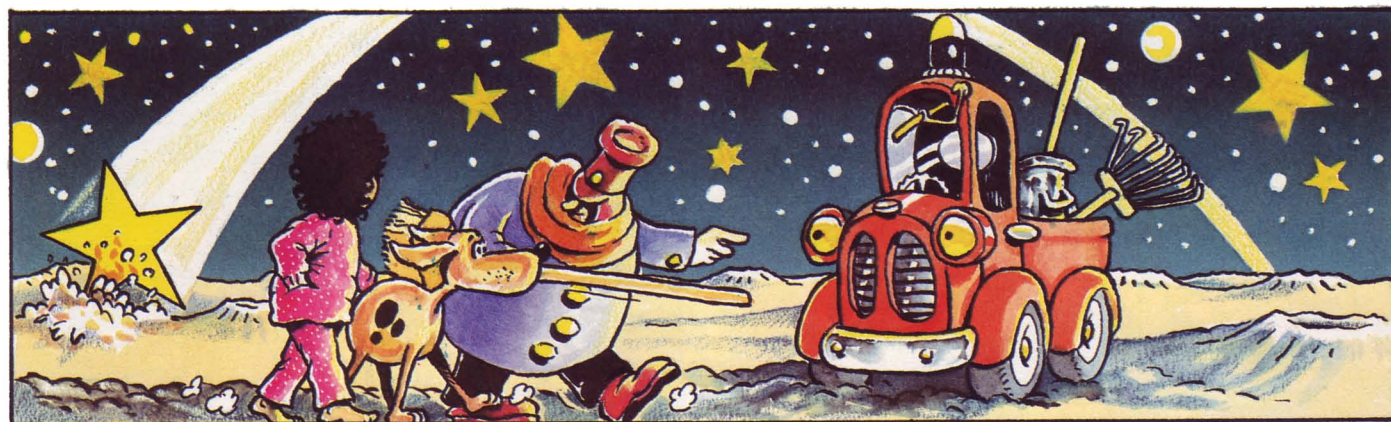
"My friends at school will never believe this," said Jojo. And Scruffy was too amazed even to bark.



CRASH! Without warning the bed came to a sudden stop. "What a weird place," said Jojo. "I wonder if anybody lives here."

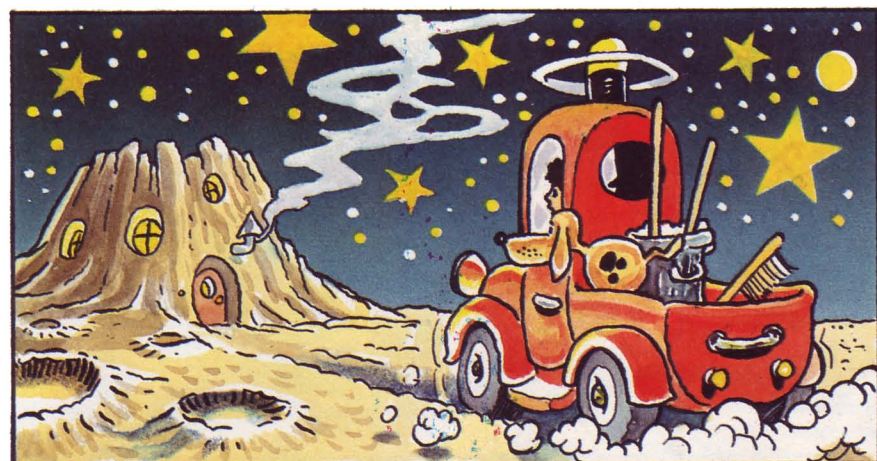


"Look, Scruffy, there's somebody. Let's go and ask him where we are."



"You're on the moon!" explained the man. "And I'm the caretaker here. I keep the place tidy. Every time a star crashes into

