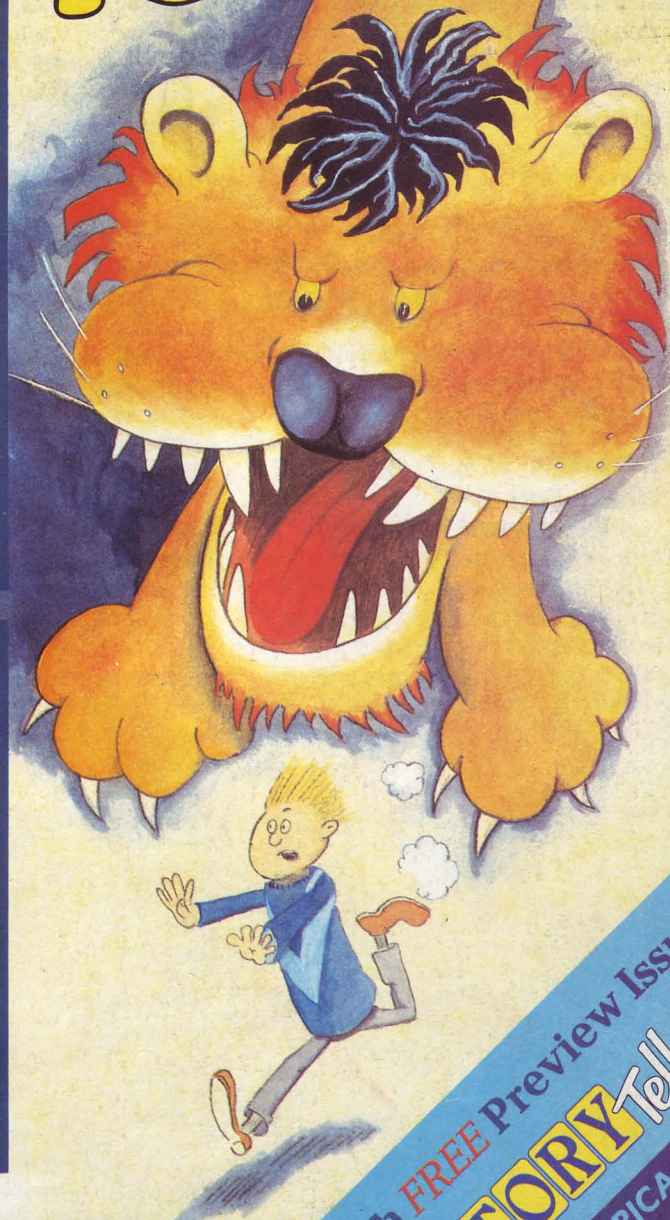


®

PART 26

# STORY Teller

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# STORY Teller

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

### Illustrators

The Goblin Rat: **Mary Van Riemsdyke**  
Thumbelina: **Gwen Turret**  
Where Can an Elephant Hide?: **Lyn Cawley**  
A Lion at School: **Francis Blake**  
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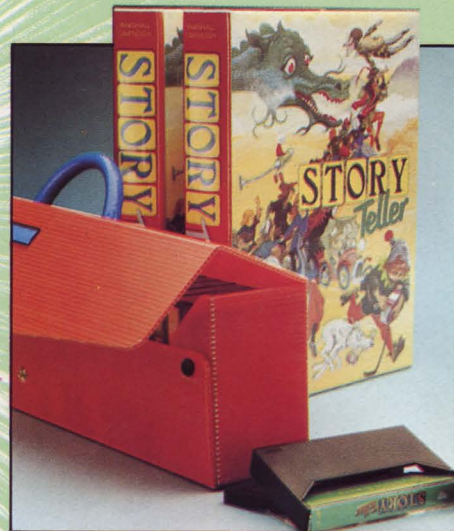
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Produced & directed by **Joa Reinelt**  
Engineered by **John Rowland & Jill Landskroner**

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### Readers

The Goblin Rat: **Liza Goddard**  
Thumbelina: **Liza Goddard**  
Where Can an Elephant Hide?: **Steven Pacey**  
A Lion at School: **Liza Goddard**  
Captain Bones: **Dermot Crowley**  
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# THE GOBLIN RAT

A long time ago, in a village in the mountains of Japan, there lived a farmer and his wife and their many sons and daughters.

The family was very poor, so all the children laboured in the fields as soon as they were old enough.

But the youngest son, whose name was Kami, was too small and weak to work. Since he was a clever boy, his parents decided that he should become a monk. So one day, they took Kami to the temple and asked the abbot to take him.



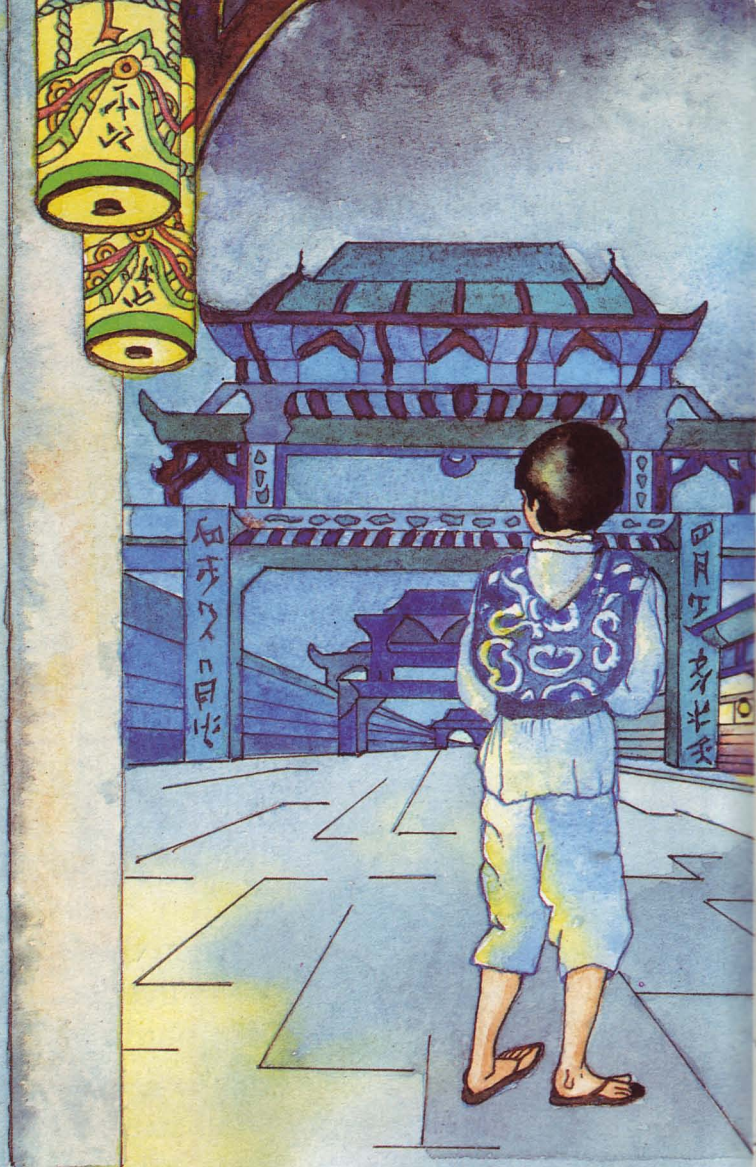


Kami was quick to learn from the monks, but he had one big fault. He loved to draw cats when he should have been studying.

He even drew them in forbidden places, such as the margins of the sacred books and the screens and walls and pillars of the temple. And although the abbot told him off, Kami just could not help himself, because he was a born artist.

Kami lived and studied in the temple for seven long years, until one day the abbot summoned him and said: "We can teach you no more, Kami. You will never make a good monk, but perhaps you could be a great artist. Go now from the temple. But before you leave, listen carefully to what I am about to say and never forget it:

*At night,  
Avoid large places  
Keep to small."*



Kami did not understand what the abbot had said. It puzzled him deeply as he tied up his little bundle of possessions and walked away from the temple. He had no idea where to go or what to do. He could not return home, because his parents were too poor to look after him. Then he remembered the temple at Nikoto, some ten miles away. Perhaps the monks there would agree to take him in. So he set off down the road.

No-one told Kami that the big temple had been closed. Several months earlier, a huge goblin rat had appeared in the evening mist, and the entire company of monks had fled in panic from the temple. Since that terrible night,





a hundred brave warriors had gone to the temple to hunt the goblin rat — but not one had ever been seen again.

By the time Kami reached Nikoto, night had fallen and everything was silent. Outside the temple, a row of golden lanterns were burning brightly. (The local people said they were the devil's lights, lit by the goblin rat to tempt travellers in to rest.)

Quite unsuspecting, Kami climbed the steps into the temple building. He could see there was nobody inside, but he was so weary that he sat down on the floor to wait for someone to appear.

Kami noticed that the hall was thick with dust, and cobwebs hung round the pillars. Surely, he thought, he could work as a cleaner, even if the monks rejected him as a novice. The idea pleased him —

and he grew happier still when he found some large white screens and a box of brushes and inks.

Kami sat for hours, painting cats on the temple screens. Then, just before midnight, he lay down on the floor to rest. He had closed his eyes and was almost asleep, when he remembered the old monk's words:

*At night,  
Avoid large places  
Keep to small.*

With a jolt, Kami was wide awake. The temple was large and silent, and he felt suddenly afraid. He stood up and looked around for a smaller room, where he could sleep safely.

In the far corner of the hall he found a small, empty room with a sliding door. Kami crept inside and, curling up in the corner like a cat, fell into a light sleep.







