

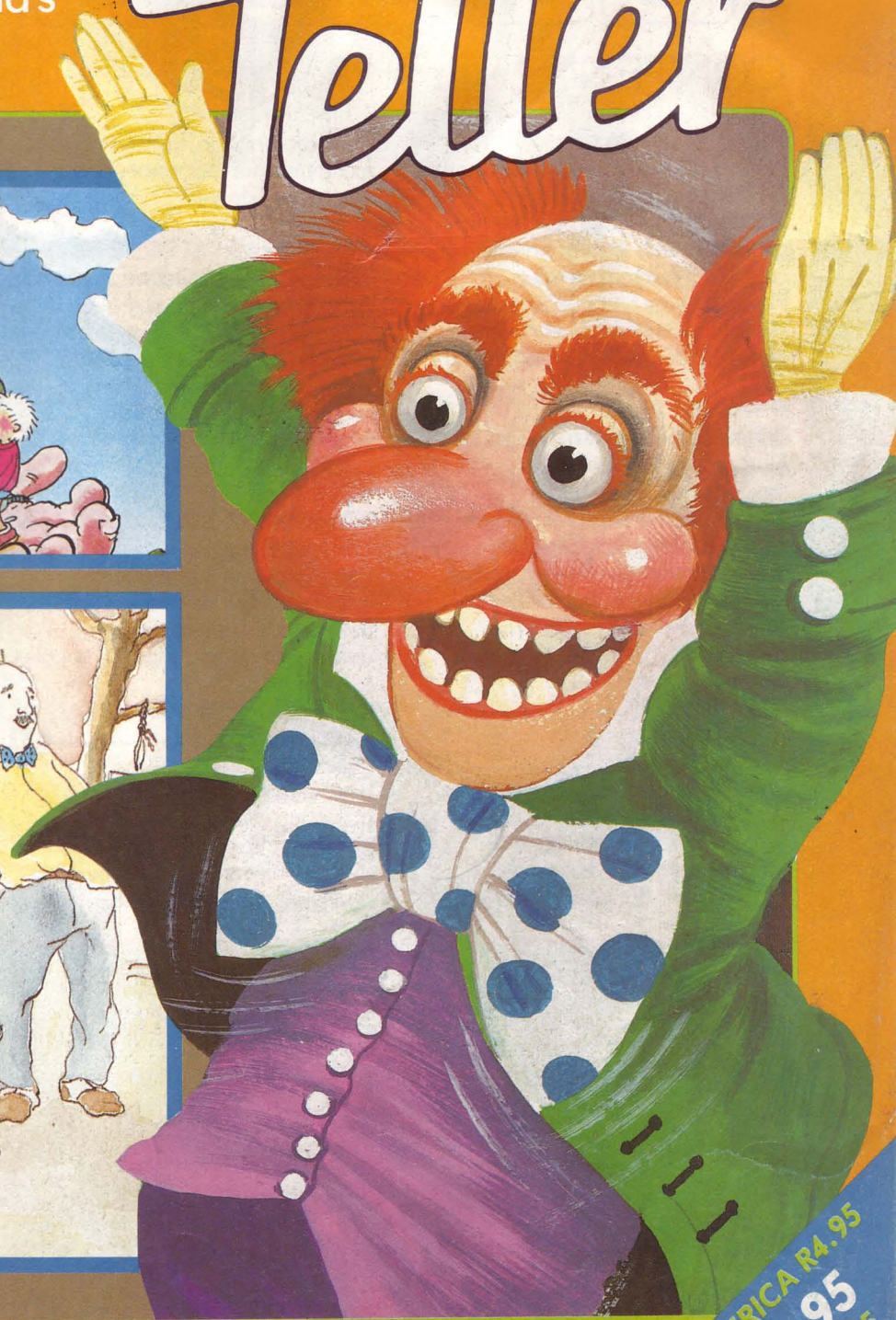
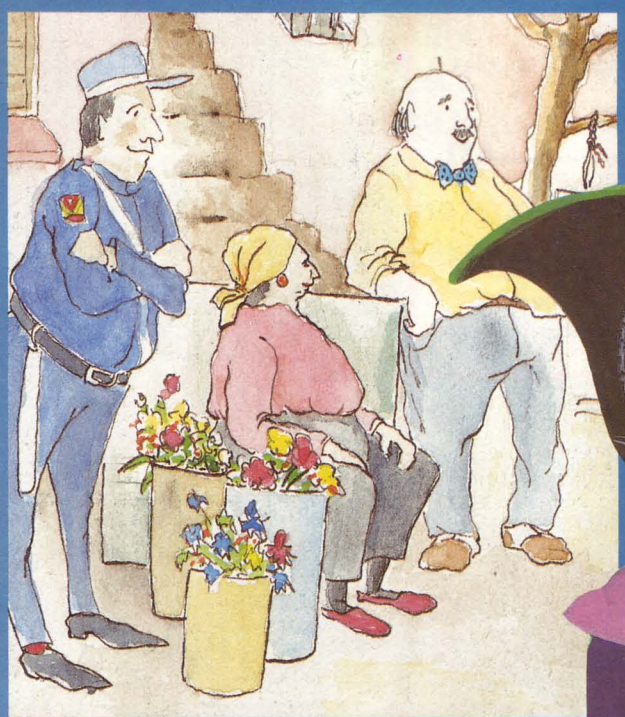
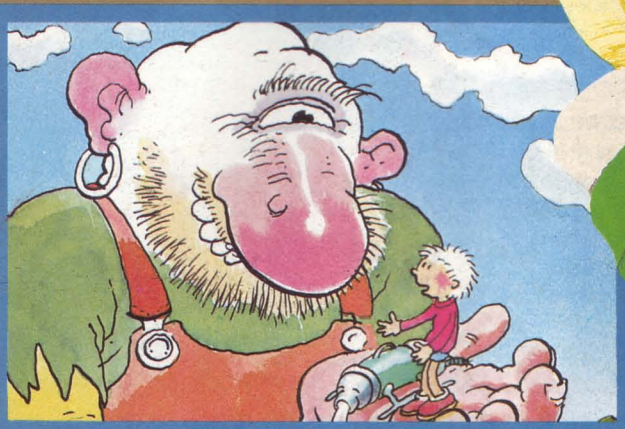
®

PART 24

# STORY

A collection of the world's  
best children's stories

# Teller



A Marshall Cavendish Publication **EVERY FORTNIGHT**

S. AFRICA R4.95  
**£1.95**  
IR £2.45



# STORY Teller

## CONTENTS PART 24

### TALES OF TODAY

#### **I Wish, I Wish.....645**

A poor little Italian girl and a rich American lady find common ground in their love of art and cats. Lisl Weil's story, set in Florence, was first published by Houghton Mifflin Co. in America, and in Britain by Blackie & Son.

### FAMOUS FABLES

#### **Counting Chickens .....649**

Numerous versions of this cautionary tale are told throughout the world. In one of Aesop's fables, it is a foolish milkmaid who daydreams about fame and fortune. But this version describes her modern counterpart in the Middle East.

### THE MAGIC WORLD OF ANIMALS

#### **A Hedgehog Learns to Fly.....652**

Even hedgehogs can be armchair travellers, as Rosalind Carreck's retelling of an original story by Georgie Adams makes clear. But when Prickles

makes a balloon, he soon learns to be grateful that what goes up must come down!

### CLASSIC FAIRY STORIES

#### **The Little Tin Soldier.....658**

Artist Francis Philipps makes a very special contribution to one of his favourite stories — Hans Christian Andersen's bitter-sweet tale of the toy soldier who fell in love with a princess.

### FOLK TALES OF THE WORLD

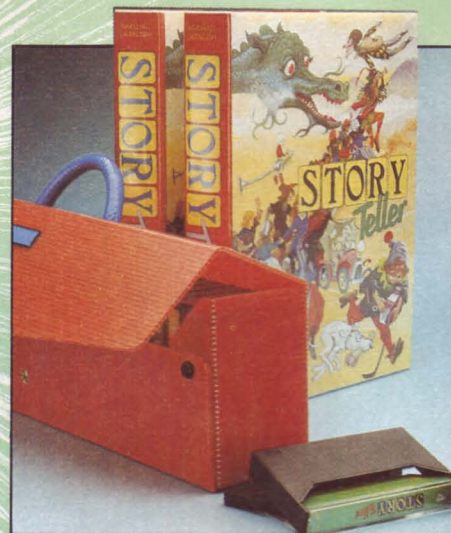
#### **Kingdom of the Seals.....665**

Eric Maple, an author who delights in retelling the folk tales and legends of the world, here puts his pen to work in defence of an endangered species.

### CARTOON HEROES

#### **Aldo in Arcadia.....671**

STORY TELLER'S most popular cartoon hero returns to save a drowning man — with a little help from Vacuum, Uncle Emo, and their creators, John Sheridan and Malcolm Livingstone.



If you want to order the binder or cassette box individually at the regular price please send your cheque or postal order, made payable to Marshall Cavendish Partworks Limited, and stating clearly what you require, to the following addresses:

#### **BINDERS:**

(Each binder holds 13 issues)  
UK & Rep. of Ireland: send £3.95 (IR£4.40) per binder, including postage and packing, to Storyteller Binders, Dept 810, Marshall Cavendish Services Ltd, Newtown Road, Hove, Sussex, BN3 7DN.  
South Africa: R7.95 from any branch of Central News Agency. (Please add sales tax).  
Or write to Republican News Agency, 31 Height Street, Doornfontein, Johannesburg, enclosing postal order for each binder plus sales tax and 85c postage.

#### **CASSETTE BOX:**

(Each box holds 26 cassettes)  
UK & Rep. of Ireland: send £4.20 (IR£4.70) per cassette box, including postage and packing, to Storyteller Cassette Box Offer, Dep 815 at the above address.  
South Africa: R7.95 (Please add sales tax) from any branch of Central News Agency. Or write to Republican News Agency, 31 Height Street, Doornfontein, Johannesburg, enclosing postal order for each binder plus sales tax and 85c postage.

#### **COPIES BY POST:**

Our Subscription Department can supply copies direct to you regularly at £1.95 (IR£2.45). For example, the cost of 13 issues is £25.35 (IR£31.85), and for any other quantity simply multiply the number of issues required by £1.95. These rates apply anywhere in the world. Send your order, with payment, to: Subscription Department, Marshall Cavendish Partworks Ltd, 58 Old Compton Street, London, W1V 5PA. Please state the title of the magazine and the issue with which you wish to start.

#### **BACK NUMBERS:**

Copies of any part of STORY TELLER can be obtained at the regular cover price from the following address: UK & Rep. of Ireland: Storyteller Back Numbers, Dept AG, Marshall Cavendish Services Ltd, Newtown Road, Hove, Sussex, BN3 7DN.  
South Africa: Back numbers are available from any branch of Central News Agency. In case of difficulty please write to Republican News Agency, 31 Height Street, Doornfontein, Johannesburg, enclosing postal order for R4.95 (plus sales tax) per part.

Typeset by ABM Typographics Limited, Hull.  
Colour work by Melbourne Graphics, London.  
Printed in England by Varnicoat, Pershore.