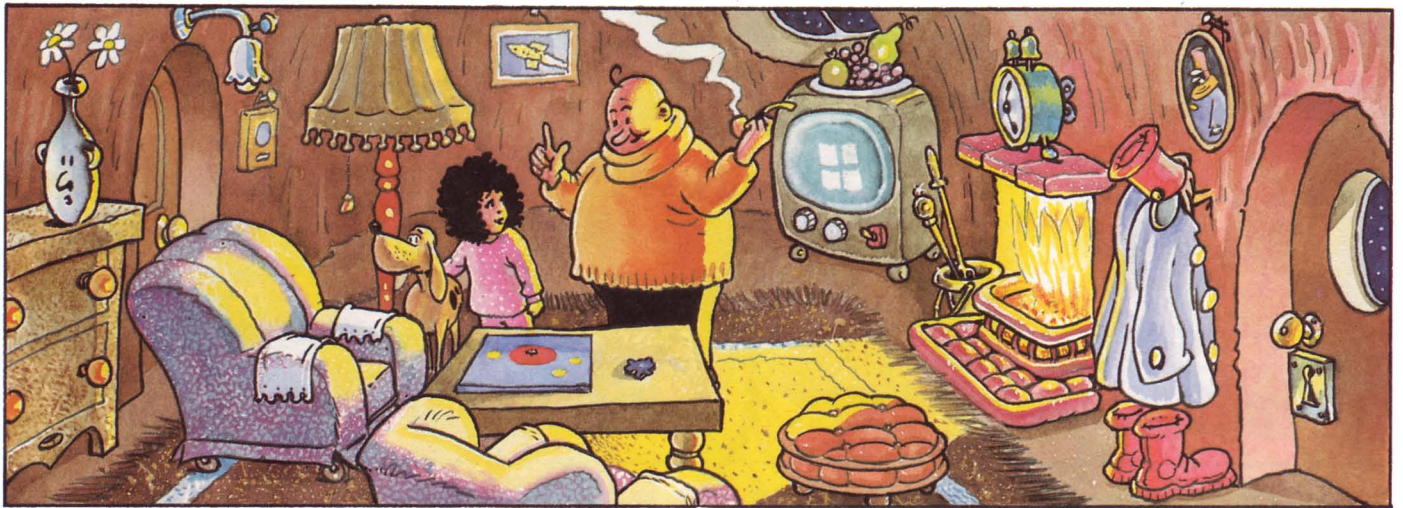
the moon it makes a big hole, and it's my job to clean up afterwards. There's always a lot to do! Now, come along with me."



After a short but bumpy ride they arrived at the man's house. It was quite cold on the moon and Jojo began to wish she had brought her slippers with her.



"I don't get many visitors," said the man. "But you'll be nice and warm in here."



The man's house was very cosy inside.
"Now, you two make yourselves at home while I put the kettle on."

Jojo could hear him humming in the kitchen. "Oh look, Scruffy. Let's have a go at finishing this jigsaw puzzle."



"That's very strange," she said. "It only needs one red piece to be complete, but the last piece is blue."



"Hang on a minute." Jojo looked in her pyjama pocket and found the red piece from her jigsaw at home.

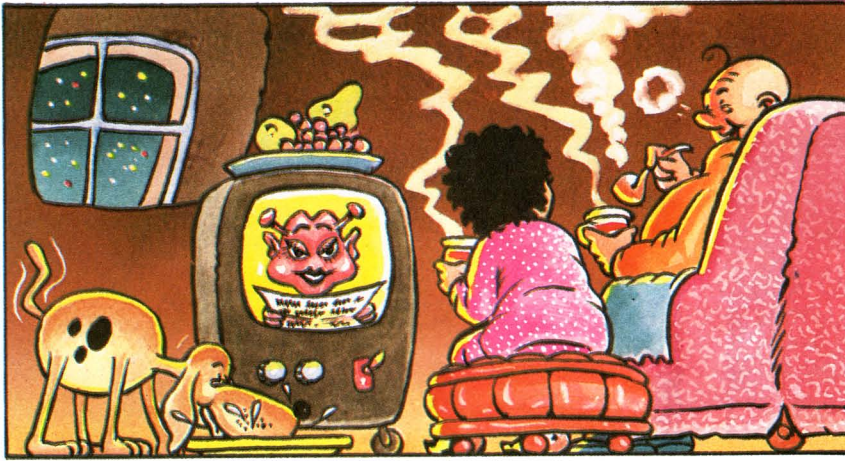


"Scruffy, look! It fits. The piece from my jigsaw fits this puzzle perfectly!"



Just then the man returned with two mugs of tea. Jojo told him about the jigsaw. "Oh, thank you, thank you! That's wonderful! I've been trying to finish it for ages!"