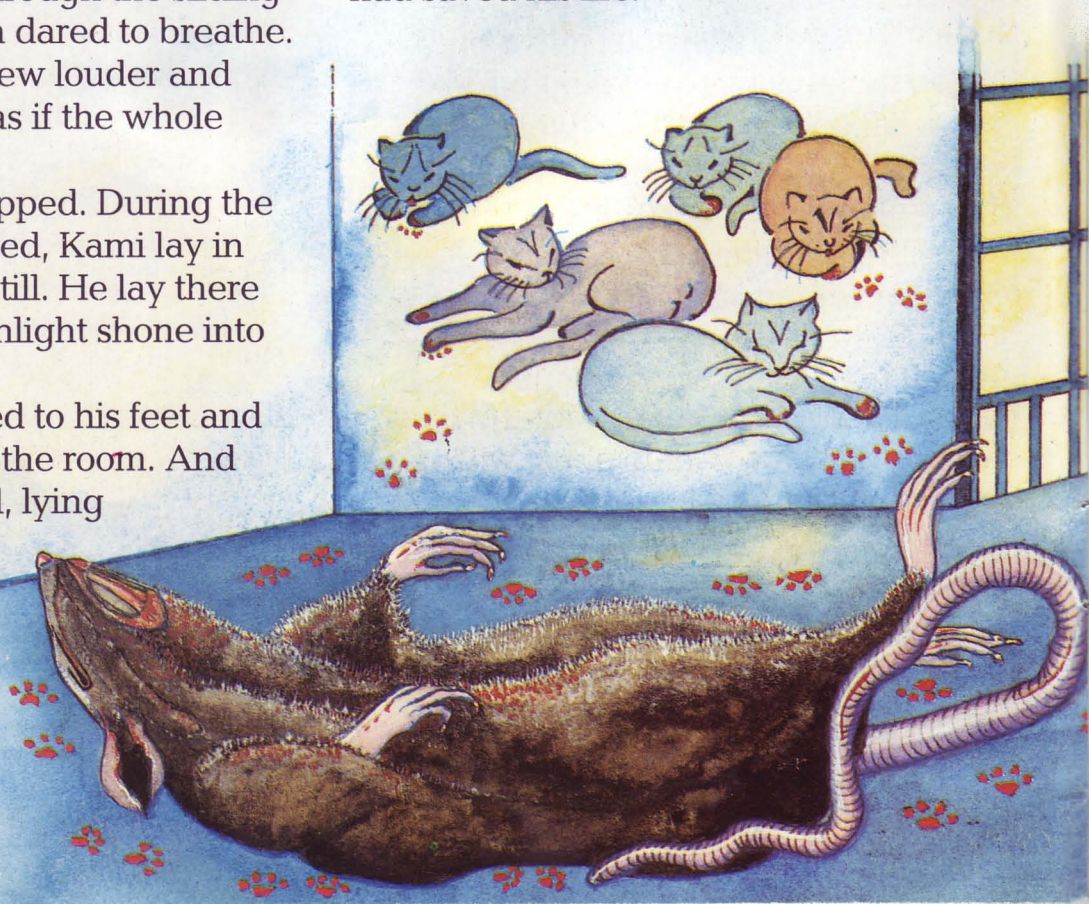
One hour before dawn, a huge black shadow appeared on the temple wall. Then all the golden lanterns suddenly went out. Moments later, Kami woke to the dreadful sounds of hissing and shrieking. He huddled into the corner . . . he did not dare peep through the sliding door . . . he hardly even dared to breathe. The hideous shrieks grew louder and louder until it seemed as if the whole temple shook.

Then the noise stopped. During the long silence that followed, Kami lay in the corner, absolutely still. He lay there until the first rays of sunlight shone into the little room.

At last Kami slipped to his feet and crept noiselessly out of the room. And there in the temple hall, lying before the screens, was the monstrous goblin rat, bigger and more terrifying than a rhinoceros, lying dead in a pool of blood.

Kami was so stunned, that it was several minutes before he noticed that the mouths of the cats he had drawn on the temple screens were all smeared with blood. His cats had killed the goblin rat!

And the words of the wise old abbot had saved his life.





# Thumbelina

There once was a wife who longed for a little child. After many years of waiting, she had almost given up hope, but she went to a wise old woman and said, "Please can you help me? I would so love to have a little child."

"That shouldn't be too difficult," replied the old woman. "Just take this grain of corn, plant it by your front door and watch what happens."

So the wife went home and planted the grain of corn. In the warm spring sunshine, it quickly took root and grew — but the plant that sprang up from the soil was not corn. It was a magnificent flower with a single bud of red and yellow petals. The wife was so thrilled at the sight that she cupped her hands around the bud and kissed it.

At once the flower opened and there in the centre sat a tiny little child — not a baby, but a perfectly formed young girl. She was beautiful and delicate, and exactly the size of the woman's thumb.

"I shall call you Thumbelina," said the woman, delighted at her good fortune. She made a cradle for the flower child out of half a walnut shell, with a rose-petal for a bed cover. And for several months, they lived together happily in the country cottage. While the woman worked in the kitchen or tended the garden, Thumbelina would perch nearby and sing or tell stories to make the hours pass quickly.





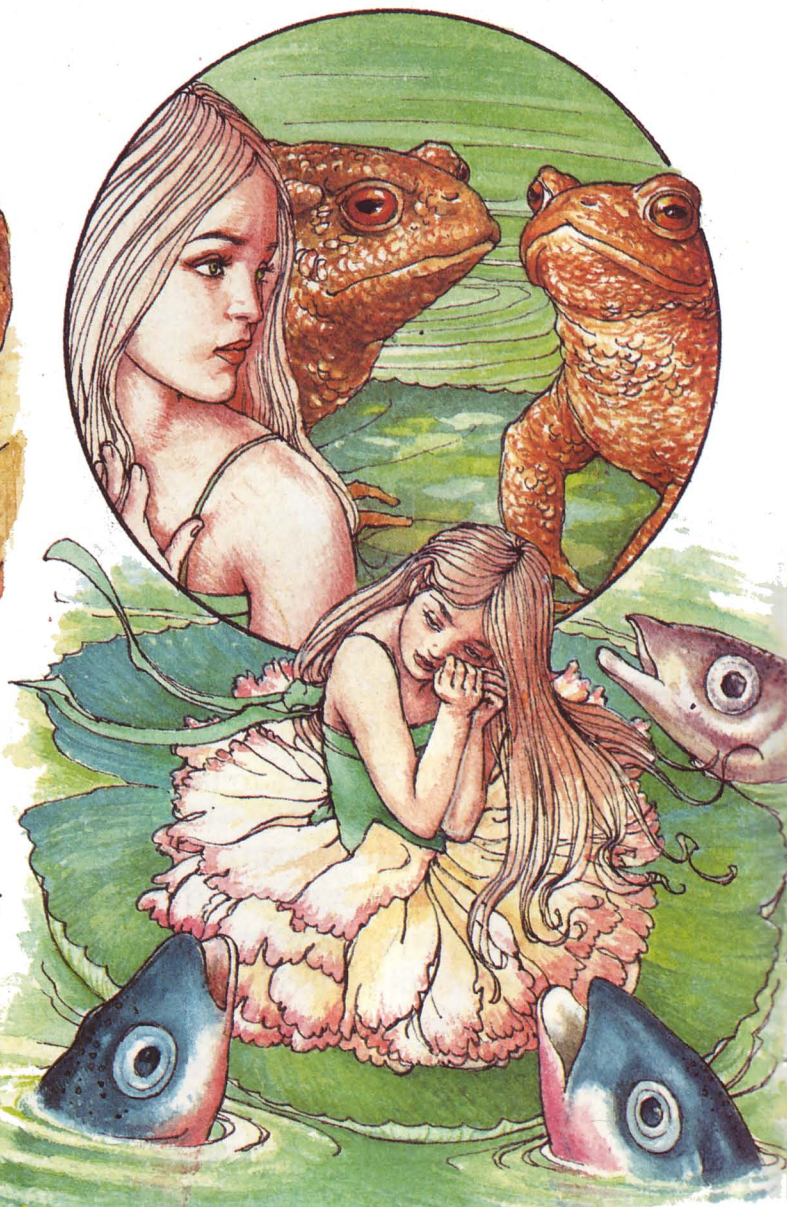


But their joy was not to last. One night as Thumbelina lay asleep in her tiny bed, a big, ugly toad hopped into the room through an open window, and peered at the sleeping girl. "What a beauty! She would make a lovely wife for my son," croaked the toad. And she picked up the walnut shell, sprang back out through the window, and hopped off to her home in the muddiest part of the river-bank.

"Look what I've got for you," she called to her son. "Don't you think she's pretty?" The son — who was almost as ugly as his mother — goggled at Thumbelina and just croaked in amazement.

"Be quiet or you'll wake her," snapped his mother. "Now you start making a home for her, while I make sure she can't escape." Then the fat old toad swam out to the farthest water-lily leaf and left Thumbelina there, still fast asleep.

When the tiny girl woke next morning — to find herself stranded on a leaf in the middle of a stream — she was terrified. Then the toad and her son came



swimming out to see her. "This is to be your husband," said the fat old toad. "We are decorating a house in the mud for you to live in." And off they swam again, leaving Thumbelina stranded on the lily.

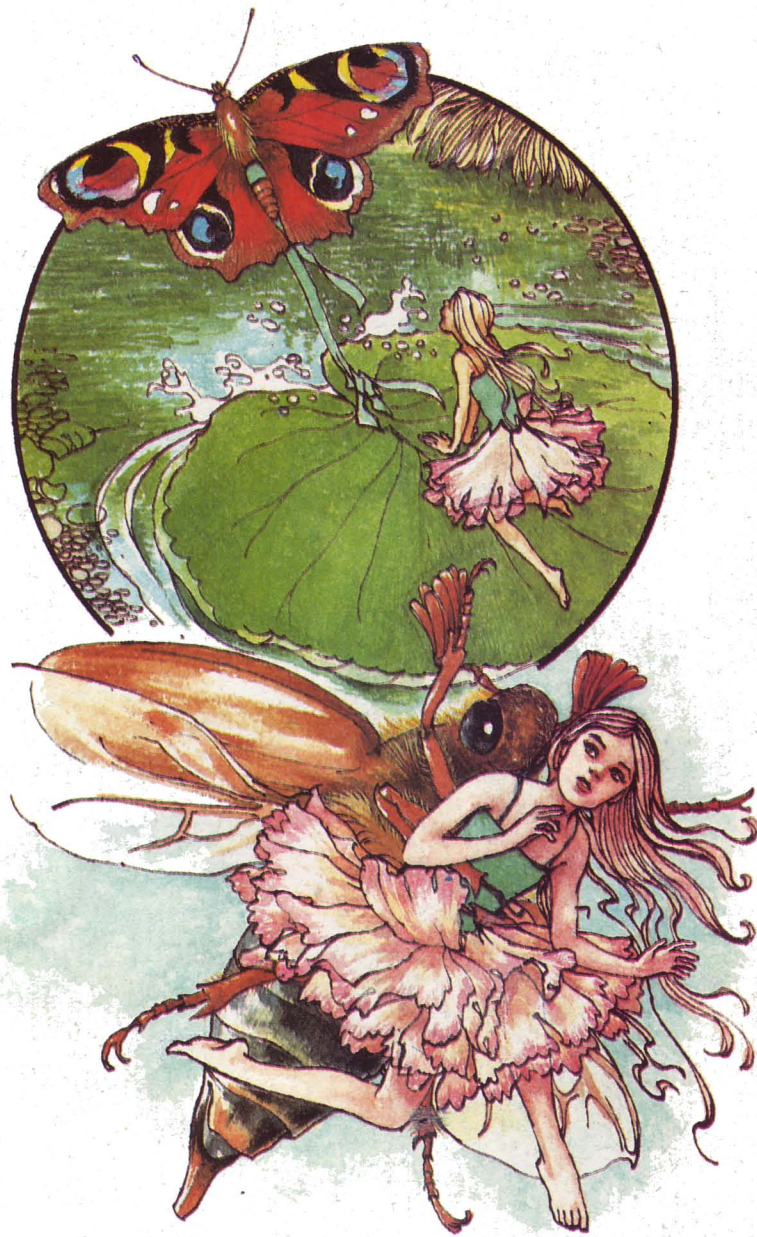
Thumbelina burst into tears. She did not want to marry the ugly toad and live in a house of mud. But help was already at hand. The little fishes of the stream had heard what the old toad had said, and as soon as she had gone they popped their heads out of the water to look at the tiny girl.



"Please save me from the toads," she pleaded, tears rolling down her cheeks. "I don't want to be married." So the little fishes nibbled through the stem that anchored the lily leaf, and it floated away down the stream.