© Marshall Cavendish Limited 1983

#### **THE BOOK**

Editorial staff: Richard Widdows, Nigel Flynn, John Gaisford, Tessa Paul, Geraldine Jones, Brenda Marshall, Jane Edmonds, Alice Peebles & Lucy Stothert

Art staff: Andrew Sutterby, Chris Legee, Paul Morgan, Fran Coston & Kim Whybrow

#### **ILLUSTRATORS**

I Wish, I Wish: Tessa Paul  
Counting Chickens: Malcolm Livingstone  
A Hedgehog Learns to Fly: Andrew Aloof  
The Little Tin Soldier: Francis Philipps  
Kingdom of the Seals: Stephen Lavis  
Aldo: Malcolm Livingstone

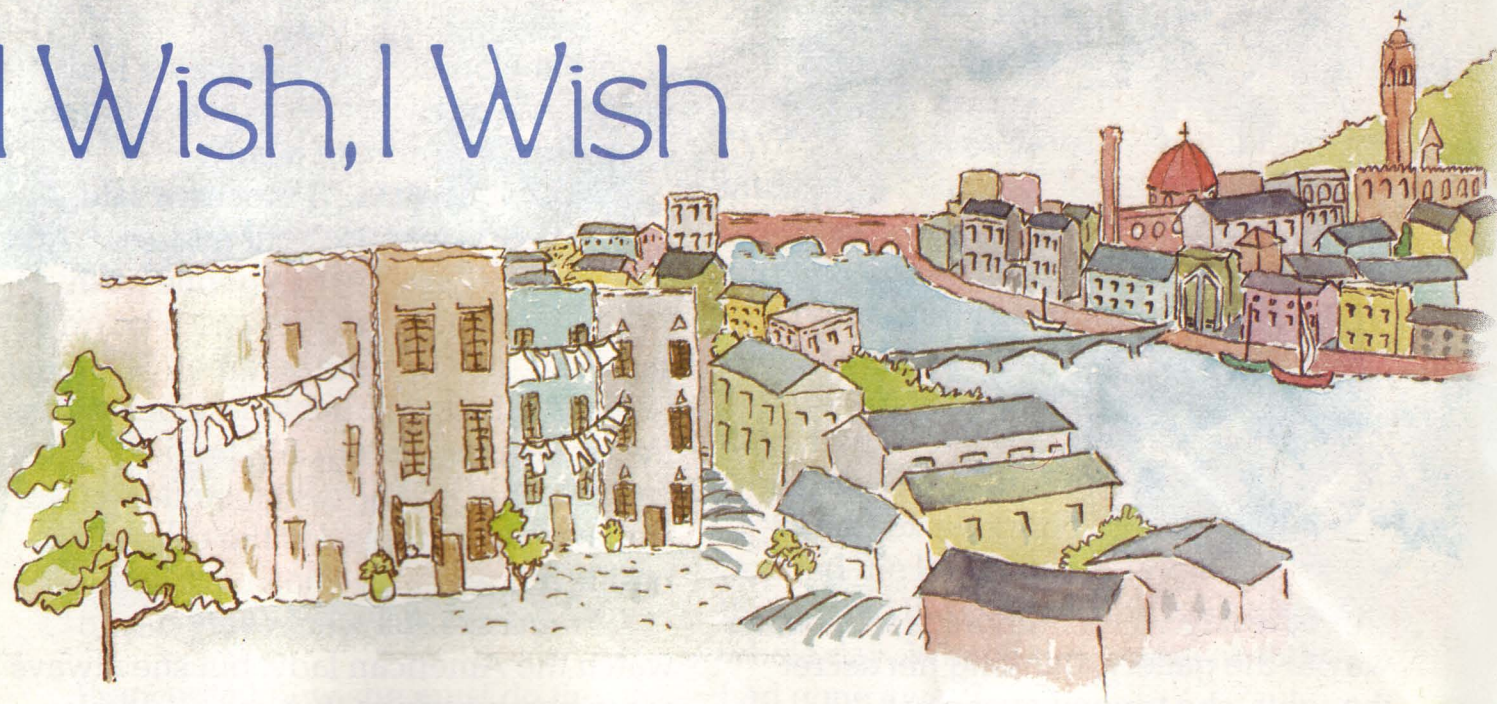
#### **THE TAPE**

Recorded at The Barge Studios, Little Venice, London:  
Produced & Directed by Joa Reinelt  
Engineered by John Rowland & Jill Landskroner  
A Creative Radio Production

#### **READERS**

I Wish, I Wish: Carole Boyd  
Counting Chickens: Carole Boyd  
A Hedgehog Learns to Fly: Steven Pacey  
The Little Tin Soldier: Ian Holm  
Kingdom of the Seals: Ian Holm  
Aldo: Nigel Lambert, John Brewer, John Green & Steven Pacey

# I Wish, I Wish



**A**long the banks of the river Arno in Italy, there is an old-world city, full of splendour. With its golden towers and many palaces, it looks like a fairy land.

In this beautiful city called Florence lives little Francesca. She lives in a narrow house in a narrow street with her mamma and papa and brother Nino.

Francesca likes to go to the art gallery. There among the beautiful paintings in gold frames Francesca dreams about a wish that is close to her heart. It is a secret wish.

Many artists from all over the world come to the gallery to make copies of the great masterpieces. The

smallest pictures of all are painted by an American lady. Francesca never tires of watching the lady hidden under a big hat. And never, never does she get too close to the lady for fear of disturbing her.

But to herself, Francesca whispers over and over again, "Oh I wish, I wish I could have a painting all my own — just a little one to take home."





One day when Francesca was on her way to the gallery, thinking her secret thoughts, she tripped over a cat.

"Excuse me," she said, and went on.

The cat followed her and kept getting between her feet all the time. Finally Francesca stopped and bent down. Around the cat's neck was a locket on a ribbon. Now, there are lots

of cats in Florence, but Francesca had never seen one wearing a locket. On the locket was a picture of a lady.

"You lovely cat," Francesca said.

"You must go home to your mistress." And she sent the cat off with a gentle push.

Later, that night, Francesca heard a sad cry out in the narrow street. She went to the window and in the dark below was the strange cat, miaowing. Francesca just had to let her in. The next morning, in one of mamma's baskets, lay the cat. And beside her was a tiny newborn kitten.

Francesca still went every day to watch the American lady, but she always came home early so that she could play with the cats.



Before long, the kitten's eyes were open and she was bouncing around after Francesca like a ball of fur.

"Oh, I wish, I wish you belonged to me, you sweet little kitten."

"No, no," said Mamma and Papa.

"The cat belongs to the lady on the locket, and now the kitten belongs to her, too. You must try to find the lady — that's the right thing to do."





The man with the wine cart said, "No. I don't know her." The flower lady said, "What a pity!" Signor Tucci, who sells birds said, "You had better ask the policeman, Francesca." The policeman had heard nothing of lost cats.

Francesca's heart leaped. Maybe she could keep the lovely cats after all. She had tried, hadn't she? She would take them home now. That is what she would do.

The next morning, Francesca hugged the kitten and stroked the cat, then ran to the gallery. She had missed a whole day. What if the American lady had gone away?

Francesca knew she must do the right thing but she said to herself, "I do *not* wish to find the mistress of the kitten. But I will try . . . I will."

The Sisters at the Convent said, "No, we have never seen this lady."





No. The lady was there. Francesca crept slowly and softly towards the lady. Suddenly there was a great commotion at the entrance to the gallery. The lady turned. Francesca gasped . . . there were the guards racing about trying to catch the cat and the kitten. They had followed Francesca!

The kitten licked Francesca's ankle with her rough little tongue. But the mother cat sprang right up into the lady's lap. She had belonged to the American lady all along! It was a glorious reunion. Only Francesca was sad. She was going to miss the little kitten.

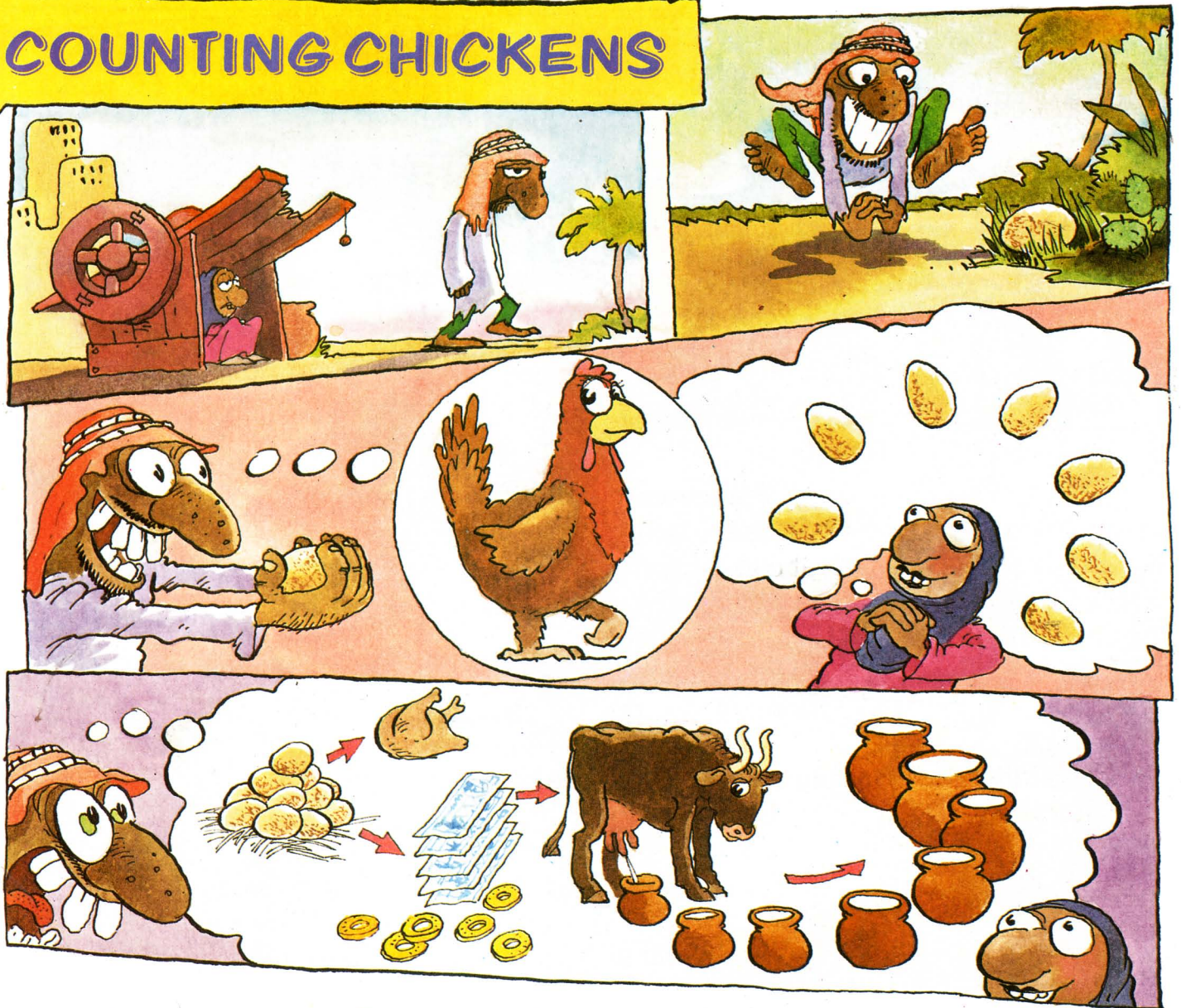
When the lady could catch her breath, she said to Francesca, "You have made me very happy. Will you help me carry the cats home?"

Francesca followed the lady to a big hotel. Up in the lift. Into the lady's room. The lady went over to the easel saying, "A little kitten should belong to a little girl. And in case you lose her . . . here is a little painting to hang round her neck."

And that's how Francesca's wishes both came true. With her very own picture and her very own kitten Francesca felt like a fairy tale princess as she skipped happily home to her narrow house in the narrow street in the beautiful city of Florence.