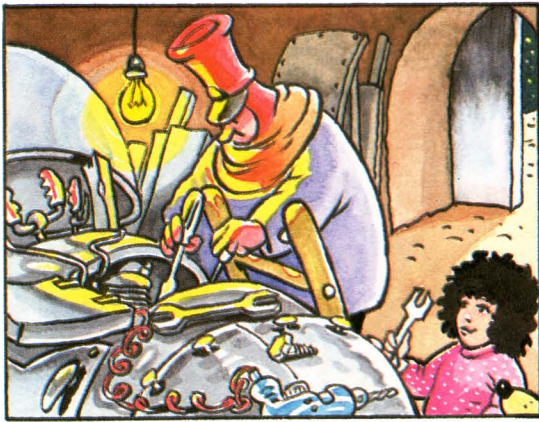




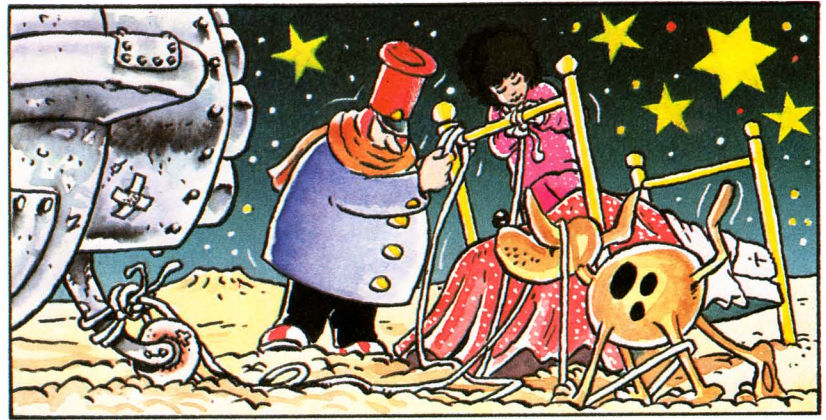
"You're very kind," said Jojo, "but I really think we should go home now. The trouble is, I've got no idea how to get back!"



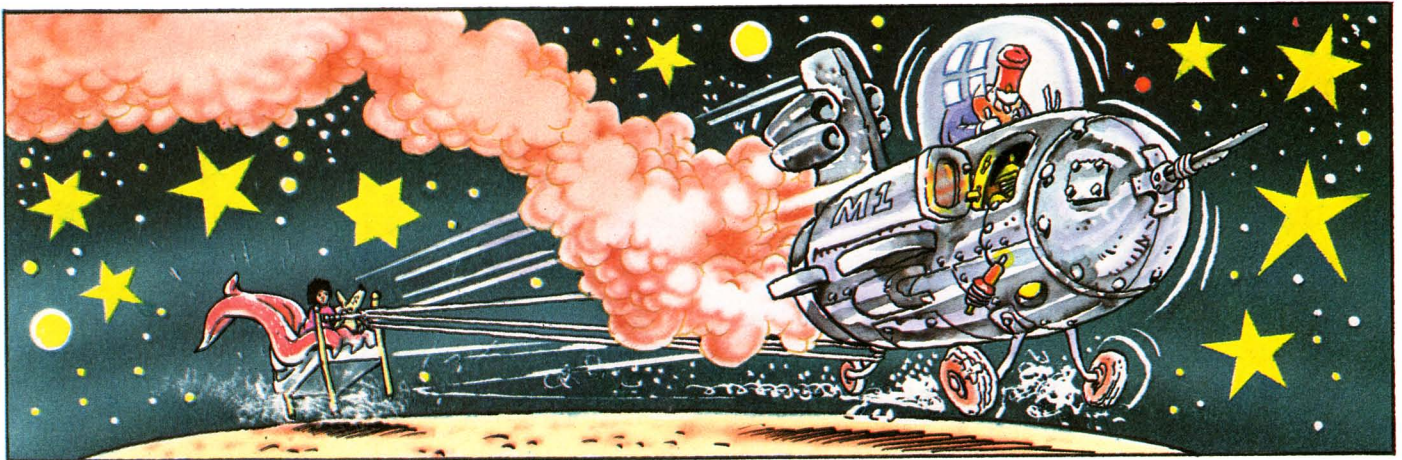
"Leave it to me," said the man. "I reckon I've got just the thing out in my garage."



"Now this old spaceship hasn't been used for years, but I'll soon have it going, you wait and see."



"There, that should do it. Now then, you make sure these knots are all quite tight. When I say 'ready!' hang on for dear life. All right?"



Jojo thought the old spaceship would never start. Then, suddenly, it shuddered into life like an old rattling hairdryer . . .

. . . and began to lurch across the ground, dragging the bed, Jojo and Scruffy up into the night sky once again.