Thumbelina was so happy to have escaped that she sang out loud for joy. Then a butterfly, hearing her voice, landed on the leaf. Thumbelina took a silk ribbon from her dress and tied one end to the butterfly's waist and the other to the leaf. Away the butterfly flew again, and soon they were racing along together down the stream.

But a big, ratty beetle with leathery wings had also heard Thumbelina singing. He swooped down to take a closer look, and was so struck by the flower-child's beauty that he grabbed her in his claws and carried her to a high tree. Thumbelina was quaking with fear,



but did not dare struggle in case she fell.

Then the beetle set her down on the topmost leaf and gave her honey to eat. He told her how lovely she was — even though she did not look like a beetle — and at first he wanted to marry her. But when his lady friends came visiting, they did not encourage him. "She has only two legs and looks just like a human being! How ugly!"

The beetle was soon convinced that Thumbelina really *was* ugly, so he carried her down to the foot of the tree and placed her on a daisy. She could go home, for all he cared.





But where could Thumbelina go? She had no home to go to. So she stayed where the beetle left her. She wove a hammock of grass and hung it under a dock leaf for shelter. She ate honey from the flowers and drank the dew on their leaves each morning. And all summer long she lived there at the foot of the beetle's tree.

Then autumn came, and winter. The flowers withered and so did Thumbelina's flower-petal clothes. She could find neither food nor shelter. It

began to snow and she was afraid she might freeze to death.

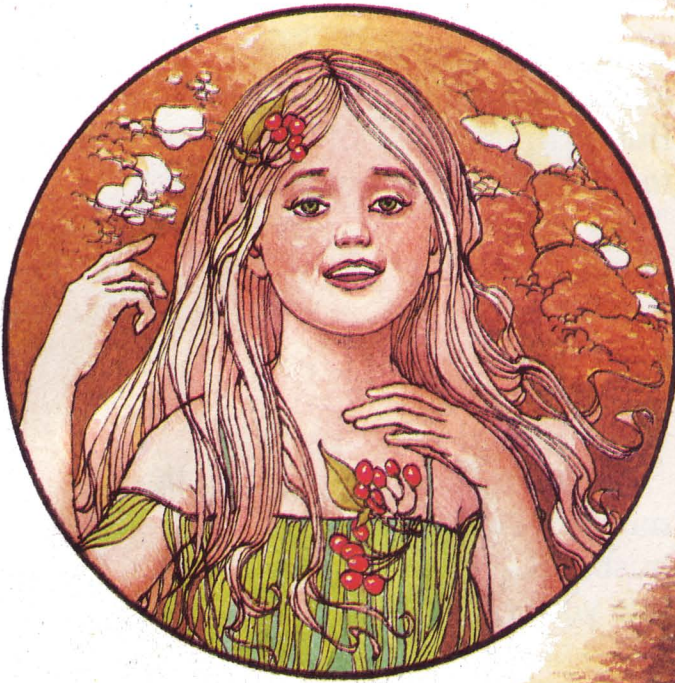
Wrapped in a shrivelled leaf, Thumbelina picked her way through a field of stubble, looking for grains of corn. At last she came to a hole in the ground where a field-mouse lived. She stood shivering outside the door and begged, "Please help me — I'm so cold, and I've nothing at all to eat."

"You poor little thing," said the field-mouse. "Come into my warm house and dine with me." The field-mouse had no children of her own, and she was lonely. "You can stay here for the winter if you will keep my house tidy and tell me a story every day."

Thumbelina was happy living with the field-mouse. It was like being back in the old wife's cottage — she felt safe again. But one day the field-mouse's friend, an elderly mole, came to visit. The field-mouse told Thumbelina that the mole was very rich — he had a wonderful black fur coat and his house was twenty times bigger than the field-mouse's.







"You must sing to him as sweetly as you can," she said, "and tell him all your best stories. If only he would marry you, you would always be well provided for."

Poor Thumbelina had not the slightest wish to marry the mole, but because the field-mouse had been so kind to her, she sang and entertained the mole as charmingly as she could. He was enchanted with her lovely singing voice, and the following week he invited Thumbelina and the field-mouse to supper.

The mole led them down the long, dark underground passage to his home. On the way they tripped over something cold and feathery. The mole opened an overhead skylight to see what it was. "Ha," he said. "It's nothing but a dead swallow. How unfortunate to be a bird! All they can do is chirp all summer — and when winter comes, they die of starvation." Then he kicked the bird aside with one of his short, blunt legs.



But Thumbelina felt sorry for the bird, and could not stop thinking about it — even when the mole started telling her jokes. On the way home that night, she put her head for an instant against the bird's breast, then jumped back in surprise. Very, very faintly, she could hear the swallow's heart ticking away!



After the field-mouse had gone to bed, Thumbelina tip-toed back down the passage. She wrapped the swallow in a blanket made of hay and held out some water on a leaf for him to drink.

At last the swallow spoke, "Thank you, my sweet child. I feel much better now. Soon I shall be strong enough to fly."

"No, no, it's cold outside — you would freeze. You must stay here."

So Thumbelina tended the sick swallow all through the winter. And all through the winter she told stories to the field-mouse and sang sweetly to the mole.

During the cold, dark months,

Thumbelina dreamed of summer, and longed to be out in the open air again. But on the first day of spring, the field-mouse greeted her with some news.

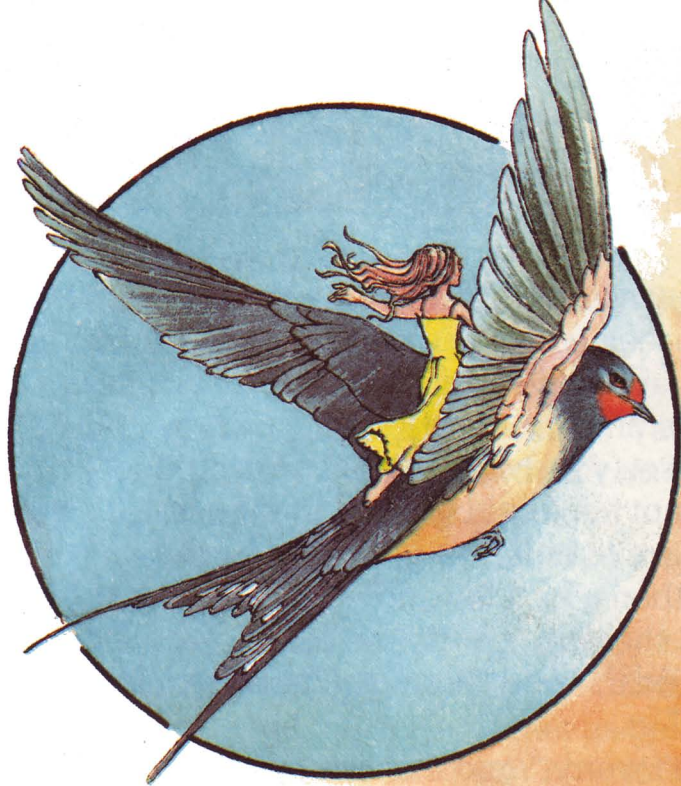
"You're a lucky girl, Thumbelina. Mole wants to marry you!"

Thumbelina burst into tears. "But I don't want to marry. The mole is so old! And if I married him I'd have to live underground with him for ever!"

"Fiddlesticks!" squeaked the field-mouse. "He'll make you an excellent husband. Any more nonsense and I'll bite you with my white teeth!"







The mole came visiting every day, and Thumbelina grew more and more desperate. The wedding was less than a week away. Then late one night, when she tip-toed off to nurse the swallow, she found him stretching and flexing his wings. "At last I feel strong enough to fly, Thumbelina! You have saved my life. Is there anything I can do to thank you?"

"Oh, please take me with you!" cried Thumbelina, scarcely daring to hope. "Help me escape from the mole!"

"Climb on to my back then, and we will fly far away from here."

As the dawn broke, they opened the skylight in the passage and flew out into the rising sun. Up and away they soared, further and further, until they reached a warm land where it was already summer. At last they landed in a field of brilliant flowers. There the swallow set Thumbelina down beside a beautiful, red and yellow bud.

"What a lovely creature!" said a young man's voice. "Do stay here with us."



Thumbelina looked up in astonishment to see a handsome prince, no bigger than herself, standing in the flower. Bowing deeply, the prince took off his golden crown and placed it on her head, then asked Thumbelina, "Will you stay and be our Queen of the Flowers?"

She hesitated . . . then fairies came from each flower in the field, bearing her gifts. One — the smallest and sweetest of all the fairies — brought a pair of wings, so that Thumbelina could fly as they did. Then the prince asked again, "Will you stay here? And be my bride?"

Thumbelina answered, "Yes, of course." And the swallow sang for them as sweetly as he knew how, the whole summer long.





# WHERE CAN AN

One day Morris the Elephant was playing hide-and-seek with some of his friends. Morris did not like playing hide-and-seek because he was always the first one to be found.

"We see you, Morris," said all his friends.

"It's not fair," said Morris. "I'm too big. I don't have a place to hide."

Just then a bird flew down. "The hunters are coming!" she said. "Everyone hide!"

"Oh dear," said Morris. "There's no place I can hide."

"Don't worry," said the tiger. "If you lie down in the tall grass, the hunters won't see you. Watch me!"

When the tiger lay down in the grass, his stripes looked like shadows and he seemed to disappear. But when Morris tried it, the other animals could still see most of him.

"Do I look like shadows?" called Morris.

"No," they answered. "You look like an elephant lying in the grass."

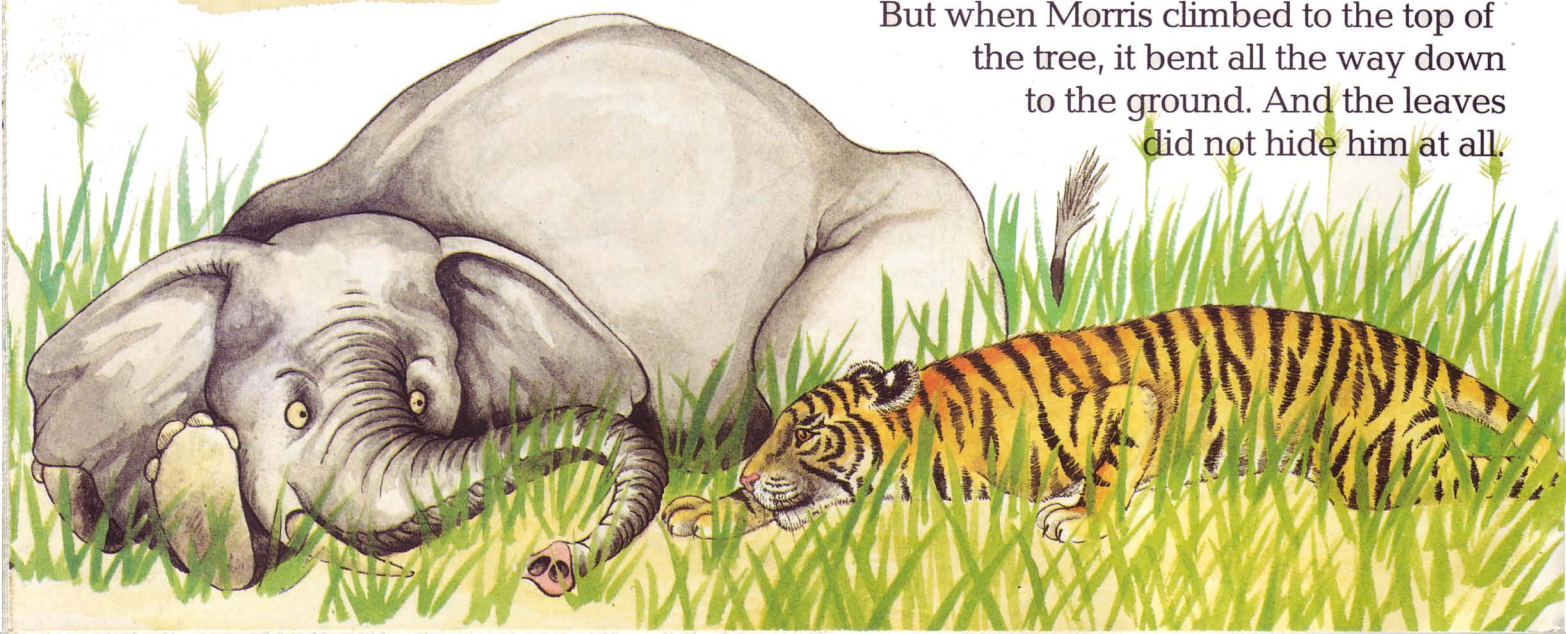
"Oh, what can I do?" Morris cried. "I'm too big to hide!"