# COUNTING CHICKENS



Rashid the beggar and Fatima his wife lived in an upturned cart near the city wall. The cart was their only possession, they were so poor! So every day Rashid left Fatima to guard the home, while he went off to beg for food.

One very hot day, Rashid was walking along gloomily with his head cast down. And there, by the roadside, half-hidden in the grass, he found a big, brown, speckled chicken's egg.

Rashid rushed home in delight and showed the egg to Fatima. "Look, look! Our luck's changed! If I can hatch out this egg, I'll have a chicken of my own!"

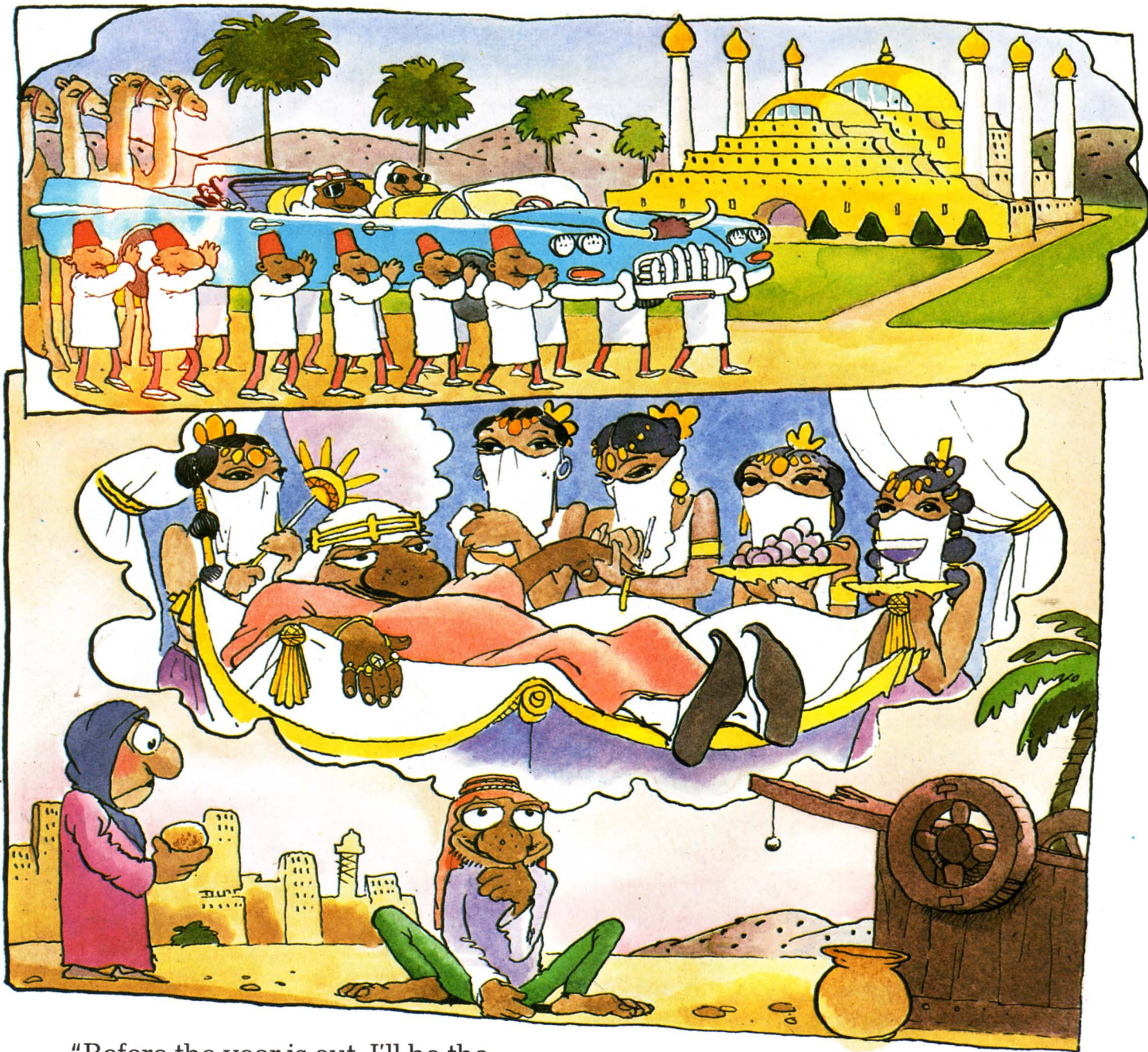
His wife was so thrilled, she threw her arms round him. "Eggs every day!"

"Dozens!" shouted Rashid. "And some of those eggs will hatch into chickens, too! We'll have roast chicken every week and still have plenty to sell in the market!"

"Enough money to buy a cow one day. And the cow will produce gallons of milk — then we can buy a bull, and breed more cattle."

Fatima began to dance round the cart. "We'll be rich, rich, rich!"

Rashid stood up straight and tall.



"Before the year is out, I'll be the richest cattle dealer north of the Sahara. Sheiks and merchants will ride hundreds of miles to buy cows from me — and eggs and chickens."

Fatima put her hands to her mouth in amazement. "Could we ever be rich enough for me to have a *new dress*?"

"Dress? You'll have a thousand dresses, and embroidered slippers to match! You'll be carried everywhere by servants! And I'll own fifty racing camels and build a palace with a thousand rooms!"

Fatima was puzzled. "Why will we need a thousand rooms? They'll be awfully hard to keep clean."

"For the servants, of course!"

"Of course! The servants!"

"And the dancing girls! I'll have a troop of dancing girls to dance for me every night — and at least a dozen beautiful young wives to care for me in my old age. Oh yes, I can see them now, wiping my brow with rosewater, fetching me glasses of sherbet, feeding me



grapes, stroking my br . . . Ow!"

Fatima had snatched the large, brown, speckled chicken's egg and smashed it on Rashid's head.

The yolk trickled down his face, the eggshell glistened in his hair. "Dancing

girls, indeed!" his wife bawled.

"Beautiful young wives! Ha!" And she stalked off to sit under the cart and sulk.

Which only goes to prove that *you should never count your chickens before they are hatched.*



# A Hedgehog Learns To Fly

"It's too bad," sighed Prickles from the depths of his armchair. "Why can't hedgehogs train to be pilots? Why can't I learn to fly?"

The candle cast a warm light on Prickles as he sat reading, in silence broken only by the rustle of paper as he turned the pages. Prickles was fascinated by aeroplanes, and he was lost in a world of cockpits, propellers and jet engines. Above all else, Prickles wanted to fly.

From a darkened corner of the little room an earwig sniffed: "Flying hedgehogs? Whatever next . . . ?" The idea was so crazy, he said nothing.

Totally absorbed, Prickles went on reading until the first blackbird sang in the dawn. Then he closed his book regretfully, rubbed his eyes and stepped outside to smell the fresh morning air.

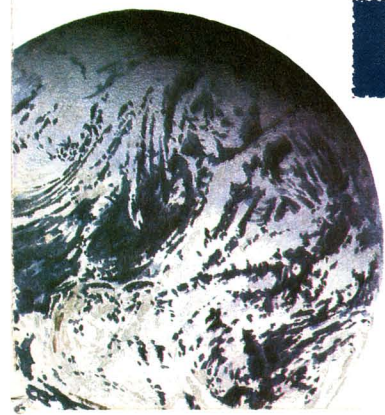
Shuffling along in a dream down his favourite path, he hardly noticed the hedgerows, scented with honeysuckle and sparkling with dew.

"If I were a bird," he remarked, as he watched the sparrows hopping and fluttering in the bushes, "I could at least fly a little way. That would be better than nothing," he added wistfully.

"What did you say?" asked a kindly voice. It was Mrs Badger, out on her morning ramble. "What's on your mind, my dear old friend? I spoke to you a minute ago, but you didn't see me."

"Oh Mrs Badger," said Prickles rather tearfully. "If only I could build an aeroplane, I could learn to fly."

Mrs Badger took Prickles quite seriously. "An aeroplane is far too complicated," she said sensibly. "But you could make a balloon. All you need is a basket and a canopy . . . and a lot of hot air. It should be quite easy. I'll give you a hand."



"We'll design it together," said Prickles excitedly. "I've got an old laundry basket. But what shall we use for a canopy?"

"You just leave that to me," said Mrs Badger mysteriously.

Half an hour later, Prickles answered a brisk knock at his door. Mrs Badger stood on the step, her basket piled high with silk petticoats of every shade and colour.

"Here's your canopy," she said. "I always knew that grandmother's petticoats would come in useful. Though I must admit, I never thought they'd be turned into a balloon!"

Mrs Badger left the petticoats at Prickles' house, and then hurried off to fetch her sewing machine. As soon as it was installed, she set to work. It took her three days to make the canopy, but when it was finished, she had to say that she had made a beautiful piece of patchwork.

Meanwhile, Prickles busied himself with the preparations for his journey. He talked to the blacksmith, who made a small tin burner to warm up the air in the canopy. Then he managed to borrow some maps and found an old telescope tucked away in his study. He was not exactly sure where his adventure would take him, so he planned his luggage very carefully. He made a long list of stores, and packed plenty of warm blankets, rope, matches, ballast and even a ball of twine.

When all his equipment was stowed away in the basket, Prickles added just one or two luxuries. He raided his larder and found some dandelion tea, a dozen quails' eggs and some jellied worms.

At last all the preparations were complete, and the day for the launch dawned bright and clear. Prickles took everything to the launching site and Mrs Badger came with him to watch the Great Event.



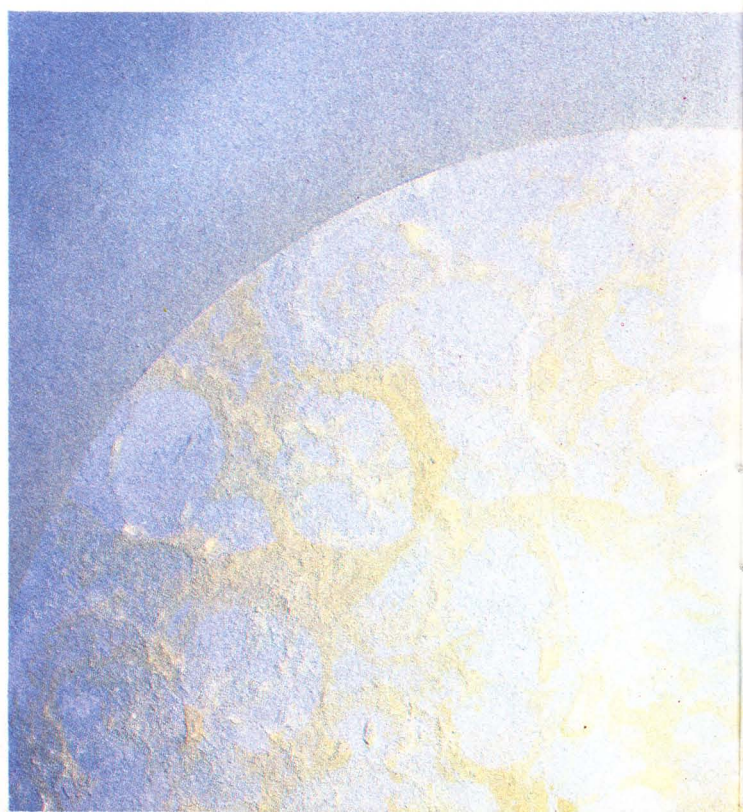


There was great excitement when the blacksmith arrived with the burner. Prickles fussed about until it was fitted into place beneath the balloon. Then he lit the wick carefully with one of his matches.