Then, way out in space, the ropes broke. "Oh wait, wait for us!" shouted Jojo, but the man in the spaceship could not hear.



The bed was left floating through space. "Now we really *are* lost, Scruffy. And I'm getting terribly cold."



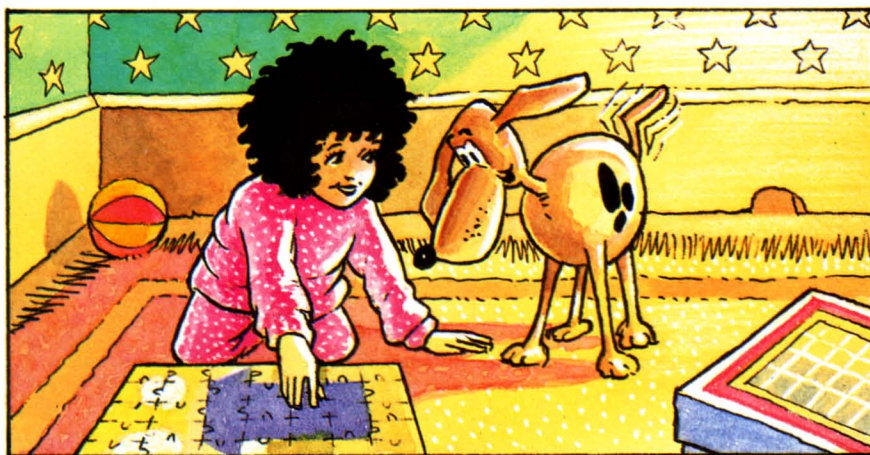
They drifted helplessly among the stars. "We'll never get home," thought Jojo, "and I'm so tired." And she fell fast asleep.



When she woke up she could not believe her eyes. She was back in her bedroom at home, and it was morning!



"Gosh! Scruffy, I had this amazing dream. It was all about . . ." Jojo stopped and took out a jigsaw piece from her pocket.



It was blue, and fitted her puzzle perfectly. "Then it *wasn't* a dream, and you were there too, Scruffy, weren't you?"

Can You Keep A Secret?

In the middle of the big green forest stood a little old house. In it lived a blacksmith and his three pretty daughters. Tansy, the eldest, was dark. Celandine, the second, was fair. Grindelia, the youngest, had hair as brown and glossy as a harvest mouse and eyes as blue as cornflowers. But Tansy and Celandine were forever teasing her because she was so forgetful.

"Watch the pot until we return," her father said as he and her two sisters set off to market. And five minutes later Grindelia was trying to remember what she had been told to do. At last she decided it must have been the spinning.

By the time the others came home, she had spun ten skeins of wool. But, oh dear! The stew was *burnt*!

"You are the most forgetful girl that ever was!" they scolded.

One green and golden day, a Prince came riding through the forest. When he saw the little house, he got off his horse and knocked at the door.

When Tansy opened it, he thought she was the prettiest girl he had ever seen — until he looked over her shoulder and saw Celandine and Grindelia. "I declare, you are each as pretty as the other."



The Prince made up his mind that one of them should be his wife. But how was he to choose between them? "I will marry whichever one of you can keep a secret," he told them. The three hid their faces in their aprons and said, "Oh!"

"Can you keep a secret, Tansy?" the Prince asked.

"I hope so," Tansy answered.

"We'll see." And he whispered in her ear.

"Oh! Fancy that!" said Tansy.

"I will come back in seven days," the Prince told her. "If my secret has been kept, you shall be my wife."

No sooner had he ridden away than Celandine and Grindelia began to ask what the Prince had whispered. But Tansy refused to say. "It's a secret!"

But, as the days went by, Tansy longed to tell the secret to someone else! At last she thought, "I will go and whisper it down the well. That's as good as telling someone, but it will stay a secret." So off she went to the well, and leaning over the edge she whispered the Prince's secret aloud.

"Now I feel much better!"

On the seventh day the Prince came back. "Have you kept my secret, Tansy?"

"Yes indeed, your majesty."

He asked Celandine and Grindelia, "Has she told you my secret?"

"No, she has not," they replied. So the Prince held out his hand to Tansy.

"Then, you shall be my w . . ."



But before he could say 'wife', in at the door hopped a little green frog.

"Stop!" he croaked. "She told *me*! She came and whispered it into the well. I was at the bottom and I heard it!"