A monkey heard Morris and came to help.

"Just climb to the top of the tree," she said.

"The hunters will never think of looking for you there." When the monkey climbed to the top of the tree, she was hidden by the leaves.

But when Morris climbed to the top of the tree, it bent all the way down to the ground. And the leaves did not hide him at all.





# ELEPHANT HIDE?

"This just won't do," said Morris. "But thanks anyway."

Then a tortoise spoke up. "Stay very still," he said, "and you'll look like a stone. Watch me!"

The tortoise pulled his head and his legs and his tail into his shell and did not move.

"It's amazing!" said Morris. "You look just like a stone!"

"Of course I do," said the tortoise. "Now you try it!"

Morris pulled himself together as best he could and did not move. But no matter how much he tried, he still looked like an elephant.

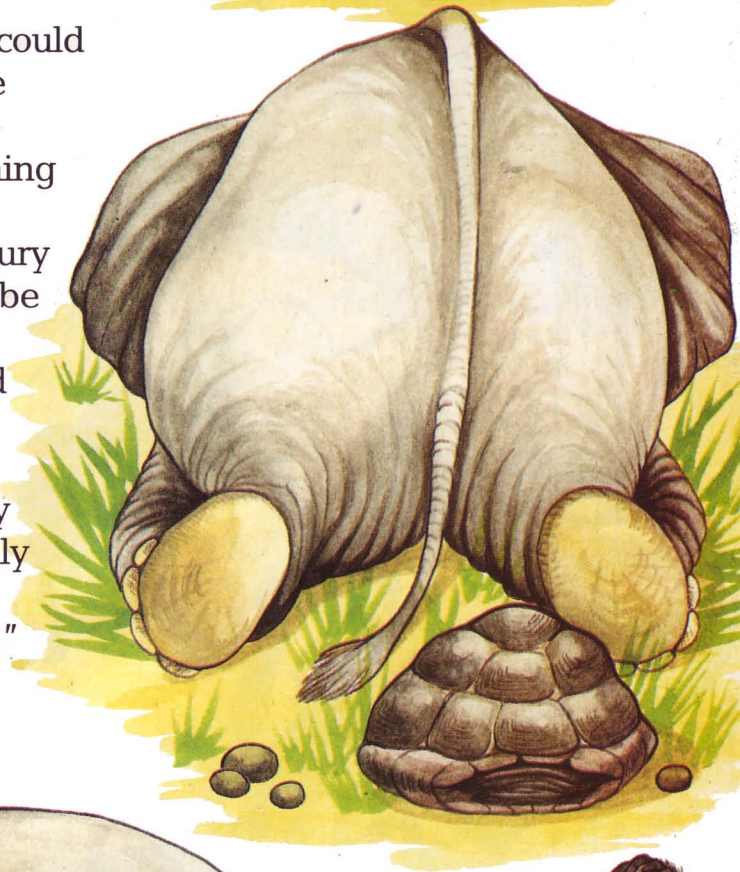
"Oh dear," he said. "The hunters are coming and I've nowhere to hide."

"It's easy to hide," said an ostrich. "Just bury your head in the sand as I do, and no-one will be able to see you."

Morris dug a big hole and buried his head in it. After about a minute he pulled his head out and began coughing.

"This won't do either," he spluttered. "My mouth gets all filled with sand. And I can hardly breathe."

"It doesn't work anyway, you silly ostrich!" said the other animals. "We can still see most of both of you."







A baboon tried to be helpful. "You can hide in my cave," he said. "It's so dark in there the hunters will never see you."

But not all of Morris could fit into the baboon's cave. Only half of him could, and the half that was left outside looked very much like the back half of an elephant.

"What *am* I going to do?" sighed Morris. "The hunters are coming and I don't have a place to hide."

"I have a few feathers I don't need," said an old parrot. "Maybe if you wear them you'll look like a bird."

Morris rolled in some sticky mud, then jumped into the pile of feathers.

"There," he said, standing up. "How do I look?"

The other animals laughed and laughed. "You don't look like a bird at all," they said. "You look like an elephant with feathers."





Now Morris was very upset. He sat down and began to cry.

"There, there," said the other animals. "We'll think of something!"

They scraped off the mud and feathers, and all night long they sat with Morris, trying to think of a way for him to hide from the hunters. But no-one could think of anything.

About dawn, the little bird came back again.

"The hunters are almost here," she said.

"Why aren't you hiding?"

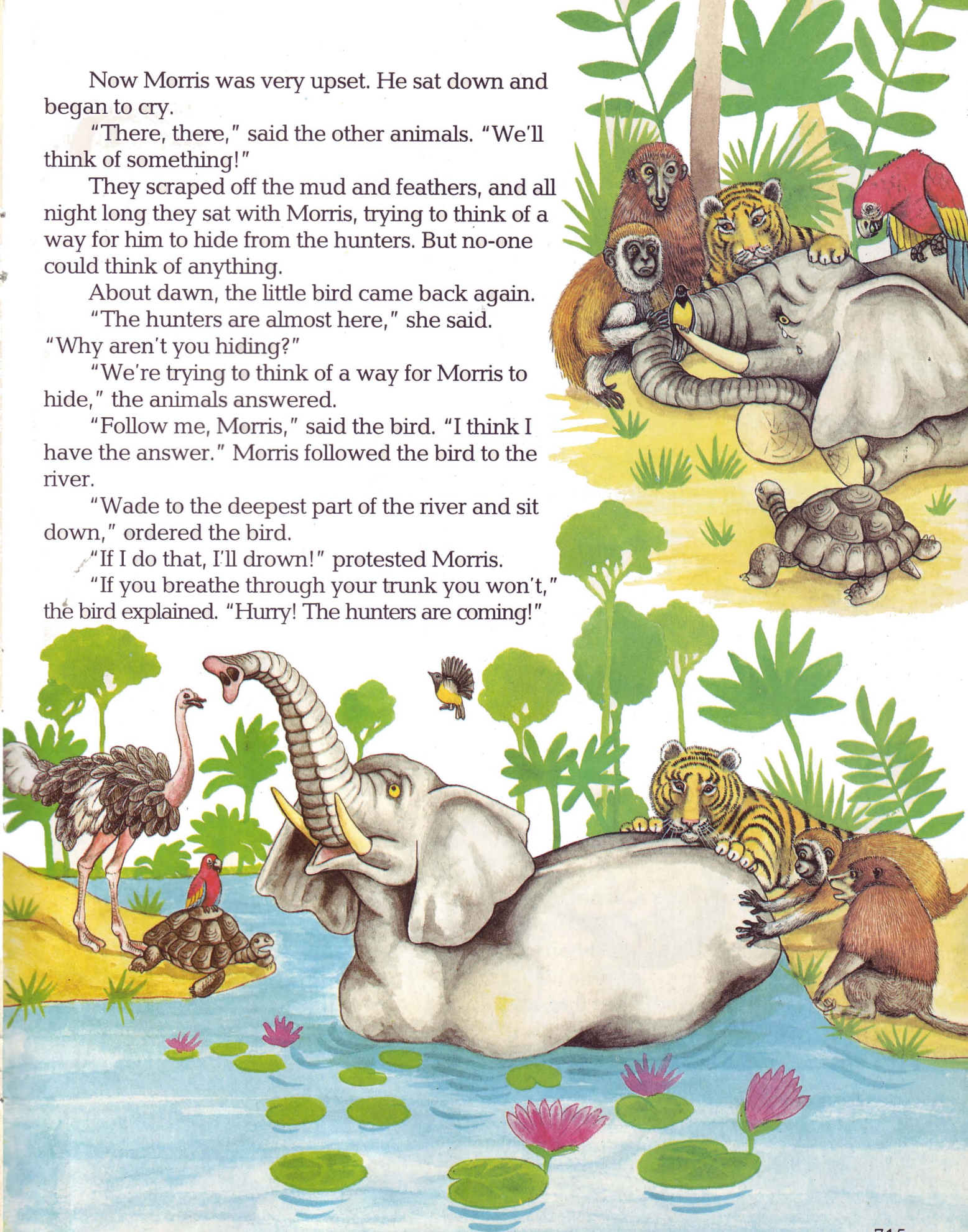
"We're trying to think of a way for Morris to hide," the animals answered.

"Follow me, Morris," said the bird. "I think I have the answer." Morris followed the bird to the river.

"Wade to the deepest part of the river and sit down," ordered the bird.

"If I do that, I'll drown!" protested Morris.

"If you breathe through your trunk you won't," the bird explained. "Hurry! The hunters are coming!"





Morris sat down, and not a moment too soon. For just then the hunters came paddling up in their canoe.

All the animals watched from their hiding places as the hunters paddled closer and closer to the spot where Morris sat in the water with his trunk just showing through the surface.

The little bird flew out and landed on Morris's trunk, and when she did, her feathers tickled Morris and he sneezed. "A-a-achoo!"

The hunters stopped and stared at the little bird, perched on what looked like a log sticking out of the water.