"Don't forget to hammer in the stake," cried Mrs Badger urgently. "The balloon will take off without you!"

And up it went! Prickles had to scramble and wriggle into the basket as the balloon rose majestically off the ground.

"Hurrah!" shouted Mrs Badger as loud as she could. "Good luck!" cried the blacksmith, waving his apron. "God speed . . .!" And their voices grew fainter and fainter as the balloon lifted up into the sky.



"This is *wonderful*," sighed Prickles, leaning back in the basket. Up and up he went, higher and higher. Soon he was over the trees and above the hills, across the mountains, then over the vast ocean, with the whole world lying small and round beneath him.

Prickles was so entranced by everything he saw, he was quite unprepared for disaster. But suddenly there was an awful tearing sound, and the dreadful swoosh of air escaping. The balloon faltered for a moment, then began to plunge towards the ocean, gathering speed as it went.

Panic-stricken, Prickles looked above him. His spines had caught in the silk, and the canopy was ripped and torn!

"What shall I do," moaned Prickles, almost paralysed with fright. "I can't swim!" But as the ocean rushed towards him, he had a brilliant idea. Delving into the bottom of the basket, he pulled out his ball of twine, then plucked a spine from his back to serve as a needle and started to stitch furiously. The canopy was repaired in the nick of time! Prickles breathed a sigh of relief as the balloon began to rise again.

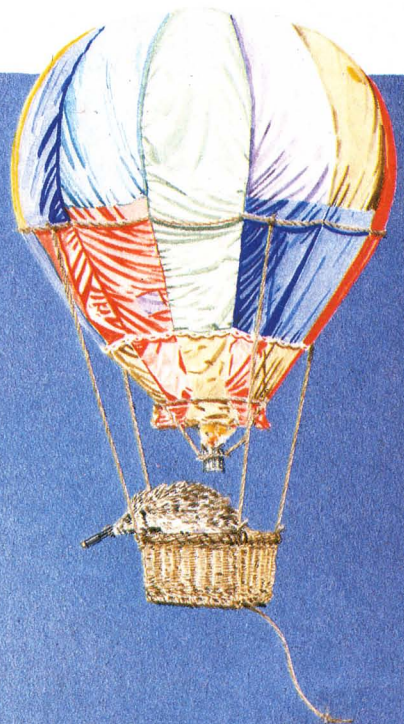
"Thank goodness for that," he said — when his limbs stopped trembling. The balloon rose further and further above the clouds, until Prickles found himself drifting peacefully among the stars and planets.

He passed the moon and studied it through his telescope. Then he spent several happy hours looking at the Milky Way. After a while he began to feel tired and decided to search for somewhere to land. He consulted his maps and decided that Mars would be as good a place as any.

It was not very long before the balloon reached Mars, but landing on the planet proved far more difficult than Prickles had imagined. How could he get down? If he let all the hot air escape, he could be stranded on Mars for ever!

"Well," thought Prickles. "If hot air rises, then I should think that cold air wouldn't! So I'll let the air cool down; then the balloon should sink!"

Hoping for the best, he took a deep breath and blew the fire out.





It worked all right! Before he knew what was happening, Prickles was hurtling towards the ground at terrifying speed.

He had a very bumpy landing. First there was an almighty thud, then a shattering somersault as the basket was dragged along the ground. Prickles clung on for dear life, wondering if the adventure was worth it. At last the dreadful tumbling stopped. Prickles shook himself and peered about him.

He was horribly disappointed. There was nothing to see — just an endless vista of dust and rocks and craters. "What a miserable place," moaned poor Prickles — and he sat down, longing for the comforts of his own leafy hollow! Suddenly, there was a scratching sound from one of the craters. A long snout appeared, then a bright pair of eyes. In a second or two, Prickles was looking at the strangest animal he had ever seen.



"Well, bless my soul," gasped Prickles. "Could you possibly be a hedgehog?"

"I could ask the same of you!" the creature replied crossly. But then his expression changed into a lovely smile.

"My name is Sam," he said. "This is a wonderful surprise. We've never had a visitor before. Come and meet the family!"

"Wait a moment," called Prickles, as he rummaged in the basket. "I've got one or two rather delicious things to eat. I think you might like them." And he produced his quails' eggs, jellied worms and the last of the cucumber sandwiches. Of course, Sam's family wanted to hear about Prickles' journey. He had a wonderful evening describing all his terrifying adventures! When he had finished, there was a moment's silence. Then Sam said gravely:

"You'll never get *me* going up in one of those balloons."



All too soon, Prickles' visit drew to an end. It was time to leave his new friends, and everyone gathered round to see him go.

They brought lots of presents, neatly wrapped in coloured canvas bags. Sam gave him a beautiful carving of a Martian hedgehog, made of a strange coloured rock. Mrs Sam made Prickles one of her very special cakes, and the children gave him the best fossils from their collection.

Prickles wiped away a tear as he said goodbye, but he was not too unhappy. He knew that he would be back to see them all again, because there was one thing he loved doing above all else — he loved flying!

# The Little TIN SOLDIER



**F**or his birthday, a little boy was given twenty-five tin soldiers in a box. The soldiers were all brothers, because they had been made from the same old tin tray and painted from the same pots of paint. They stood to attention with their rifles on their shoulders, looking straight ahead, wearing smart red and black uniforms.

All the tin soldiers were exactly alike except one — the last one to be made. By then the toymaker had been running out of tin, so the last soldier could only have one leg. Even so, he stood as steady on his one leg as all the other soldiers did on two.

When the boy opened his birthday present, he clapped

his hands and cried, "An army!" He took the tin soldiers out of their box, one by one, and lined them up on a table crowded with other toys. The army stood there proudly in front of a fine cardboard castle, with swans gliding round a moat made from a piece of mirror, admiring their own reflections. On the drawbridge stood the lady of the castle, a paper ballerina. The last tin soldier, standing on his one leg, thought that the ballerina was the most beautiful doll he had ever seen.

She had a white muslin dress and wore a blue ribbon over her shoulder, fixed with a glittering spangle. She stretched out her pale arms in front of her, as if she was reaching out towards him. And she stood on

tip-toe, balancing on one leg with the other stretched out behind her, almost hidden by her skirt. To the tin soldier she looked as if she only had one leg — just like himself.

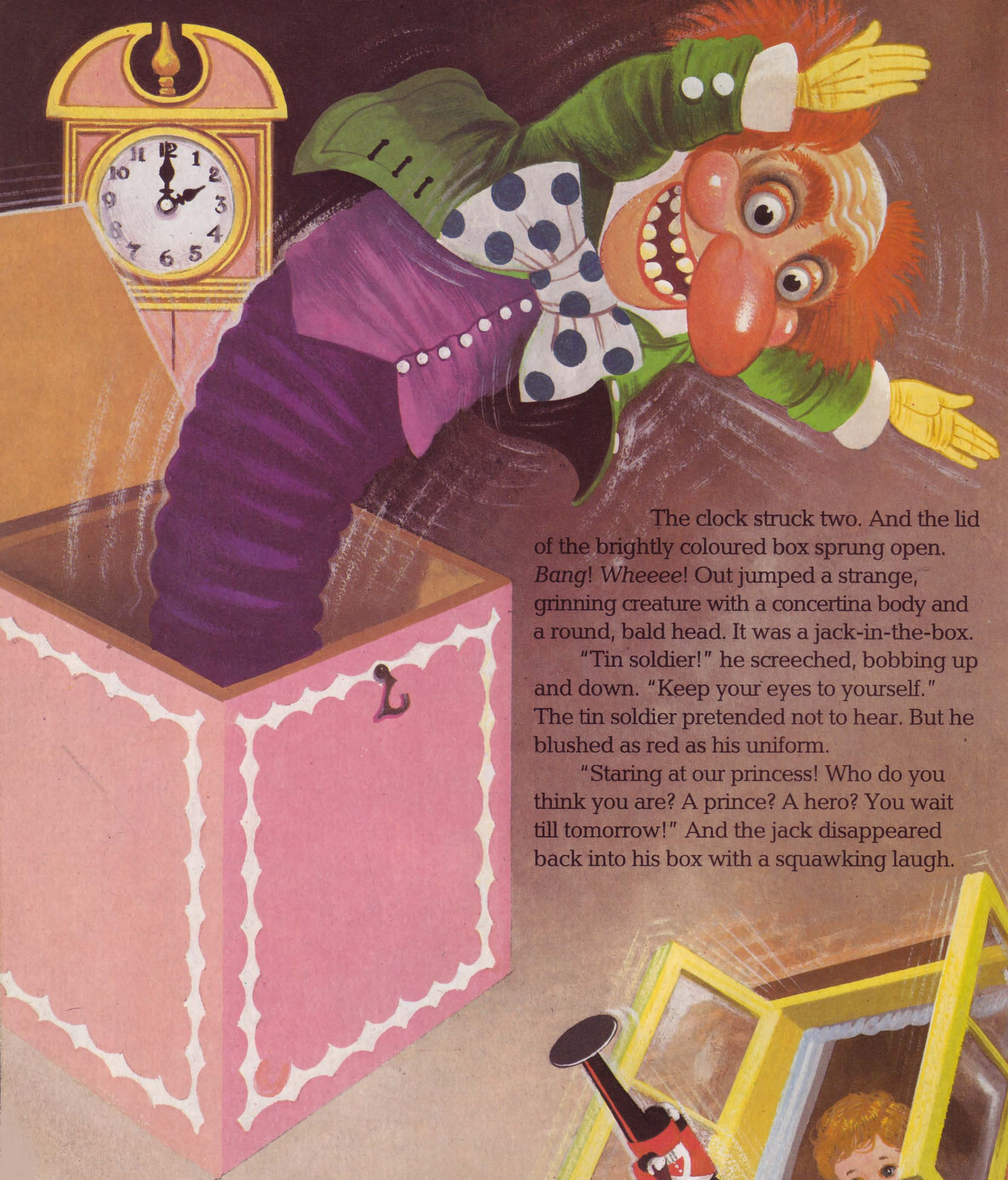
"She would be a perfect wife for me," he thought. "But she is much too fine. She has a castle — and I only have a box that I share with other soldiers. That wouldn't do for her. But she's so beautiful! I could look at her for ever!"

The soldier stood in silence and stared at the ballerina on the drawbridge of her

castle. And when the other soldiers were packed away, he slipped into the shadows of a colourful box, so that he could go on watching her all night.

The little boy went to bed, and the house grew quiet. Then, in the middle of the night, the toys began to play. A clown on the table turned somersaults, and some sticks of chalk began to write on the blackboard. The animals played hide and seek, and danced to the music of the musical box. The tin soldiers in their box rattled around because they wanted to play too, but they could not get the lid open. The only toys who did not move were the ballerina and the soldier. She stood as still and steady on the toes of her one foot as the soldier did on his. His eyes never left her.





The clock struck two. And the lid of the brightly coloured box sprung open. *Bang! Wheeee!* Out jumped a strange, grinning creature with a concertina body and a round, bald head. It was a jack-in-the-box.

"Tin soldier!" he screeched, bobbing up and down. "Keep your eyes to yourself." The tin soldier pretended not to hear. But he blushed as red as his uniform.

"Staring at our princess! Who do you think you are? A prince? A hero? You wait till tomorrow!" And the jack disappeared back into his box with a squawking laugh.



Next morning, when the little boy set out his soldiers for battle, he put the one-legged soldier by the window as a look-out.

Was it just the wind or the evil magic of the jack-in-the-box? Suddenly the window opened and the soldier toppled out. He fell all the way down to the street, and landed head-first on the pavement.