And there and then the frog croaked out the Prince's secret. "There is a hole in the heel of your left sock!"

The Prince let go of Tansy's hand and looked at her sadly. "In that case, I'm afraid you cannot be my wife," he said. Turning to Celandine he asked, "Can you keep a secret?"

"I think so, your majesty."

"We'll see." And he whispered a new secret in her ear.

"Well, I never did!" cried Celandine.

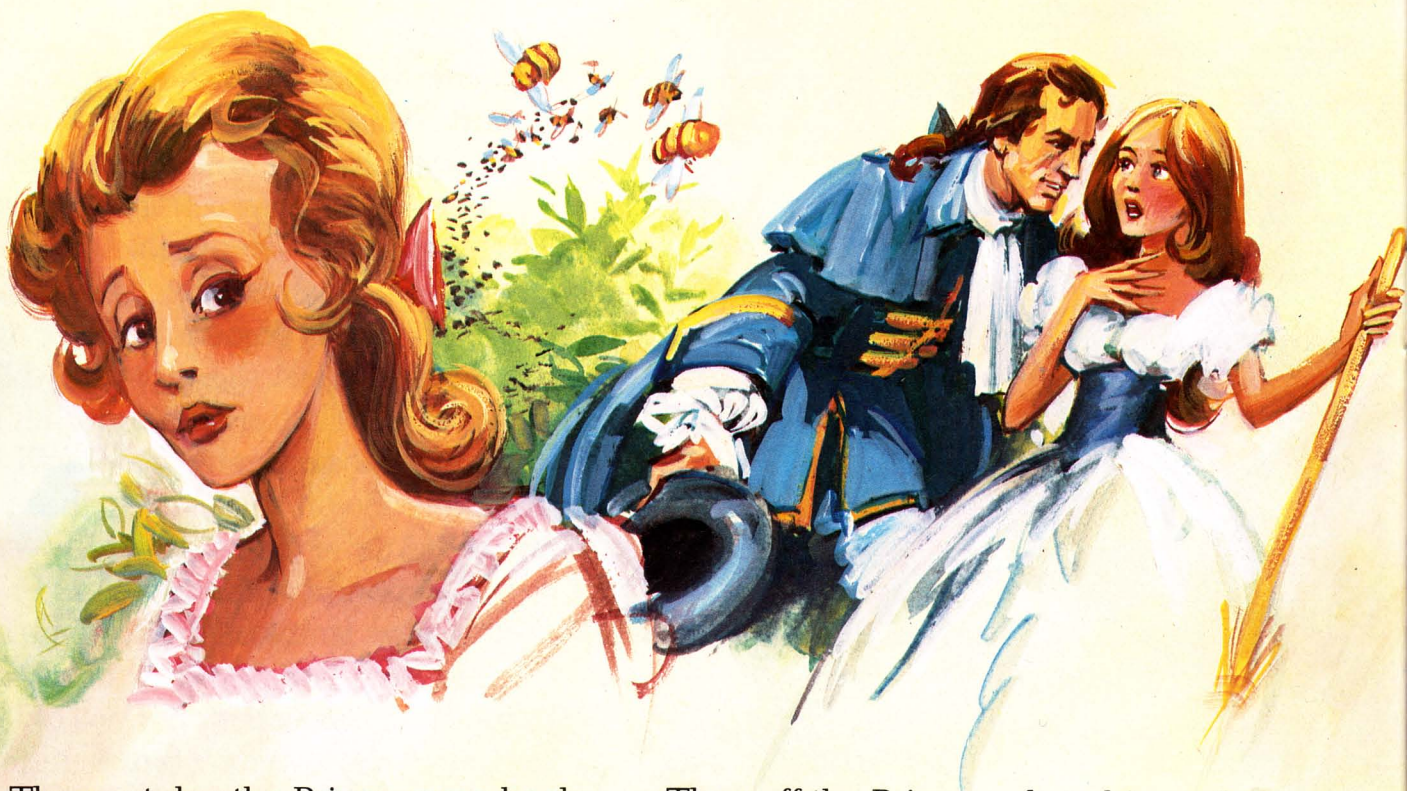
"If you keep my secret for a week, you shall be my wife."

The minute he was out of sight, Tansy and Grindelia asked her what the Prince had whispered. But Celandine would not tell. "It's a secret!"