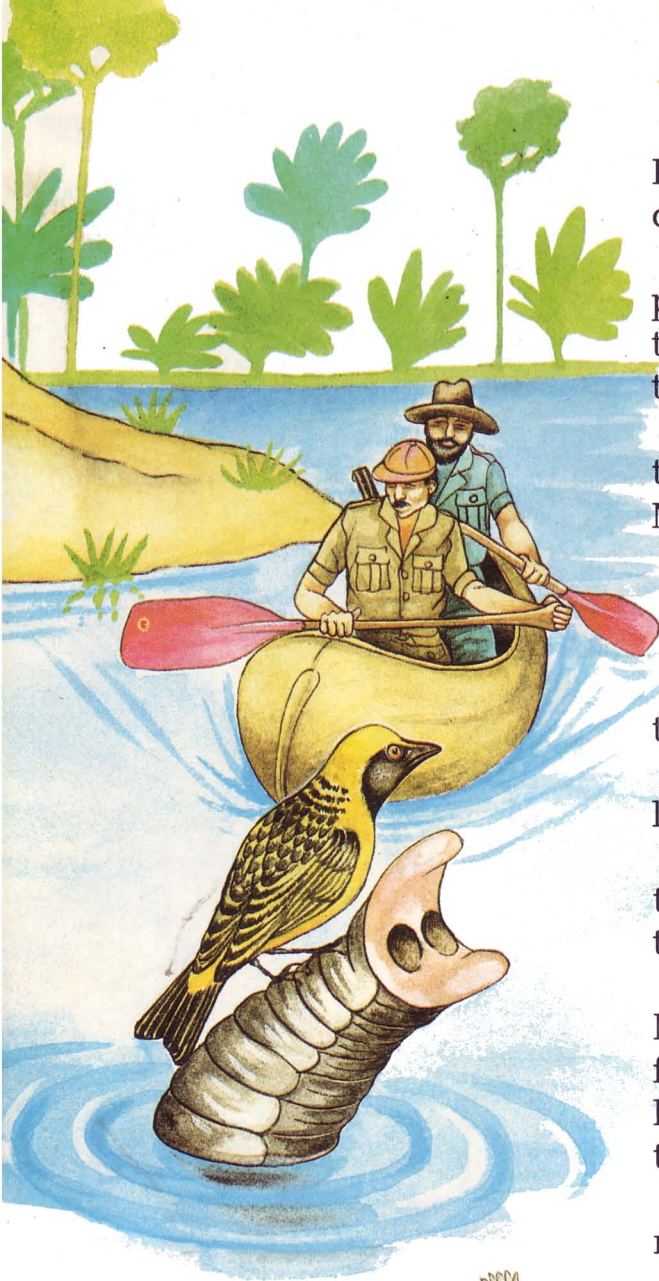
"Did you hear that bird sneeze?" asked one of the hunters.

"Yes," said the other hunter. "It sounded just like an elephant!"

Then they both laughed loudly and went on their way until they disappeared around a bend in the river.

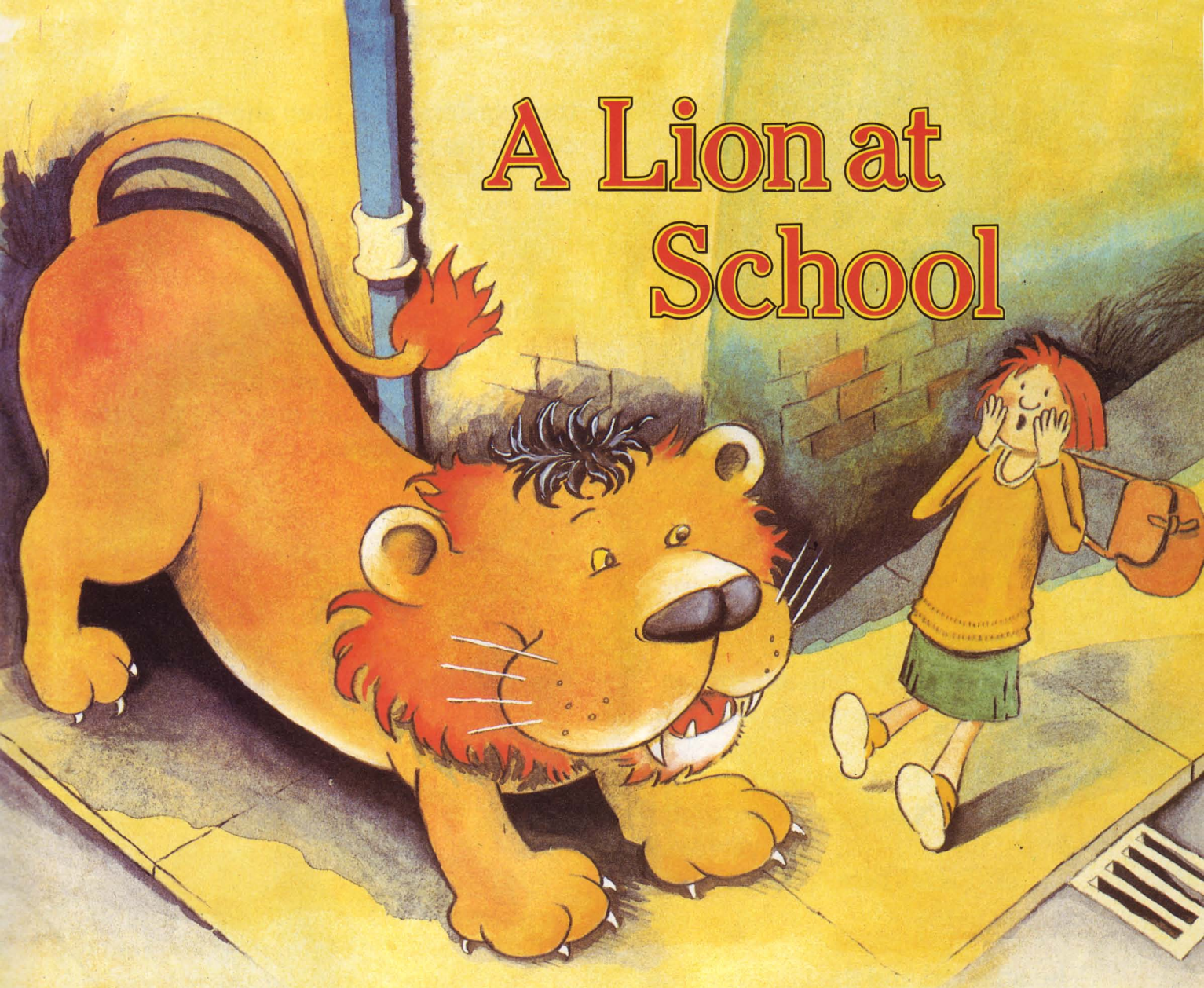
All of the animals were very happy. And Morris was especially happy because he had finally found a place to hide. They danced and laughed all day, and when the other animals were too tired to continue, Morris was still going strong.

"Come on," he shouted happily. "Just one more game! Let's play hide-and-seek!"





# A Lion at School



Once upon a time there was a little girl who did not like going to school. She always set off late. Then she had to hurry, but she never hurried fast enough.

One morning she was hurrying along as usual when she turned a corner and there stood a lion, waiting for her. He stared at her with yellow eyes. He growled, and when he growled the little girl could see that his teeth were as sharp as skewers and knives.

He growled, "I am going to eat you up, unless you take me to school with you."

"Oh, dear," said the little girl. "My

teacher says we mustn't bring pets to school."

"I'm not a pet," said the lion. He growled again, and she saw that his tail swished from side to side in anger — *swish! swash!*

"All right then," said the little girl. "But you must let me ride on your back to school."

"Very well," said the lion. He crouched down on the pavement and the little girl climbed on to his back. She held on by his mane, and she rode to school on the lion.





the register: Noil. Then she finished calling the register.

"Betty Small," she said.

"Yes," said the little girl.

"Noil," said the teacher.

"Yes," said the lion. He mumbled, opening his mouth as little as possible, so that the teacher should not see his teeth as sharp as skewers and knives.

Then the lion sat down by the little girl, as good as gold.

The little girl and the lion went into the classroom just as the teacher was calling the register. The teacher stopped when she saw them. She said to the little girl, "You know you are not allowed to bring pets to school."

The lion began to swish his tail — *swish! swash!* The little girl said, "This is not a pet. This is my friend who is coming to school with me."

The teacher said, "What is his name then?"

"Noil," said the little girl. She knew it would be no good to tell the teacher that her friend was a lion, so she turned his name backwards: LION — NOIL.

The teacher wrote the name down in







The little girl said, "I don't like playing because some of the big boys are so big and rough. They knock you over without meaning to."

The lion growled,

"They wouldn't knock *me* over."

"There's one big boy — the very biggest," said the little girl, "his name is Jack Tall. He knocks me over on purpose."

"Which is he?" said the lion. "Point him out to me."

The little girl pointed out Jack Tall to the lion.

"Ah!" said the lion.

"So that's Jack Tall."

Just then Jack Tall came running towards the little girl. He was running in circles, closer and closer to the little girl.

"Go away," said the lion. "You might knock my friend over. Go away."

"Shan't," said Jack Tall.

At playtime the little girl and the lion went into the playground. The children all stopped their games to stare at the lion. Then they went on again. The little girl stood in a corner of the playground, with the lion beside her.

"Why don't we play like the others?" the lion asked.







The little girl got behind the lion. The lion began to swish his tail: *swish! swash!* Jack Tall was running closer and closer. The lion growled. Then Jack Tall saw the lion's teeth as sharp as skewers and knives. He stopped running. He stood still. He stared.

The lion opened his mouth wider — so wide that Jack Tall could see his throat, deep and dark like a tunnel to go into. Jack Tall went pale.

The lion roared. He roared and he *roared* and he ROARED.

All the teachers came out to see what the matter was. All the children stopped playing and stuck their fingers in their ears. And Jack Tall turned and ran and ran and ran — out through the playground — out through the school gates — along the streets. He never stopped running until he got home to his mother.

The little girl came out from behind the lion.

"Well," she said, "I don't think much of *him*. I shall never be scared of *him* again."

"No," said the lion, and began to walk off. The little girl called after him, but the lion did not answer. He went.

The little girl did not see the lion again; but she did not mind that. She liked school now.







# CAPTAIN BONES

On a warm summer's evening, a long, long time ago, a young boy called Pip sat on the steps of the Crow's Nest Inn, as the church clock struck ten. Inside the inn Uncle Ned sat chatting to a stranger, while Pip listened to three fishermen telling a fantastic tale.

"Bones," said the tallest man. "That was his name — Captain William Bones. Hanged a hundred years ago to this day, he was, for luring ships on to these rocks, and murdering the crews and stealing their cargoes. He's buried over there in the churchyard — and some say his ghost still walks!"