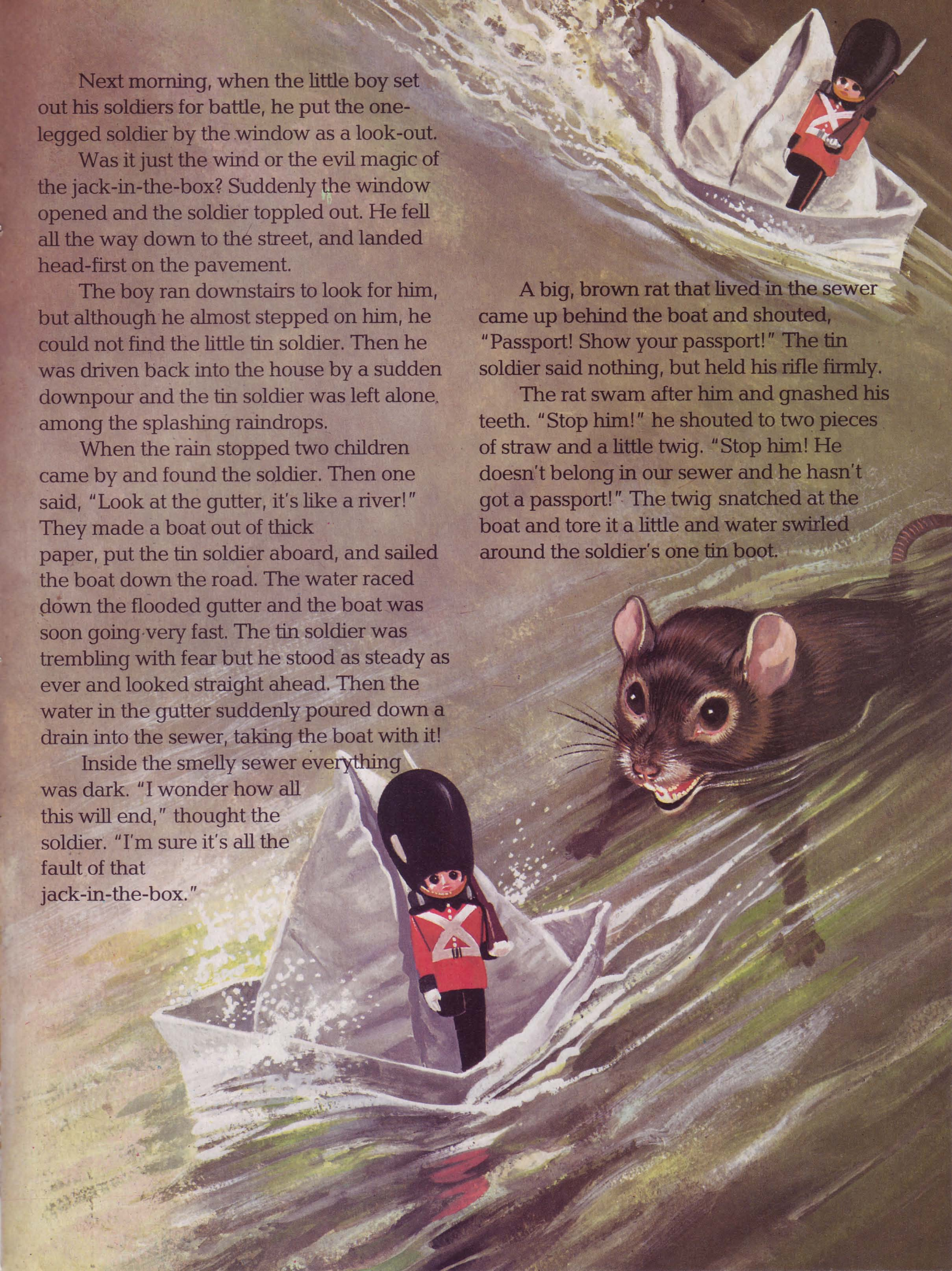
The boy ran downstairs to look for him, but although he almost stepped on him, he could not find the little tin soldier. Then he was driven back into the house by a sudden downpour and the tin soldier was left alone, among the splashing raindrops.

When the rain stopped two children came by and found the soldier. Then one said, "Look at the gutter, it's like a river!" They made a boat out of thick paper, put the tin soldier aboard, and sailed the boat down the road. The water raced down the flooded gutter and the boat was soon going very fast. The tin soldier was trembling with fear but he stood as steady as ever and looked straight ahead. Then the water in the gutter suddenly poured down a drain into the sewer, taking the boat with it!

Inside the smelly sewer everything was dark. "I wonder how all this will end," thought the soldier. "I'm sure it's all the fault of that jack-in-the-box."

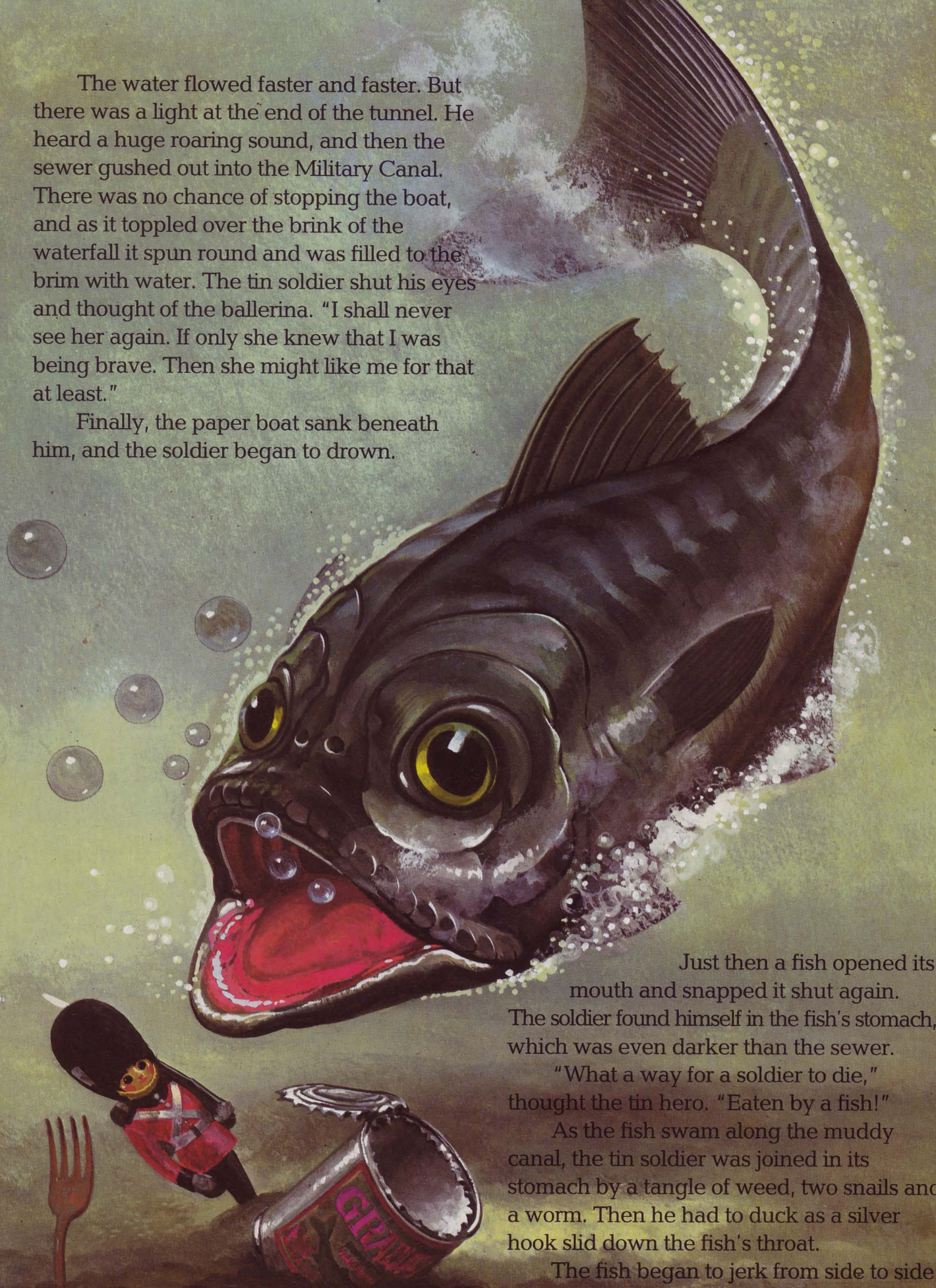
A big, brown rat that lived in the sewer came up behind the boat and shouted, "Passport! Show your passport!" The tin soldier said nothing, but held his rifle firmly.

The rat swam after him and gnashed his teeth. "Stop him!" he shouted to two pieces of straw and a little twig. "Stop him! He doesn't belong in our sewer and he hasn't got a passport!" The twig snatched at the boat and tore it a little and water swirled around the soldier's one tin boot.



The water flowed faster and faster. But there was a light at the end of the tunnel. He heard a huge roaring sound, and then the sewer gushed out into the Military Canal. There was no chance of stopping the boat, and as it toppled over the brink of the waterfall it spun round and was filled to the brim with water. The tin soldier shut his eyes and thought of the ballerina. "I shall never see her again. If only she knew that I was being brave. Then she might like me for that at least."

Finally, the paper boat sank beneath him, and the soldier began to drown.



Just then a fish opened its mouth and snapped it shut again. The soldier found himself in the fish's stomach, which was even darker than the sewer.

"What a way for a soldier to die," thought the tin hero. "Eaten by a fish!"

As the fish swam along the muddy canal, the tin soldier was joined in its stomach by a tangle of weed, two snails and a worm. Then he had to duck as a silver hook slid down the fish's throat.

The fish began to jerk from side to side



as it was hauled out of the water. The soldier and the snails rattled around in the darkness. Then at last the fish lay still.

Sometime later, a ray of light appeared and the blade of a knife almost sliced the soldier in two. A woman's voice cried, "Look! It's your old tin soldier!"


The fish had been caught by a fisherman and sold in the market. And who do you suppose had bought it, and taken it home to cook for supper? Yes, it was the mother of the little boy — the same little boy who had lost his look-out man. She took the

tin soldier into the living room, where her son was playing. "Look what I found inside the fish! What an exciting journey he must have had."

And she placed the tin soldier back on the table among the toys he knew.

And there *she* was! The little ballerina was still standing on one leg reaching out her arms towards him. She was as steady and as beautiful as ever, and he was so relieved to see her again he almost cried. He looked at her and she looked at him, but neither of them spoke.



A painting of a ballerina with dark hair and a white flower crown, wearing a red dress with a white star on the sleeve. She is holding a tin soldier in her arms. The background is a warm, golden-yellow with many small, glowing particles. The tin soldier is a simple, stylized figure with a round face and a pointed hat.

The tin soldier lay helpless on the rough black coal, hot flames licking his red and black paint. His rifle twisted and curled in his hand and he began to sweat drops of tin. Through the stifling smoke, he could see the jack-in-the-box bobbing and grinning on his spring. But there too was the ballerina on her drawbridge, her arms still reaching out towards him. The flames burning at the heart of his tin body felt like the flames of love as he looked at her and she looked at him.

Then someone opened the door of the living room and a sudden breeze caught the little dancer. She flew like a fairy right into the fire. In an instant her muslin dress flared up, and she was gone.