But — oh dear! — as the seven days went by, the secret was more and more hard to keep. If only she could share it with someone! At last she thought, "I'll go and whisper it in the orchard. That's as good as telling someone, but it will stay a secret." So off she went to the orchard, where the tops of the trees were floating in pink and white blossom. She stood beneath a fruit tree and whispered the Prince's secret out loud.

"Now I feel much better!"





The next day the Prince came back.
"Have you kept my secret, Celandine?"

"Yes, indeed, your majesty."

The prince asked Tansy and Grindelia if their sister had told them the secret. "No, no," came the reply. So he held out his hands to Celandine.

"Then you shall be my w . . .".

But before he could say 'wife', there came a buzzing at the window, and in swarmed a cloud of bumble-bees. "Say no more!" droned the bees. "She told us! She came to the orchard and whispered it aloud. And we in the trees heard it!" Then the bees hummed the Prince's secret aloud. "There is a hole in the toe of your right sock!"

The Prince let go of Celandine's hand and looked at her sadly. "In that case, I'm afraid you cannot be my wife."

He turned to Grindelia. "Can you keep a secret?"

"I don't know, your majesty."

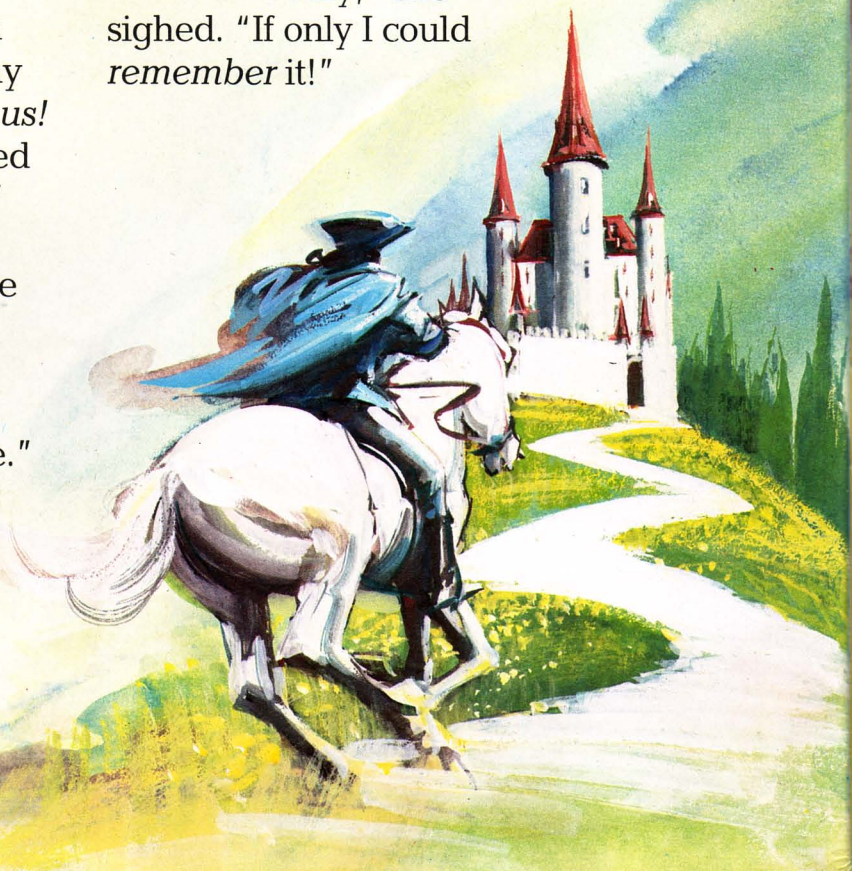
"Let's see." And he whispered a third secret in her ear.

"Well!" exclaimed Grindelia.

Then off the Prince rode to his castle.

Immediately Tansy and Celandine cried, "Tell us what he said!" But Grindelia shook her head and put her hands over her ears. "I can't!"

Now, you remember how forgetful Grindelia was? Well, as the seven days came and went, she grew sadder and sadder. "If only," she sighed. "If only I could remember it!"



But although she racked her brain, the Prince's secret had gone in one ear and out of the other.

On the seventh day the Prince came back. "Have you kept my secret?"

"No, I haven't," she replied, because she was a very truthful girl. "I've lost it. I've clean forgotten it."

"Forgotten it!" exclaimed the Prince. "Fancy that! Well I never!"

Then he looked at Grindelia's glossy brown hair and eyes the colour of cornflowers. "She's the one for me!" he thought to himself. "I don't care if she can keep a secret or not!" And he took Grindelia's hands in his. "Will you marry me?"

