

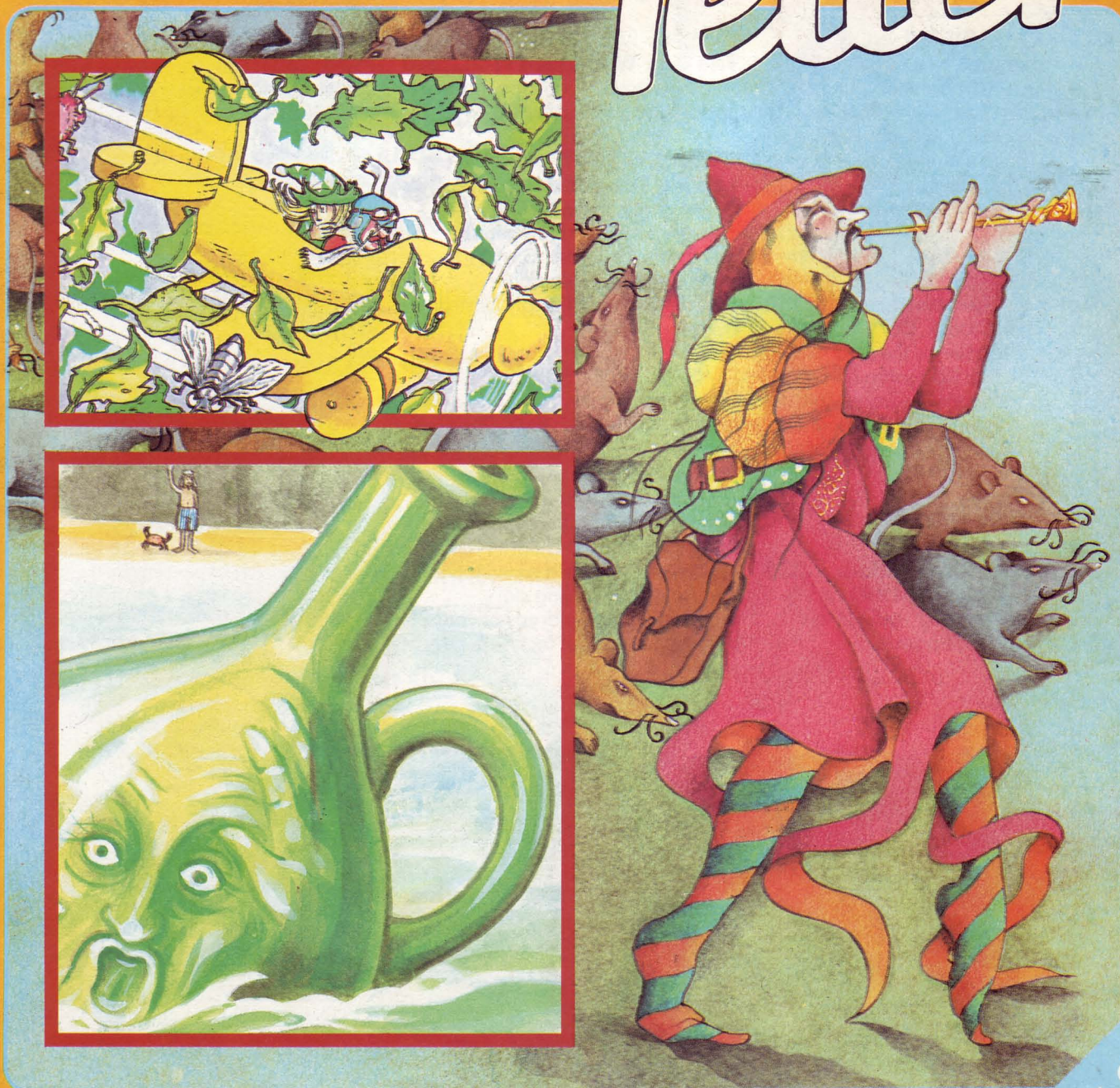
®

PART 9

# STORY

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# Teller



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# STORY Teller

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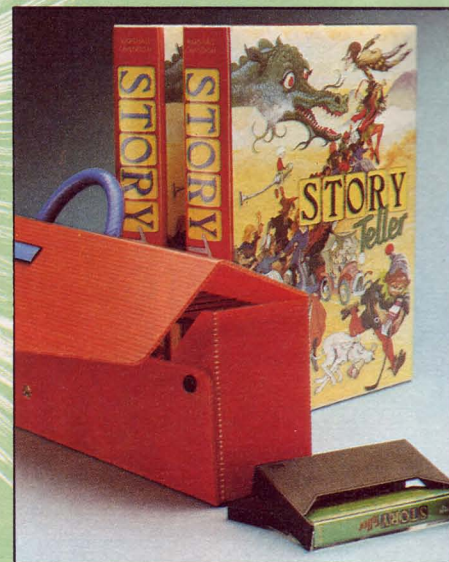
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# ABDULLA and the GENIE

Where the golden sands of Arabia touch the deep blue sea, there once lived a poor fisherman called Abdulla. Every day he would stand on the beach for hours and hours, casting his net into the water.