"Has, has anyone ever seen him?" asked Pip. "Aye, lad, I have! And a horrible sight

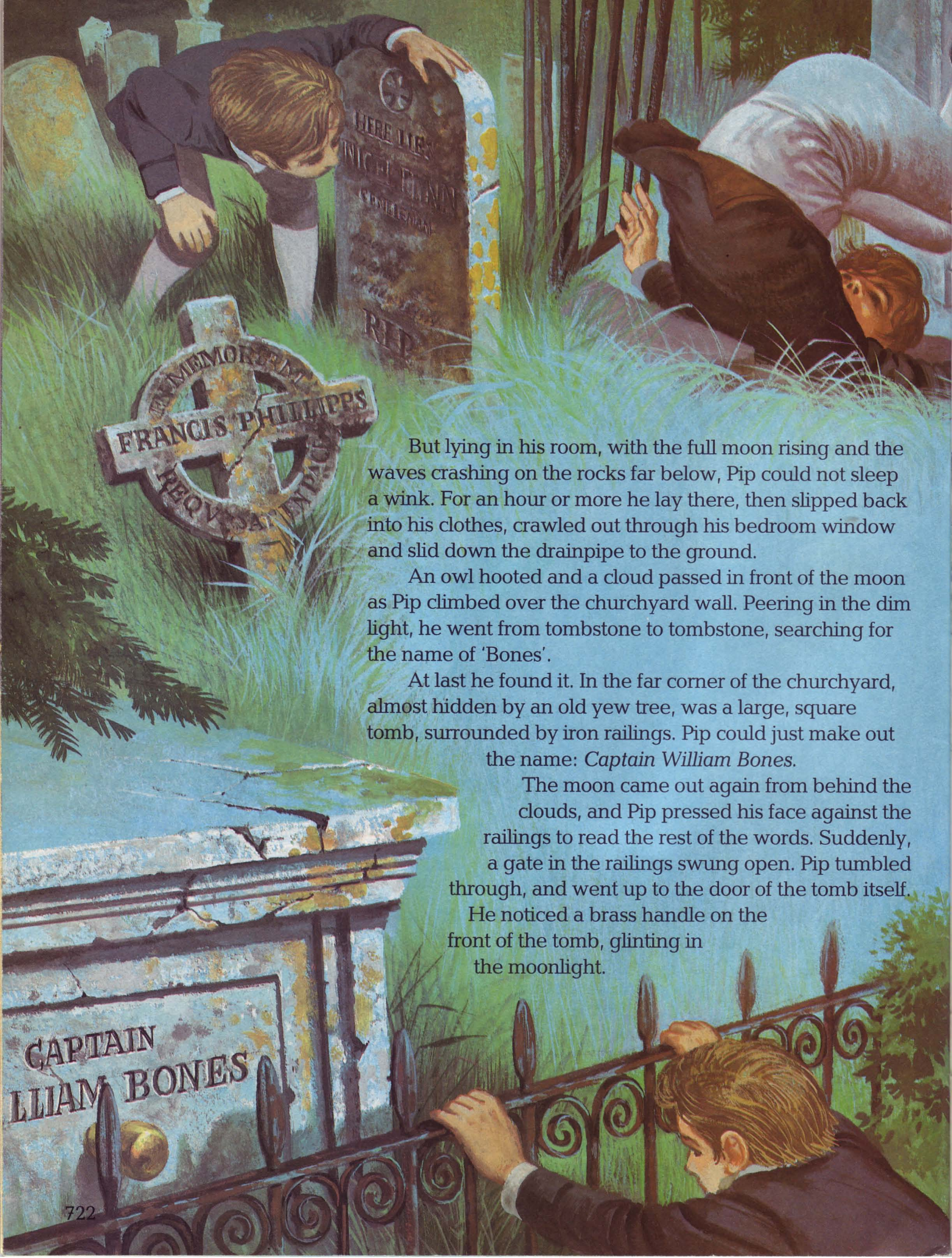
he is, with the chains he was hanged in, draped round his neck!"

Pip was so excited that he jumped up from the doorstep. The tall man just laughed. "He might even walk tonight, young Pip. He often does, on full moons! So you'd best keep well out of the way!"

The three fishermen swigged down the rest of their ale, and left the inn. Pip took the tankards back inside. The stranger had already disappeared and Uncle Ned was sweeping out the bar. Pip wiped down the tables, blew out the flames in the oil-lamps and went upstairs. "Night, Uncle Ned!"

"Good night, Pip. Sleep well — and pleasant dreams!"





But lying in his room, with the full moon rising and the waves crashing on the rocks far below, Pip could not sleep a wink. For an hour or more he lay there, then slipped back into his clothes, crawled out through his bedroom window and slid down the drainpipe to the ground.

An owl hooted and a cloud passed in front of the moon as Pip climbed over the churchyard wall. Peering in the dim light, he went from tombstone to tombstone, searching for the name of 'Bones'.

At last he found it. In the far corner of the churchyard, almost hidden by an old yew tree, was a large, square tomb, surrounded by iron railings. Pip could just make out the name: *Captain William Bones*.

The moon came out again from behind the clouds, and Pip pressed his face against the railings to read the rest of the words. Suddenly, a gate in the railings swung open. Pip tumbled through, and went up to the door of the tomb itself.

He noticed a brass handle on the front of the tomb, glinting in the moonlight.





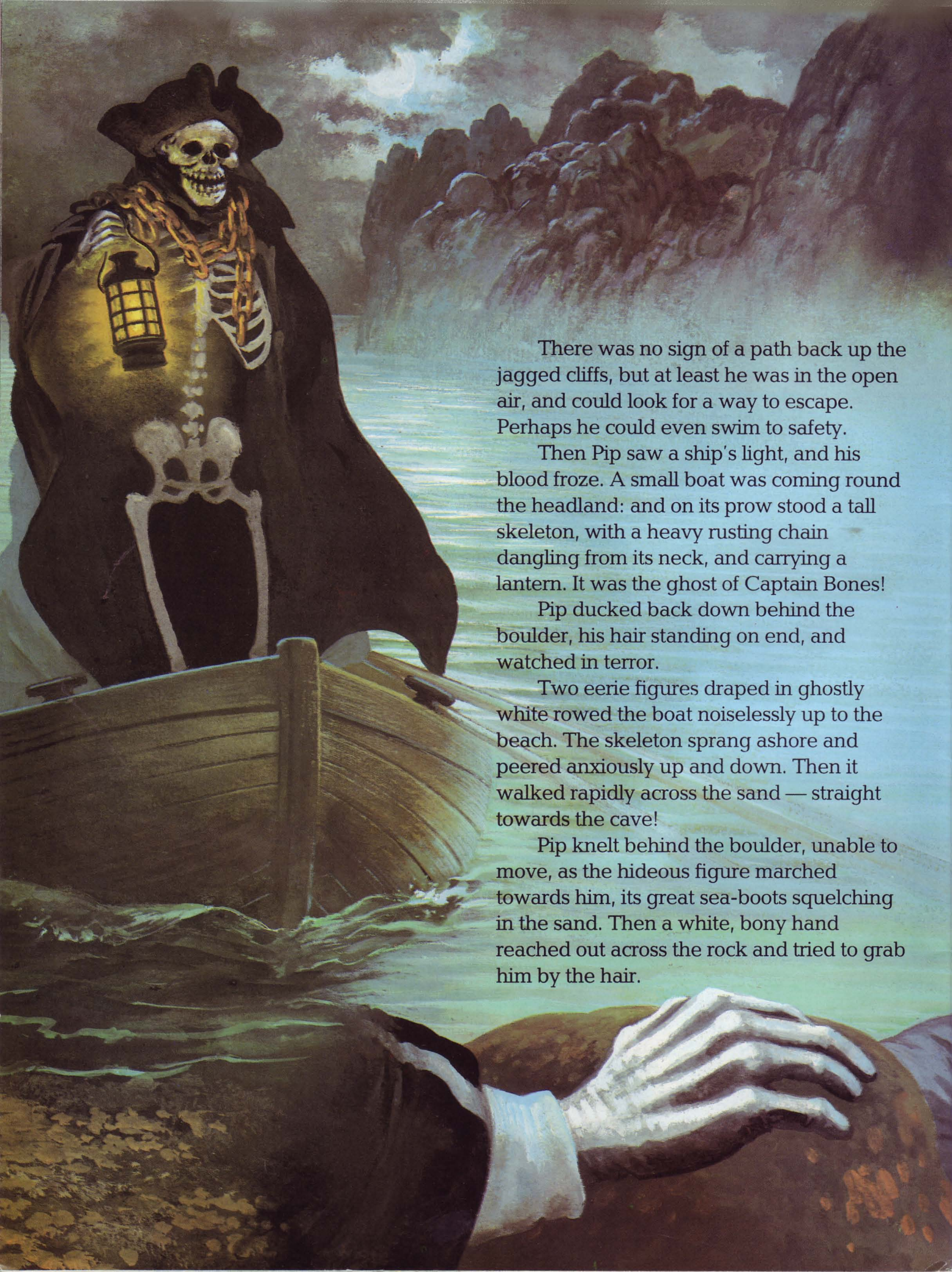
Scarcely daring to breathe, Pip grasped the heavy handle and pulled it firmly. The massive stone slab creaked open. To his amazement he found himself not inside the sealed tomb, but at the top of a narrow flight of steps.

The air was musty and a bat flashed past him into the churchyard, skimming through his hair. Pip shuddered, but he could not stop now. He crept silently down the steps, a shaft of moonlight guiding his way. Then suddenly, with a hollow thud, the tomb door swung closed behind him. Pip was trapped in the dark!

All he could do was follow the steps down. They were mossy in places, and very slippery, but he edged his way steadily downward, gripping tightly to a rope fixed to the wall. Down and down he went, deep into the earth, until at last he heard the sound of the sea.

Then he saw moonlight sparkling on white surf, and found himself in the mouth of a cave, half closed by a large boulder. Pip stepped out into a rocky inlet.





There was no sign of a path back up the jagged cliffs, but at least he was in the open air, and could look for a way to escape. Perhaps he could even swim to safety.