Grindelia looked at the Prince. He had a kind, gentle face, so she said, "Yes," kissed her father and sisters goodbye, and rode off with the Prince.

"She forgot to take off her apron!" they laughed.

No-one ever found out what the Prince had whispered in Grindelia's ear. She and her Prince lived happily together in the castle on the hill, and although Grindelia never had to spin wool or sweep the floor, or watch the pot, she did sit down with a basket of mending and a darning needle every night — for the Prince was terribly hard on his socks.



THE LION AND THE PEACOCK



There was once a lion and a peacock who were very great friends. They liked nothing better than meeting in a forest clearing on warm, sunny afternoons and eating their food together.

One afternoon, the lion was tearing into huge chunks of meat when he noticed that the peacock was scratching the earth and burying plum stones.

"Surely you can find a better way of spending your time," he said lazily.

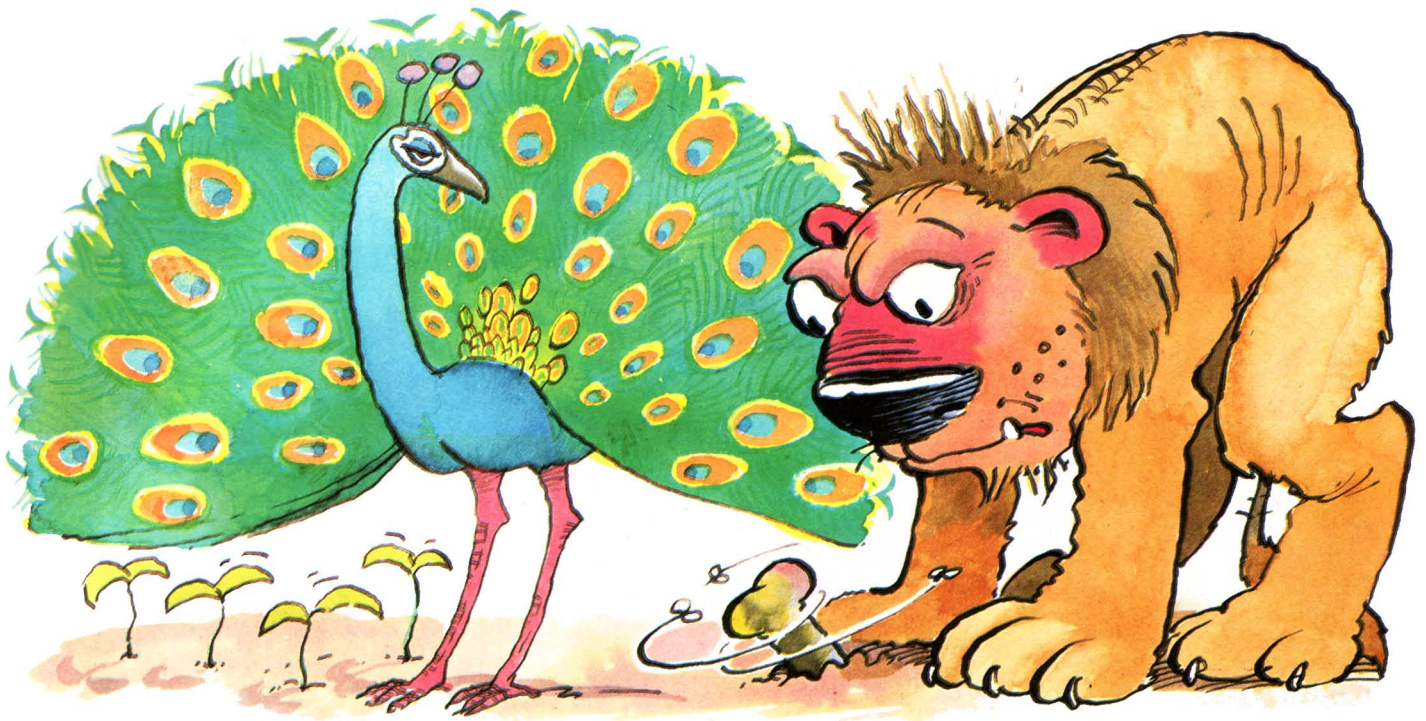
Now the peacock was a proud bird who thought he knew everything. "How

can you be so stupid?" he asked in amazement. "You must be the only animal in the forest who doesn't know why it's important to plant plum stones. Trees grow from the stones and provide lots of nice, juicy plums."