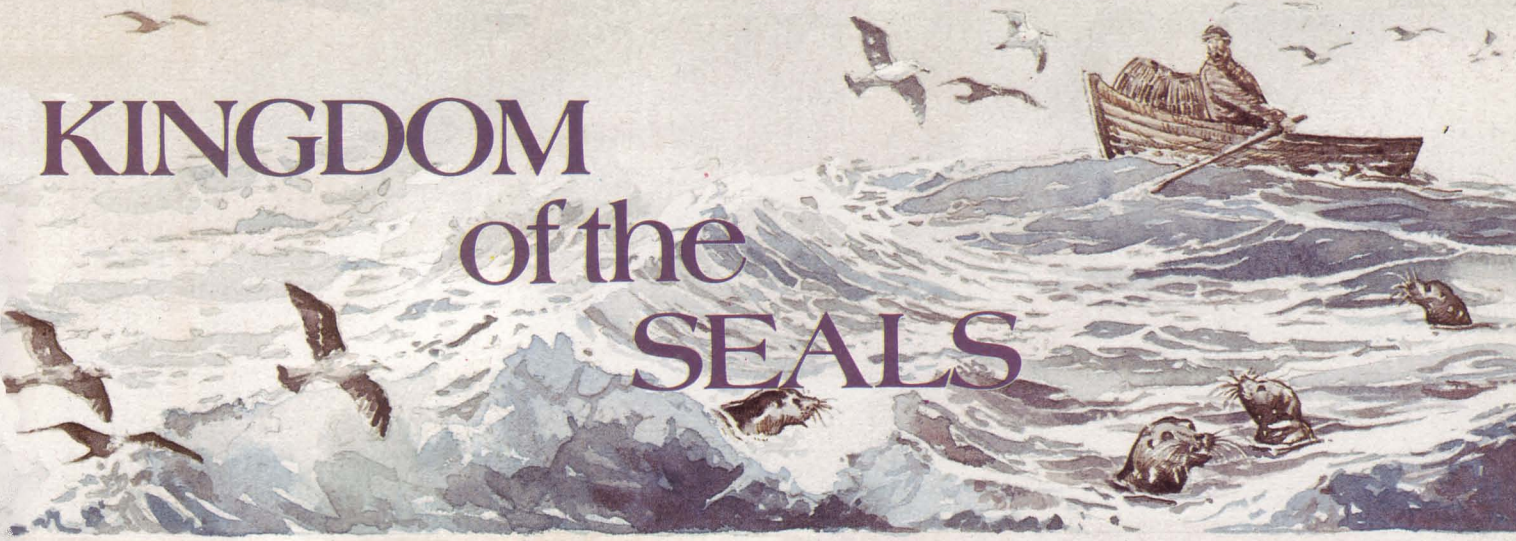
The next day, when the fire was cold, the boy's mother swept out the grate. And in among the ashes she found a little tin heart and the metal spangle from the ballerina's dress. They had melted together in the great heat.

Suddenly the little boy grabbed the soldier. "Just think where he's been," he said. "Ugh!" And he threw him into the fire.

But he did not really know why he had done it. Perhaps the evil magic of the jack-in-the-box was to blame.



# KINGDOM of the SEALS



Ben Beckett was a fisherman. Every day he rowed his little boat out to the fishing grounds. All around him sleek grey seals bobbed up and down in the waves, watching him.

"Clear off!" Ben would shout at the seals. "I can't spare you any of my fish."

But sometimes he caught a seal in his trailing nets. Then he would kill it and take the skin home to sell.

One sunny morning, when he was out in his boat, Ben pulled on his nets — but they were almost too heavy to lift.

Suddenly the head of a huge seal popped up alongside the boat. It was

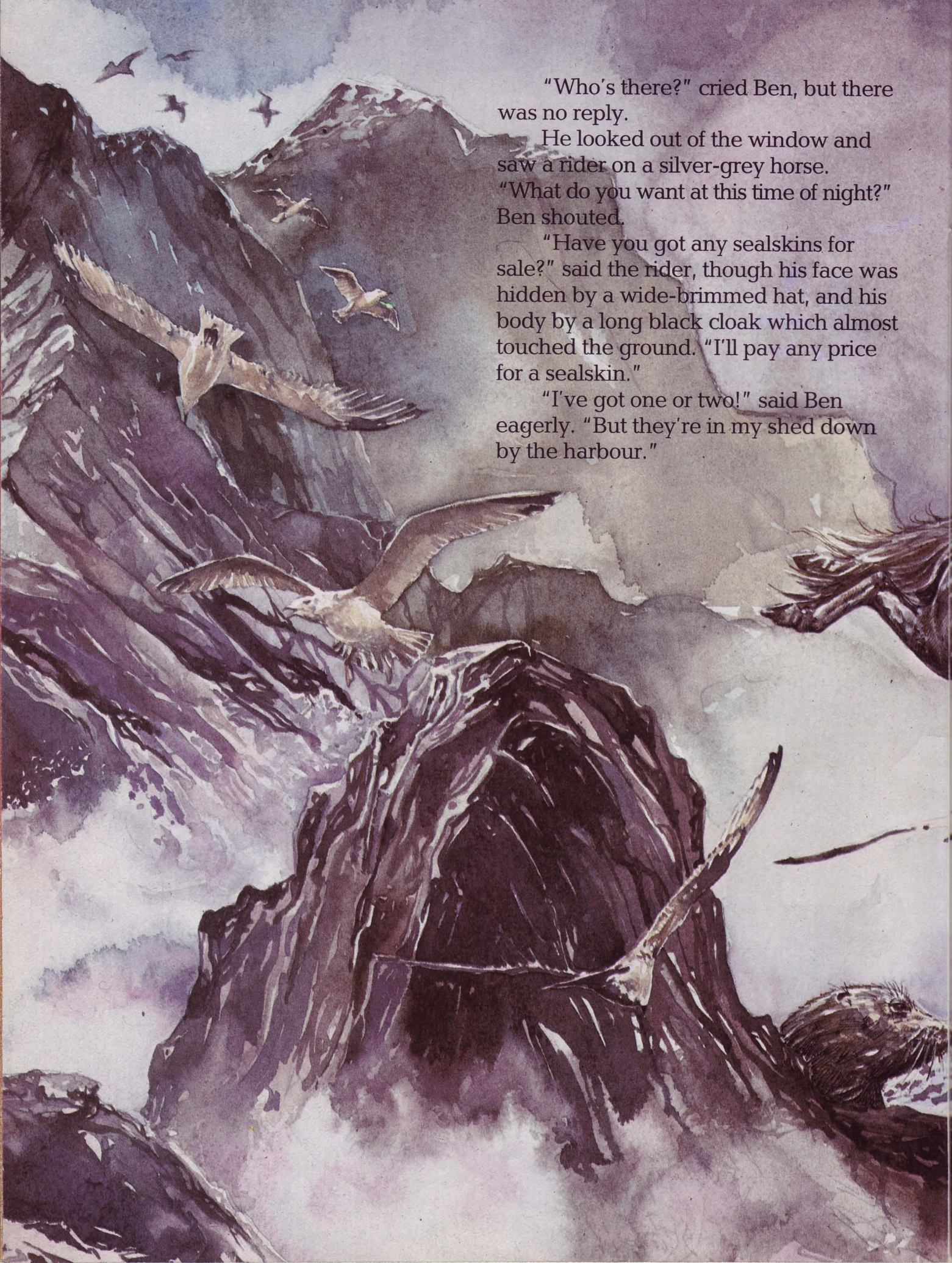
tangled in the net. Quickly Ben raised his stout club and struck at it. "What a size it is!" gasped Ben, hitting the animal's head.

The seal struggled, almost pulling Ben overboard. Twice more Ben wounded it, but then it tore his nets to pieces and plunged out of sight through the water.

That night Ben sat in his cottage, fuming with rage. "What a coat that sealskin would have made!" he thought to himself. But as the lamp flickered, he fell asleep in his fireside chair.

Three loud bangs on the front door woke him with a start.





"Who's there?" cried Ben, but there was no reply.

He looked out of the window and saw a rider on a silver-grey horse. "What do you want at this time of night?" Ben shouted.

"Have you got any sealskins for sale?" said the rider, though his face was hidden by a wide-brimmed hat, and his body by a long black cloak which almost touched the ground. "I'll pay any price for a sealskin."

"I've got one or two!" said Ben eagerly. "But they're in my shed down by the harbour."

"Then ride with me and we'll fetch them together," said the mysterious stranger.

Ben slammed his front door and leaped up behind the rider. The horse sprang into such a gallop that Ben had to cling tightly to the horseman's cloak. And it did not stop at the harbour, but raced along the waterfront and the cliff until Ben realised that its feet were no longer touching the ground. They were flying through the air.

"Help! Help me!" shouted Ben. But

there was nobody to hear his cries.

The horse leaped over the edge of the cliff and down, down, down they floated towards the sea. Ben closed his eyes as he heard the storm waves thundering far below, then closer and closer. With a splash they plunged into the sea and sank slowly into the ocean's depths.

When Ben opened his eyes, he found that they were on the seabed, in the heart of a green seaweed forest. All around them lobsters and crabs and whelks and cockles and wriggling eels stared at the horse and its two riders. Lying on the seabed were thousands of shining shells.

Then, to his horror, Ben watched his own hands, clutching the horseman's cloak in front of him, change into flippers! His skin became slippery, like leather, and in place of his bushy beard, he grew long, cat-like whiskers. Ben had turned into a seal!

When the horseman turned his head, he too had seal's whiskers — and their silver-grey steed had become a gigantic sea-horse.

"No! No!" shouted Ben. But instead of words, a string of bubbles streamed out of his mouth.



All around him swam hundreds and hundreds of seals, with shining skins and long whiskers. Every shape and size of seal twisted and twirled in the sea. Then they began to sing — the saddest song Ben had ever heard:

*Ben Beckett, in his nets,  
Caught and stabbed the Seal King  
Only he who made the cuts  
Has the power of healing.*

The silvery sea-horse and its two riders swept on until they reached a vast wall of rock. Suddenly it opened and, looking inside, Ben saw an immense cave — the palace of the Seal King.

Thousands of shining pearls hung from the cave roof, making it as light as day. The floor was carpeted with multi-coloured sands sweeping up to a huge throne made of mother-of-pearl. There, surrounded by tall, fierce seals with bristling whiskers, sat the Seal King.