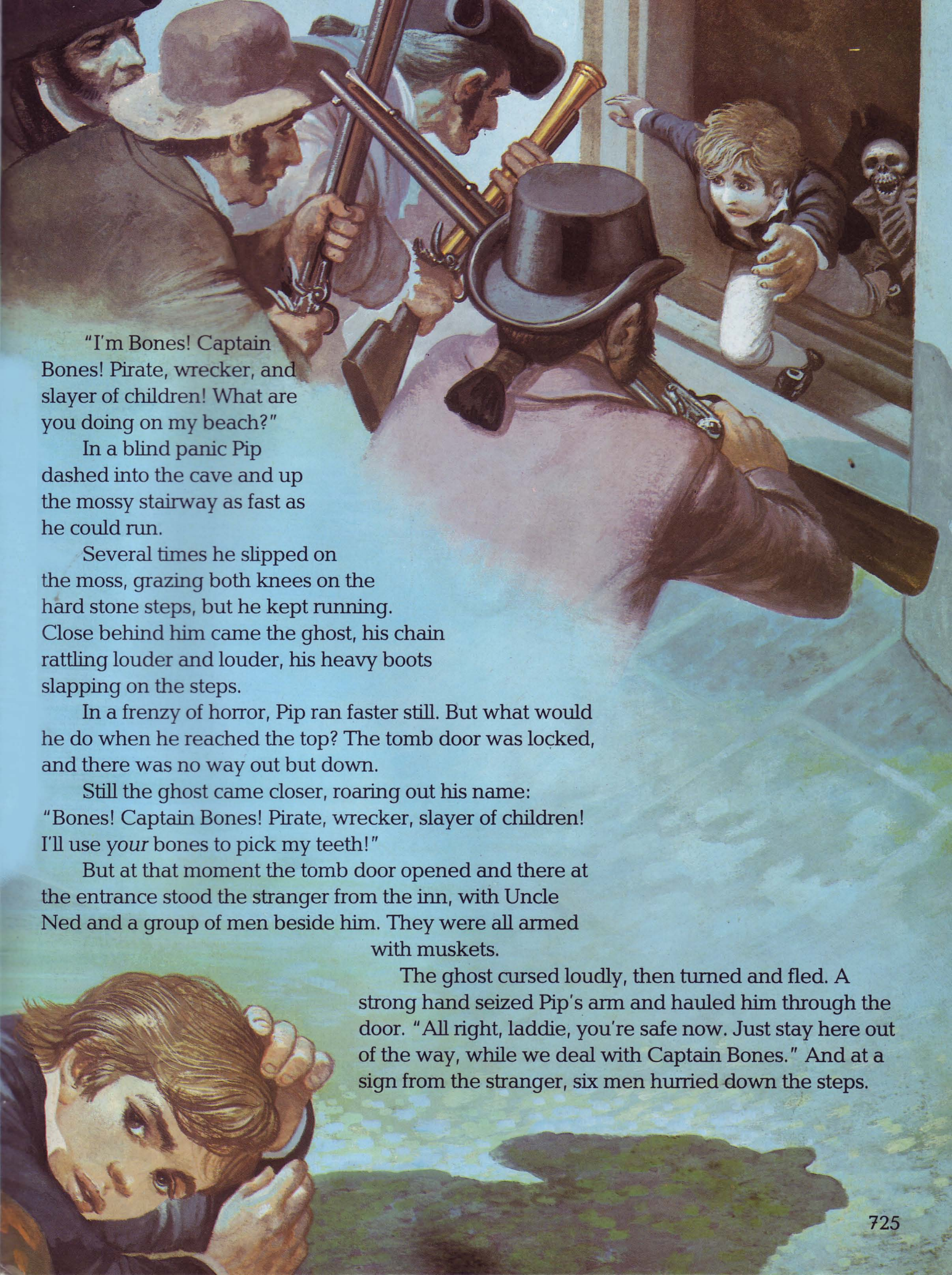
Then Pip saw a ship's light, and his blood froze. A small boat was coming round the headland: and on its prow stood a tall skeleton, with a heavy rusting chain dangling from its neck, and carrying a lantern. It was the ghost of Captain Bones!

Pip ducked back down behind the boulder, his hair standing on end, and watched in terror.

Two eerie figures draped in ghostly white rowed the boat noiselessly up to the beach. The skeleton sprang ashore and peered anxiously up and down. Then it walked rapidly across the sand — straight towards the cave!

Pip knelt behind the boulder, unable to move, as the hideous figure marched towards him, its great sea-boots squelching in the sand. Then a white, bony hand reached out across the rock and tried to grab him by the hair.





"I'm Bones! Captain Bones! Pirate, wrecker, and slayer of children! What are you doing on my beach?"

In a blind panic Pip dashed into the cave and up the mossy stairway as fast as he could run.

Several times he slipped on the moss, grazing both knees on the hard stone steps, but he kept running. Close behind him came the ghost, his chain rattling louder and louder, his heavy boots slapping on the steps.

In a frenzy of horror, Pip ran faster still. But what would he do when he reached the top? The tomb door was locked, and there was no way out but down.

Still the ghost came closer, roaring out his name: "Bones! Captain Bones! Pirate, wrecker, slayer of children! I'll use *your* bones to pick my teeth!"

But at that moment the tomb door opened and there at the entrance stood the stranger from the inn, with Uncle Ned and a group of men beside him. They were all armed with muskets.

The ghost cursed loudly, then turned and fled. A strong hand seized Pip's arm and hauled him through the door. "All right, laddie, you're safe now. Just stay here out of the way, while we deal with Captain Bones." And at a sign from the stranger, six men hurried down the steps.





Pip lay under the yew tree, gasping and panting until he caught his breath. Then Uncle Ned explained what had happened. "That was no ghost, Pip. These men are brandy smugglers — and the stranger is a customs man. He's been hunting the gang for weeks, and was listening to the stories at the inn tonight just as carefully as you. When he heard that the 'ghost' might walk, he summoned his men — and asked me to come along too."

A few minutes later, three dejected figures wrapped up in sheets were hustled up the steps from the tomb. The tallest man wore a vast black sheet, with a brilliant white skeleton painted on it. And when the customs men pulled the sheet away, there stood the fisherman Pip had listened to outside the inn, not three hours before.

The church clock struck one as Pip and his uncle crossed the cobbled street back to the old inn door. Uncle Ned led Pip in, and shot the bolts behind them.

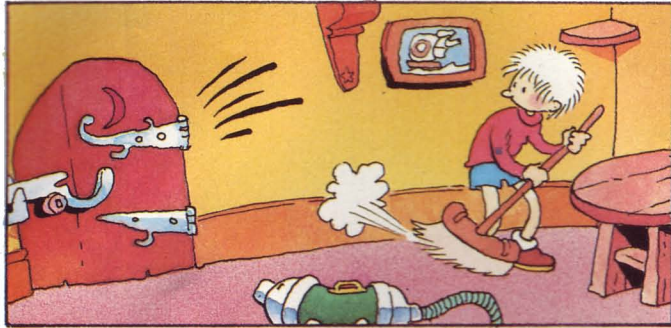
Pip sat quietly on the side of his bed, watching his uncle fasten the window tightly with a piece of rope. "I'm not having you climb out of there again!" he said. Pip did not really mind at all, for the curses of Captain Bones were still ringing in his ears, and he was glad to be safe. And at last, with the owls hooting in the churchyard, and the waves breaking on the rocks below, he fell fast asleep.



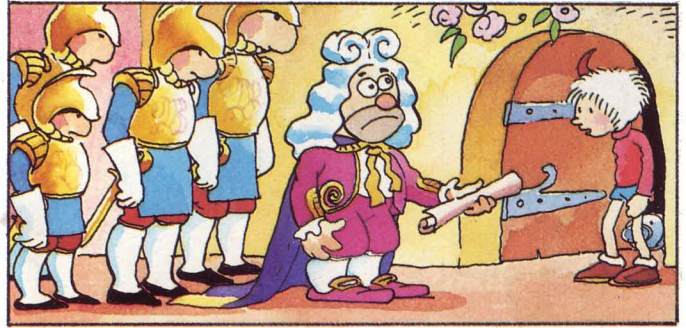


# ALDO

in Arcadia.



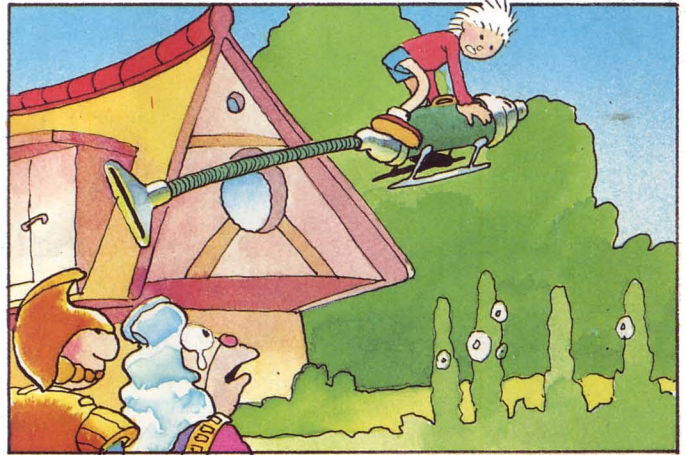
Aldo was very busy one day, when there was a loud knock at the door.



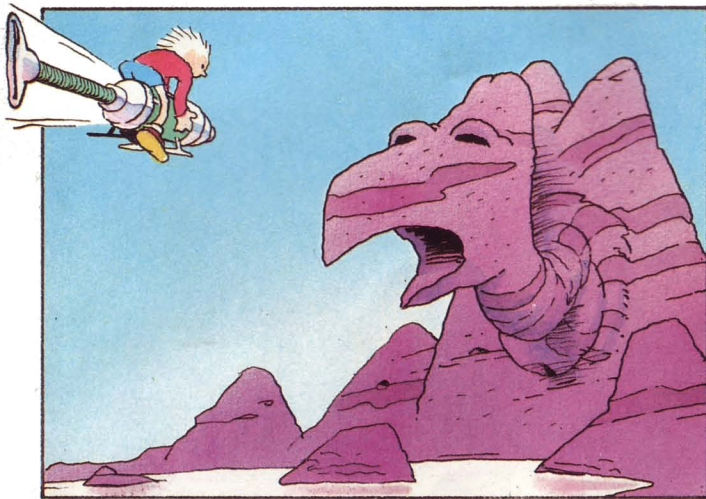
"Aldo you must help. The Princess has been kidnapped. Look at this ransom note."



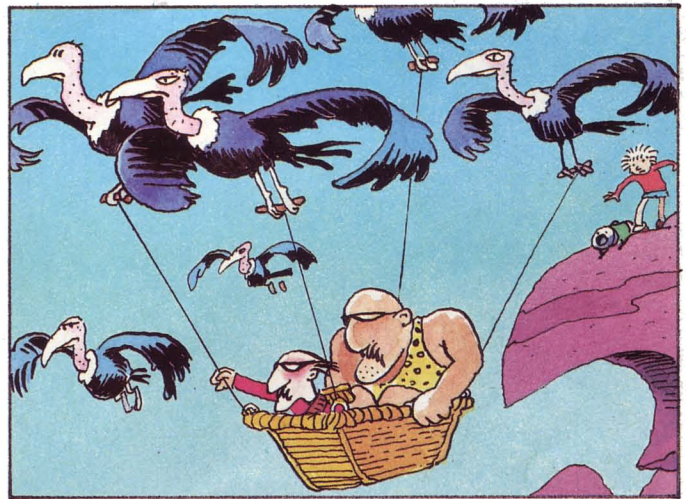
"Pay us £10 if you want the Princess back, signed the Grip Brothers, Black Mountain."



"Don't worry, your majesty, I'll get her back, and I won't need £10!"

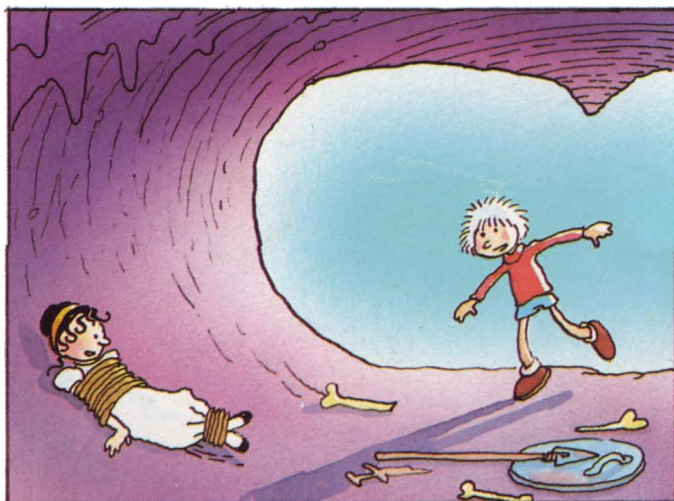


"Quick, vacuum, over there. That must be Black Mountain. Land on top of it."



"Look, vacuum! Those vultures are carrying the Grip Brothers. But where's the Princess?"