Most days he was lucky and caught a few fish. But on one particular day he seemed to have no luck at all. With his first throw of the net he hauled in a heap of slimy green seaweed. With his second throw he brought in a pile of broken plates and dishes. And with his third throw he dragged in a mass of black, sticky mud.

"Wait a minute," he thought as the mud oozed out of the net at his feet. "There's an old bottle. I wonder what's in it."

Abdulla tried to take out the tight-fitting stopper. After he had tugged and pulled at it for some time it suddenly popped out, and a flurry of dust shot out of the bottle. The dust quickly changed to smoke.

And then the smoke changed colour, and the colours began to make a shape — first a face, then a body. And the figure grew bigger and bigger . . . and bigger. In just a few seconds an enormous genie was towering over the frightened fisherman.





"Free at last!" boomed a voice louder than thunder. "Free after all these years! And I'm going to eat you up!"

Abdulla clutched at his head. "Why, why? What have I done to you?"

"I'll cut you into tiny pieces!" roared the genie, swatting a flock of birds as they flew past his shoulder.

"Don't do that, Master Genie," pleaded Abdulla, falling to his knees. "I didn't mean to disturb you. *Please* don't kill me!"

"I'll feed you to the fish, in little mouthfuls!" bellowed the genie, drawing out a massive curved sword and almost touching the fisherman's nose with it.

"Have mercy!" cried Abdulla. "What harm have I done?"

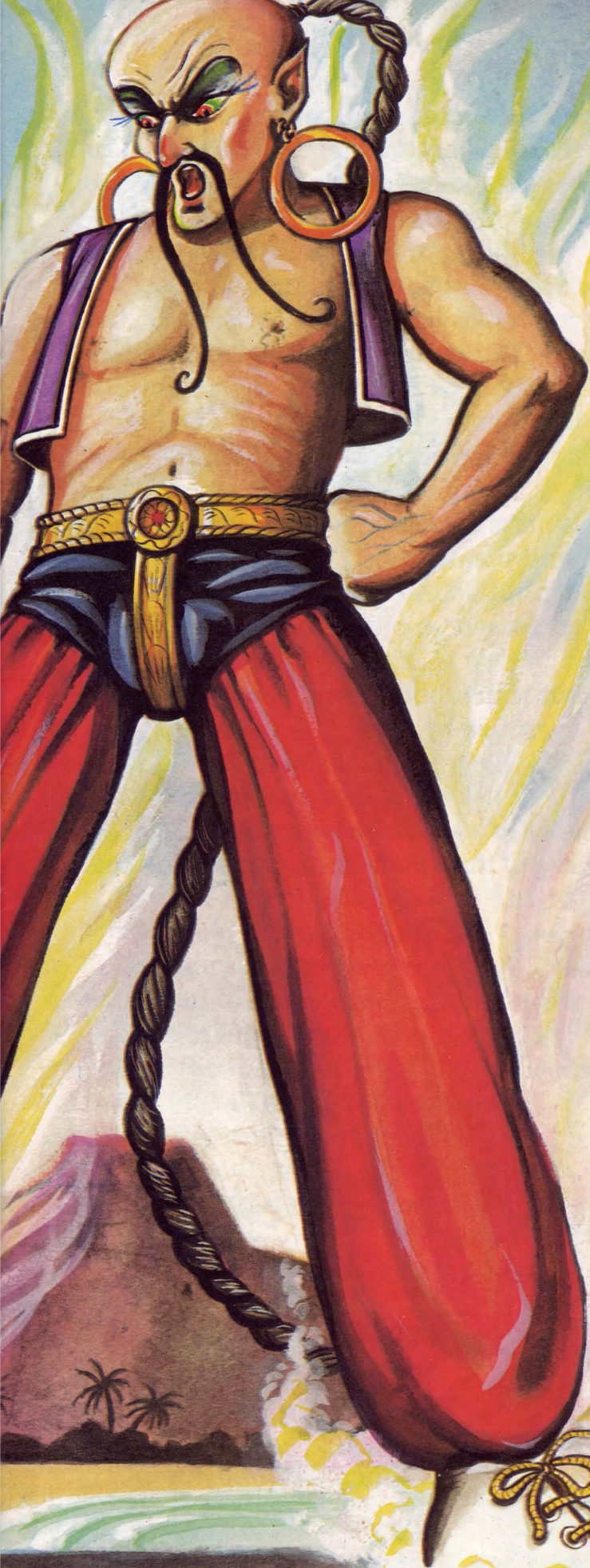
"*Silence!*" bawled the genie. And he shouted so loudly that a nearby volcano began to erupt. "Be silent and I shall tell you my reason for killing you."

And without moving his sword from Abdulla's face, the genie started his story . . .

"The Great Sultan Suleiman shut me up in that bottle as punishment for the wicked magic I worked in his kingdom. He squashed me into that horrible glass prison like a whale squeezed into an egg. Then he threw it into the sea.







"I slopped about in the dark silence for centuries. All I could hear was my own breathing. All I could feel was my own heartbeat. All I could hope for was to be fished out and set free by a fisherman.