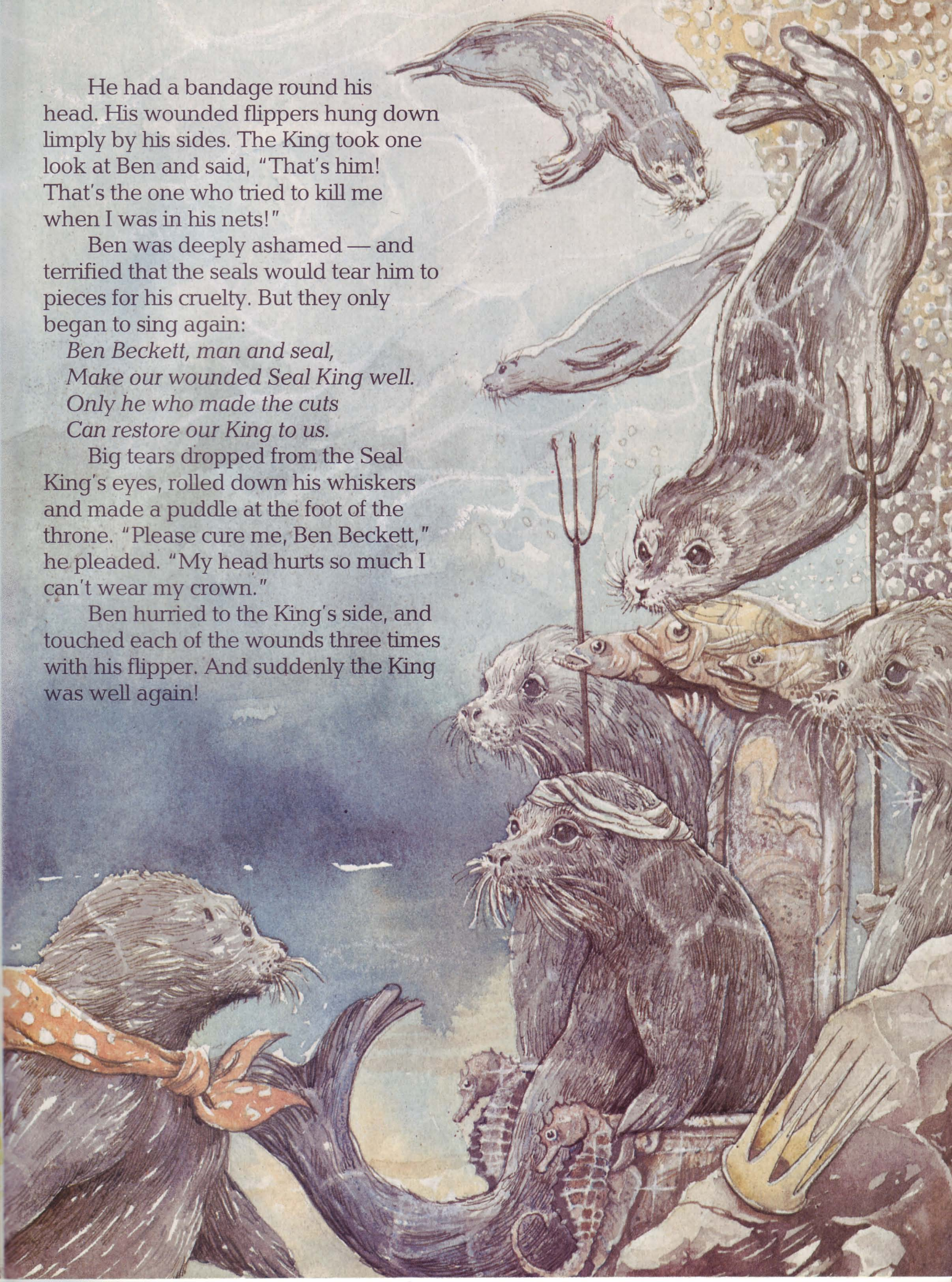
He had a bandage round his head. His wounded flippers hung down limply by his sides. The King took one look at Ben and said, "That's him! That's the one who tried to kill me when I was in his nets!"

Ben was deeply ashamed — and terrified that the seals would tear him to pieces for his cruelty. But they only began to sing again:

*Ben Beckett, man and seal,  
Make our wounded Seal King well.  
Only he who made the cuts  
Can restore our King to us.*

Big tears dropped from the Seal King's eyes, rolled down his whiskers and made a puddle at the foot of the throne. "Please cure me, Ben Beckett," he pleaded. "My head hurts so much I can't wear my crown."

Ben hurried to the King's side, and touched each of the wounds three times with his flipper. And suddenly the King was well again!



He tore the bandage from his head and cried, "I'm healed! I'm healed!"

Now all the seals began to dance round the throne and, grabbing Ben by his flippers, they made him dance too. Only the Seal King's command brought the dance to a stop. "Ben," he said, "I invite you to join us in the Kingdom of Seals and to live in your sealskin for ever."

"I'd rather be myself again," said Ben anxiously. "Thank you all the same."

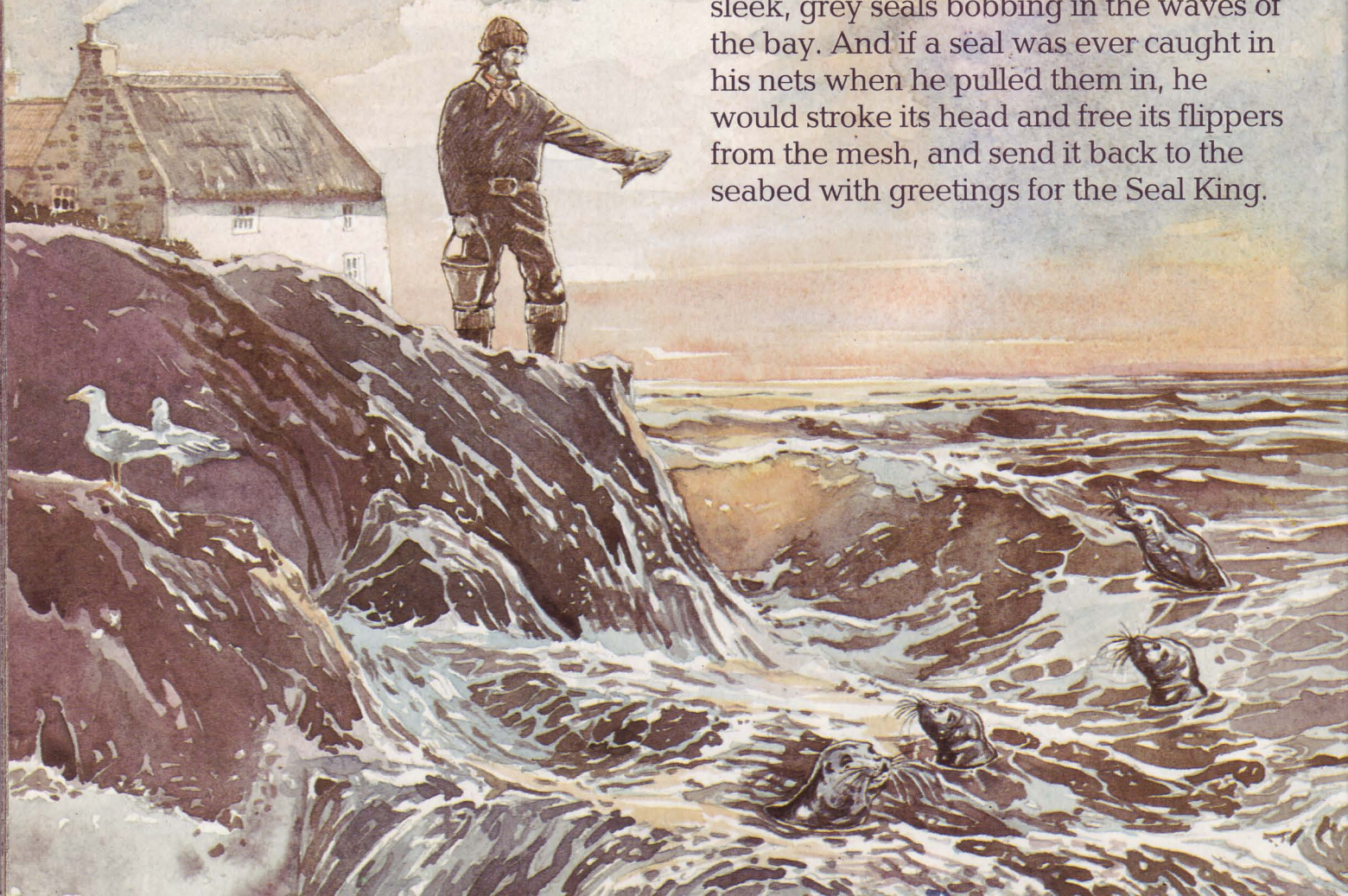
"So be it," said the King. "But I will not change you back unless you promise never to kill seals again."

"Oh, I promise!" cried Ben.



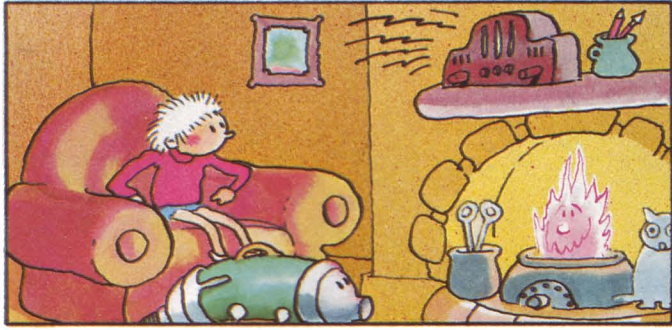
As he spoke, the cave vanished and Ben found himself standing at his own cottage door. He rushed inside and looked into the mirror. Yes, he was a man again — and a very happy man, too.

From that time onwards, he spent his Sunday afternoons feeding fish to the sleek, grey seals bobbing in the waves of the bay. And if a seal was ever caught in his nets when he pulled them in, he would stroke its head and free its flippers from the mesh, and send it back to the seabed with greetings for the Seal King.

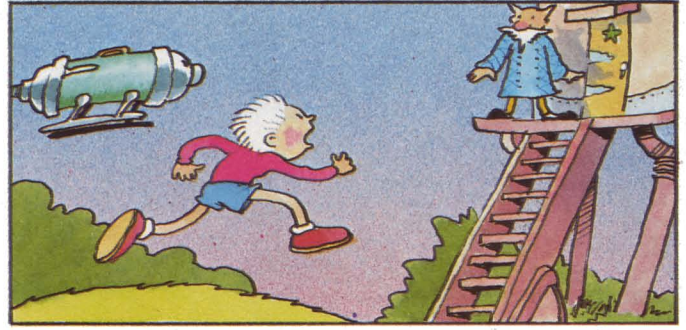


# ALDO

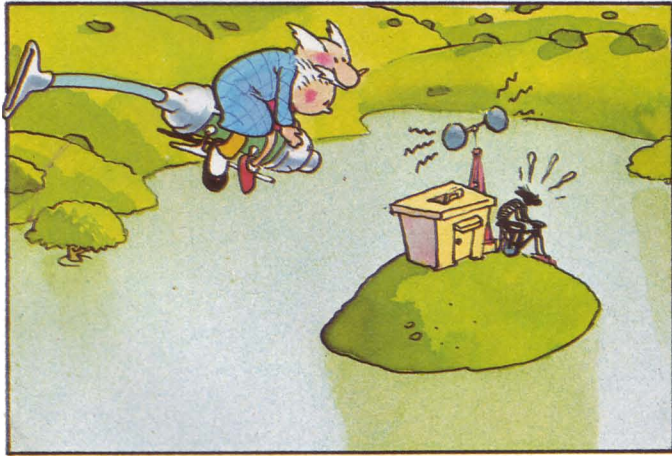
in Arcadia

A horizontal banner featuring the title 'ALDO in Arcadia' in large, stylized red and orange letters. On the left, a small character with white hair and a pink shirt is visible. On the right, a large, cartoonish face with a prominent pink nose and a wide smile is shown.

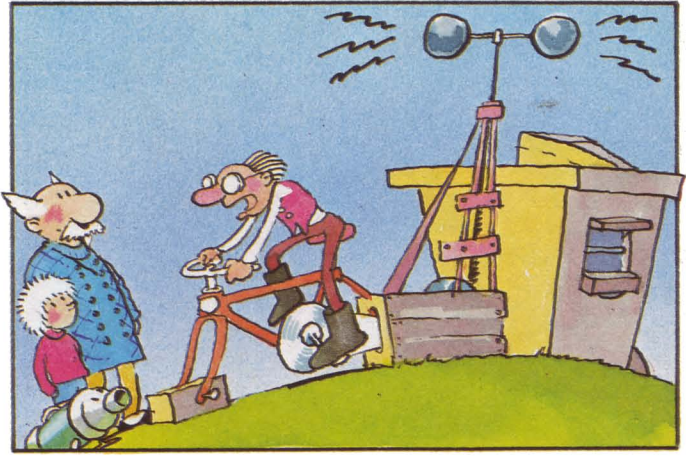
One day Aldo heard an S.O.S call on his radio. "Help! Save me from the floods!"