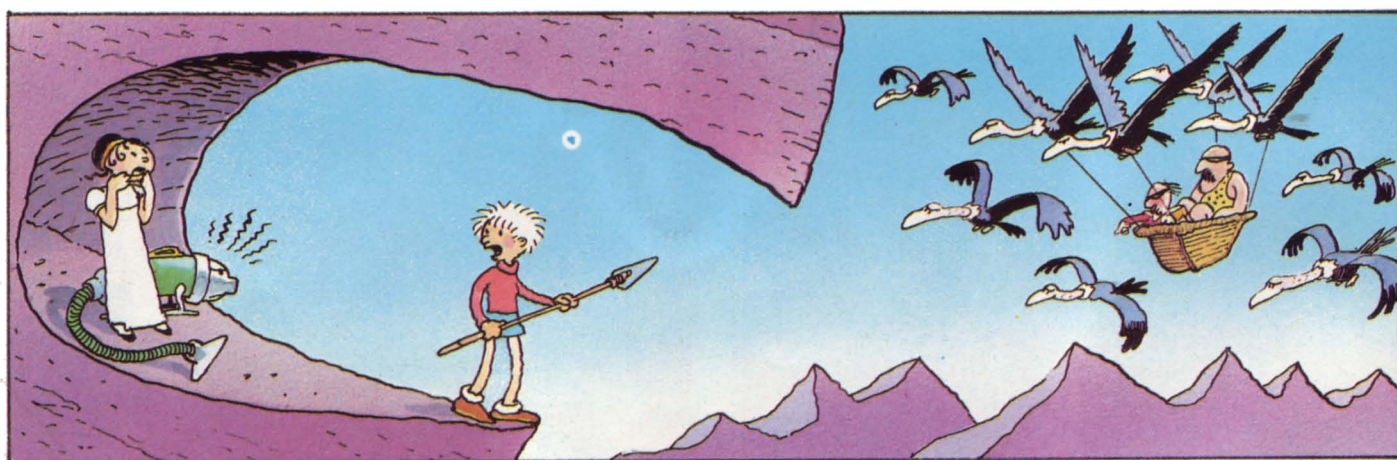




"There she is! Princess, are you all right?"  
 "I'm fine now you've arrived, Aldo."

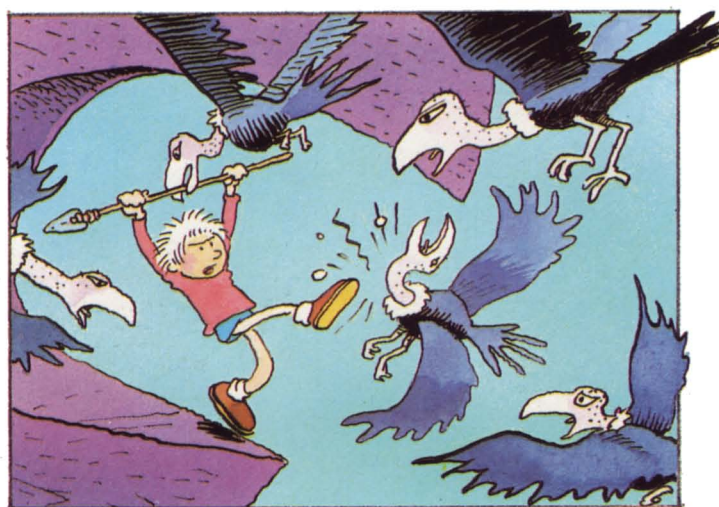


"Oh Aldo, how can we escape?"  
 "Vacuum'll take care of that, Princess."

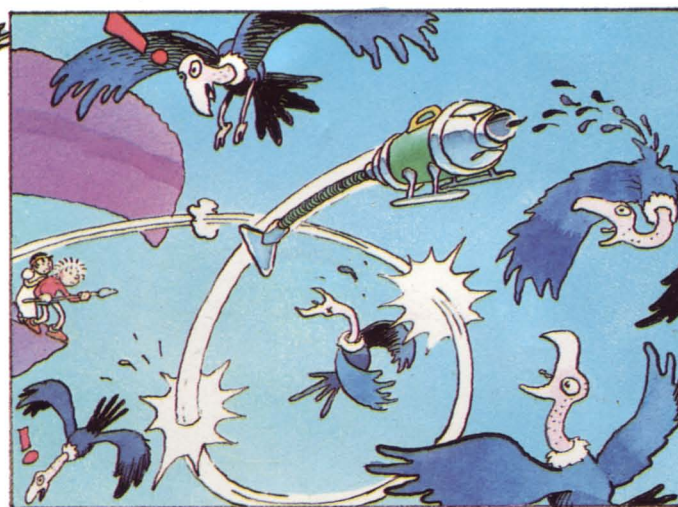


"Look out, Aldo. The Grip Brothers are coming back. What will we do now?"

"Don't worry, Princess. They won't get near you again. I'll stop them."

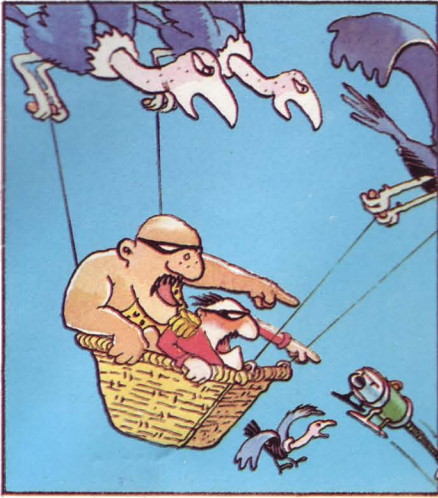


"Clear off, you bald-headed birds, or I'll get really cross."



"Look, Aldo, vacuum must be angry. He's getting quite ferocious."

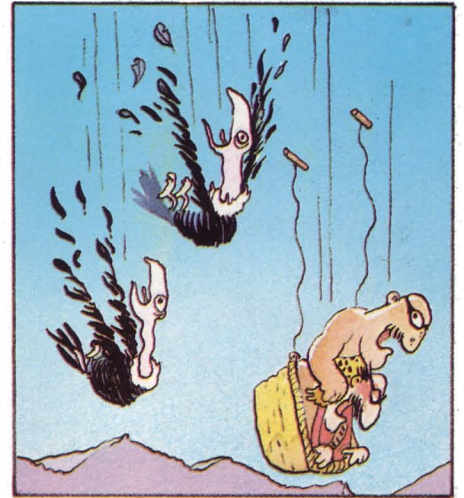




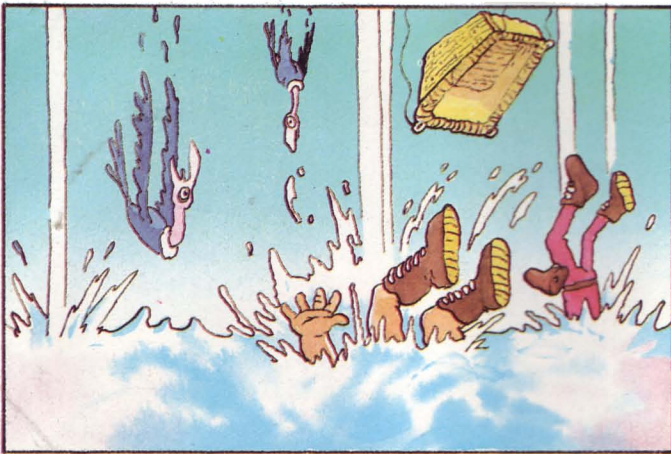
"Attack, you fools, attack! It's only a flying tin can."



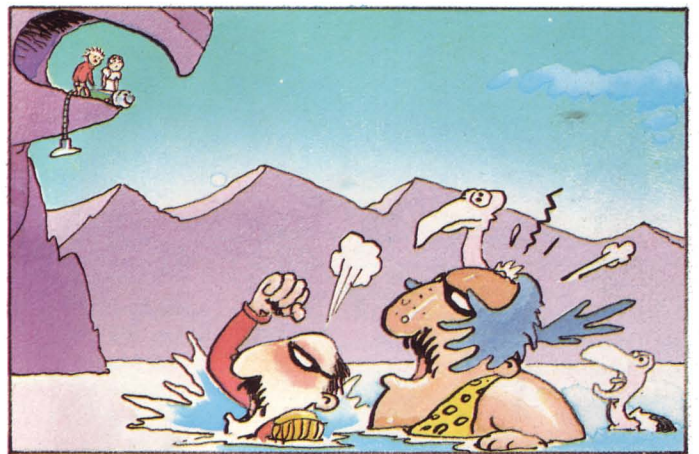
"Oh, now you've made it angry. You shouldn't have said that!"



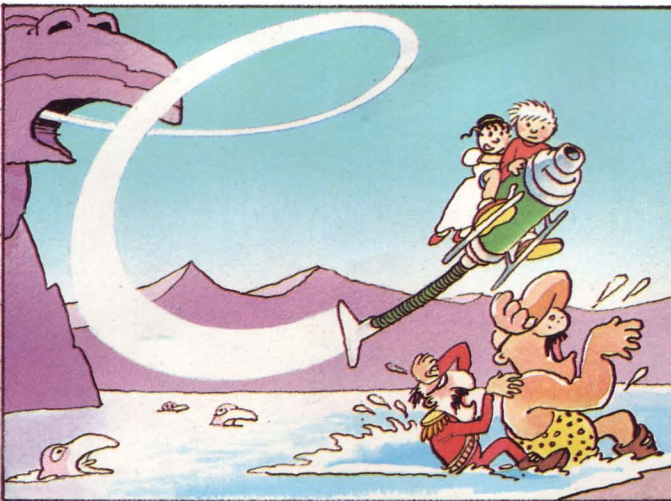
"Aargh! We're done for! We're heading for the drink!"



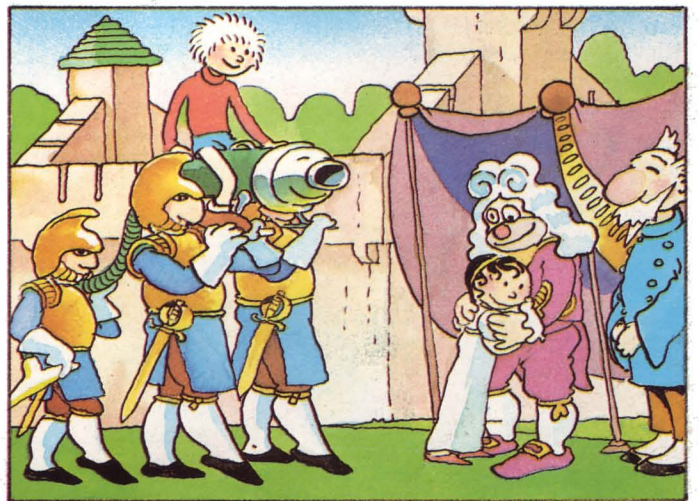
"Look, Princess. Vacuum has shown them what a flying tin can can do."



"We'll get you for this, Aldo. Just wait till we've dried off. A-a-achoo!"



"Pooh, d'you think we're afraid of a couple of wets like you, Grip Brothers?"



"Well, Aldo, I don't know how to thank you."  
"My pleasure, your majesty. It was an honour."



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