The lion felt very hurt at being called stupid. "I'll show my friend that I'm as clever as he is." So he carefully buried the bones left over from his meal.

Some weeks later the two friends met again in the same clearing. The peacock was feeling particularly pleased with





himself because the plum stones had begun to sprout. And he laughed when he saw the lion scratching at the ground, anxiously trying to find a bone that had begun to grow.

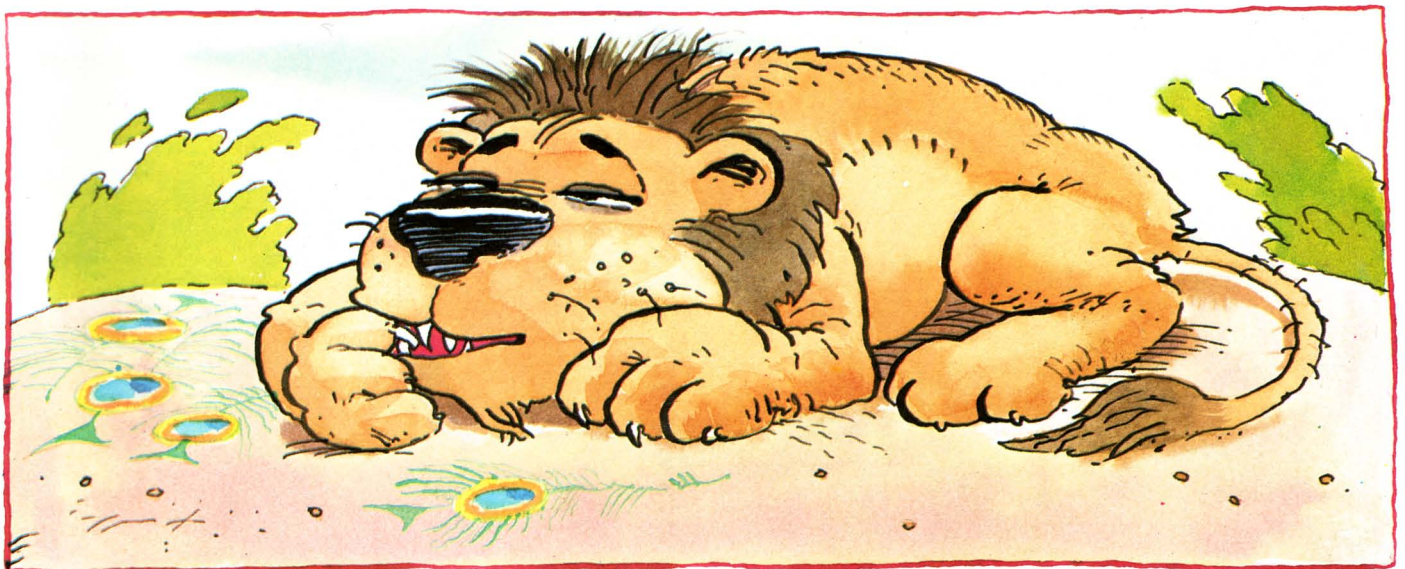
"You're even more stupid than I thought," he said. "Everyone knows that you can't make bones grow by burying them in the ground."

Time passed and when the two friends met again in the clearing it was full of plum trees laden with fruit. The peacock beamed with pleasure but the

lion looked very sad. He had caught nothing to eat that day and would have to go hungry while his friend feasted on rich purple plums.

"It's a pity that you're not as clever as I am," said the peacock proudly. "I'll always have enough to eat while you'll often go hungry."

But the peacock should have known that pride comes before a fall. The lion had had enough of his friend's haughty ways. So, with a quick pounce, he leaped on the peacock and gobbled him up.



IN PART 18 OF **STORY**Teller

NEW SERIAL

Lewis Carroll's classic poem
FATHER WILLIAM

When the fair comes to Shipwreck Reef,
it's a big day out for the starfish
BUBBLE AND SQUEEK

A new life awaits little **HEIDI** when she
arrives at the lonely chalet in the Swiss
mountains. But will her Grandfather
want her?

GEORGE AND THE DRAGON fight for
the life of the lovely Princess Sabra

A frog can be useful when you need him.
But if you make him a promise, you'd better
keep it: he may be **THE FROG PRINCE**

PLUS
NO MULES—why ever not?

Readers include **GEMMA CRAVEN,**
STEVEN PACEY & DENISE BRYER