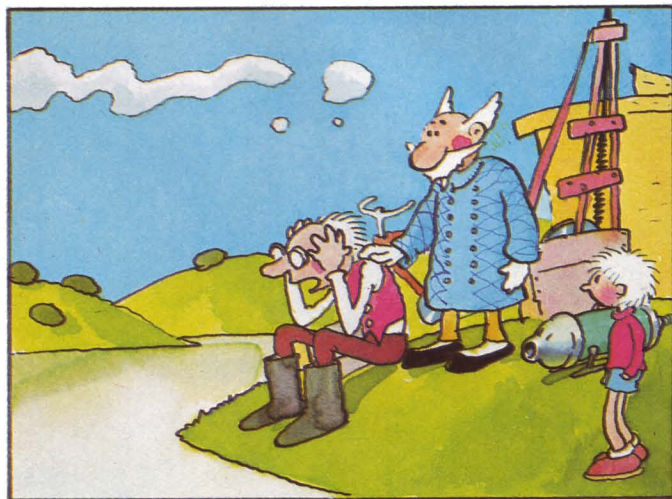
"Uncle Emo! Uncle Emo! Come quickly! A man needs our help. We must fly!"



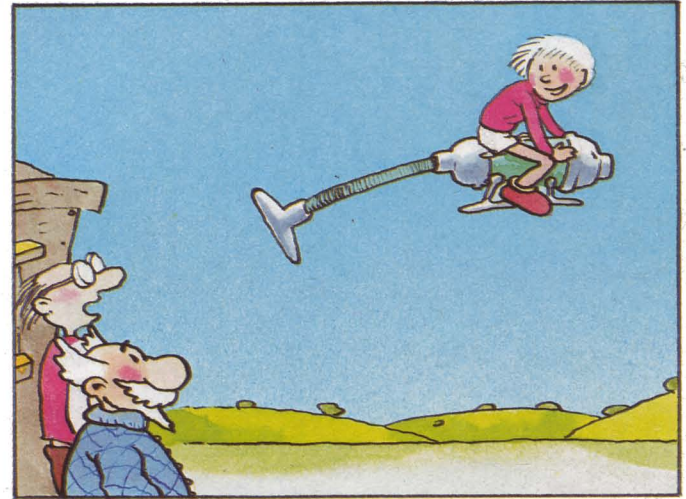
"Look, Aldo! The water is rising fast! We've got here just in the nick of time!"



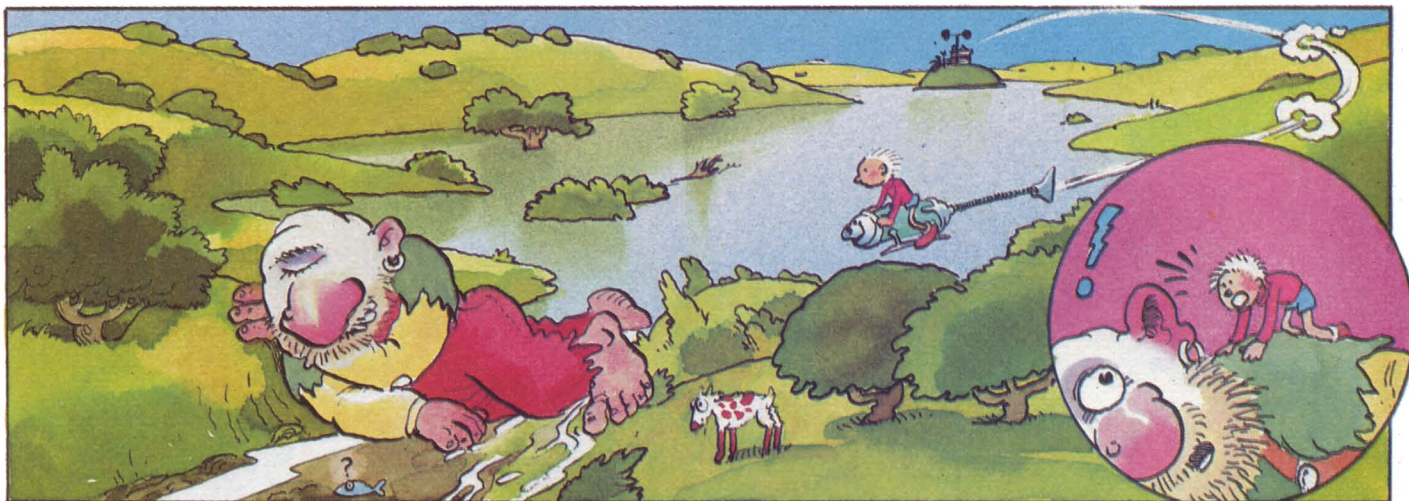
"I'm glad you heard my S.O.S. I can't transmit much longer. My legs are tired!"



"I really don't know what's happened. This was only a small stream yesterday."



"I'll fly up high, Uncle. Maybe I'll be able to see what's causing the flood."

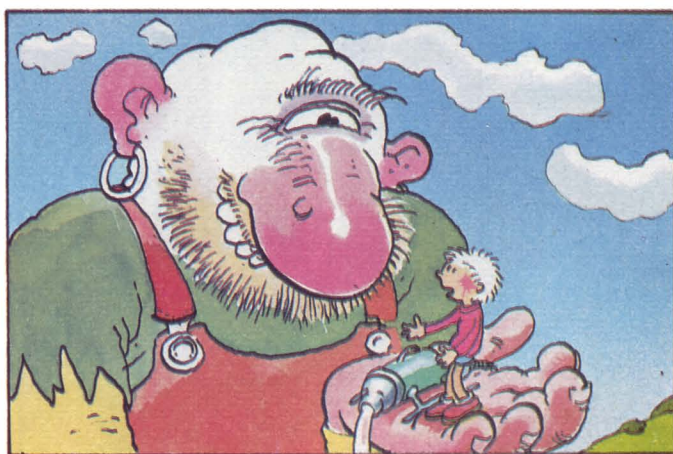


"Look vacuum, down there. I think that must be the problem."

"Hey, wake up, Mr Giant! You're blocking the stream and starting a flood!"



"Uh, I'm sorry. I must have rolled over in my sleep. I dreamed I was in the bath."



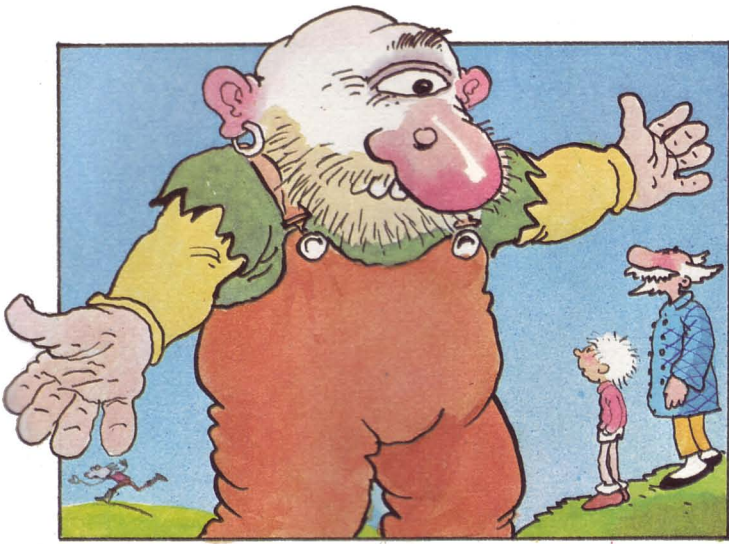
"It can be hard for someone as big as me to find a safe place to sleep, you know."



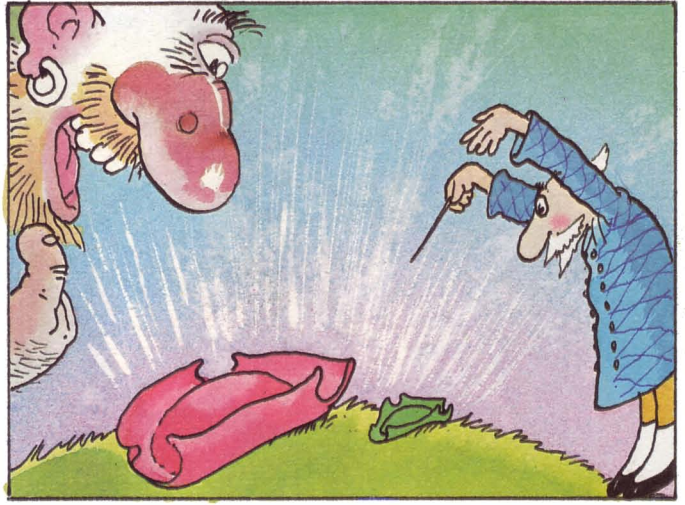
"Don't worry. Uncle Emo will be able to sort this out in the twinkling of an eye."



"Magic wand and crystal ball . . . Make this lake go very small!"



"I wish you could make me small, too. Then I could get a good night's sleep."



"I'll do even better than that, Mr Giant. These two hats will give you a choice!"

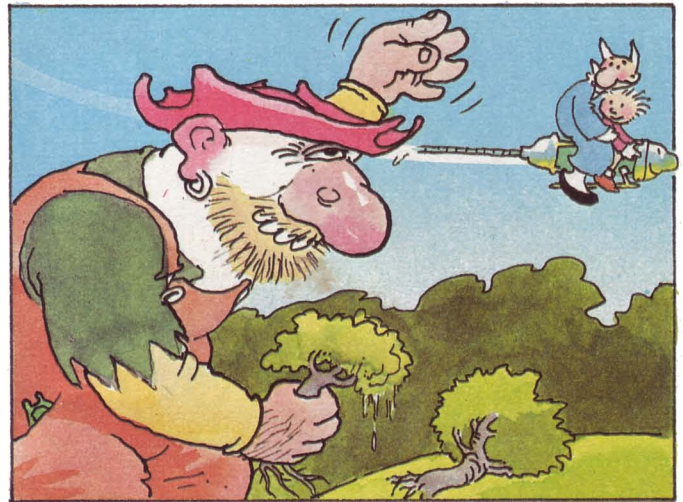


"The big one will make you grow, and the small one will make you shrink!"

"Oh thank you, Uncle Emo. Sometimes it's really good to be small."



"But sometimes it's good to be big. Now I can clear up the mess easily."



"Come on, Aldo. That's quite enough excitement for one day." "Bye, bye, Mr Giant!"

[Vacuum comes to the rescue again in Part 25]



IN PART 25 OF  
**STORY**Teller

Look out below! King Odin's on the rampage. And it's all because the giants have **STOLEN THUNDER**

**MR MIACCA** eats boys for his supper, and he can't wait to have a taste of Tommy Grimes

When he lived, he was called **THE HAPPY PRINCE**, but now his statue stands high on a column – and what he sees from there makes him far from happy

'Mark my words,' said Gruff Puff the baker, 'You'll end up in the oven one of these days. And sure enough, it happened to Wee Puff in **THE GREAT PIE CONTEST**

My! What big eyes you have! All the better for reading **LITTLE RED RIDING HOOD!**

Readers include  
**TIM CURRY**  
**NIGEL LAMBERT**  
& **DENISE BRYER**

COMING SOON—  
**STORY**Teller  
another great  
collection of  
children's stories