"For the first thousand years I called out: *'Let me out! Let me out! Somebody let me out and I will grant you three wishes.'* But nobody heard me, and nobody set me free.

"For the next thousand years I called out: *'Let me out! Let me out! Somebody let me out and I will give you the whole of Arabia for a present.'* But nobody heard me, and nobody set me free.

"For the next thousand years I kept quiet and thought to myself: *'If ever I get out of this terrible bottle I shall kill the first man I see — and every man I see after him!'*"

"But Sultan Suleiman died nearly three thousand years ago!" cried Abdulla.

"Exactly!" snapped the genie. "Is it any wonder that I'm in such a bad temper?" And he gave a great shriek, and the water boiled around his ankles. He lifted his great sword and it flashed in the sun, and cut a cloud to ribbons overhead. Then he peered down to enjoy for one last time the look of terror on the little fisherman's face.





But instead of looking scared, Abdulla was standing with his hands on his hips, his head to one side, and a broad grin on his face.

"Now, now genie," he said calmly. "Stop pulling my leg and tell me where you *really* came from."

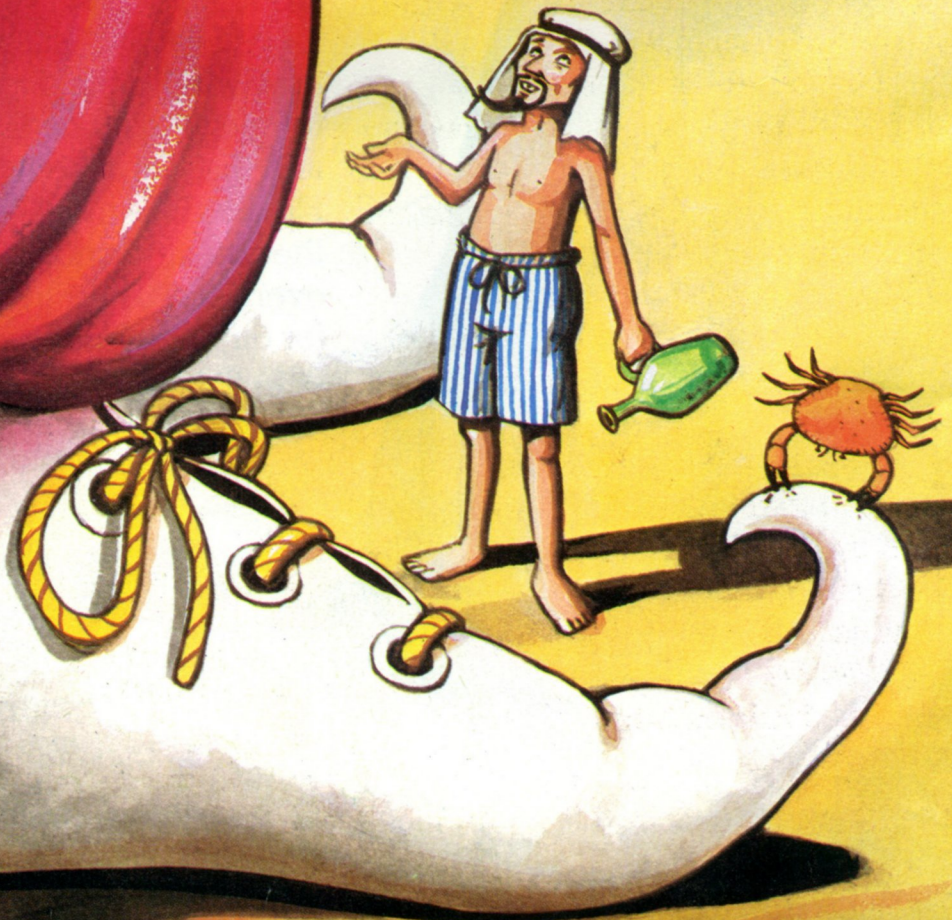
The ground shook as the genie took a deep breath. "*What?* You worm! You little beetle! *Prepare to die!*" And he lifted his sword over his head.

"Oh, come on. You must be joking. What a tall story. Tell me where you *really* came from. I was busy emptying this old bottle I pulled in and I didn't see you creep up on me."

"*What?* You ant! You earwig! I came out of that bottle! And I am going to kill *everybody.*"

"Dear, oh dear," sighed Abdulla.

"Didn't your mother ever warn you not to tell lies, especially big ones? I can see the size of that *bottle* and I can see the size of





you. You no more came out of that bottle than I did." And Abdulla made a great show of trying to get his foot down the bottle's narrow neck.

"You cockroach! You . . . you . . ."  
The genie's bottom lip began to tremble.  
"I *did* come out of that bottle. I *did*!"



"Hey! Let me out, you little worm! Let me out right now!"

"Oh no," said Abdulla, laughing.  
"You can stay in there for another thousand years if you're going to be so unpleasant."

"No! Please, no! I'll grant you three wishes if you let me out again. Open this bottle at once, you ant!"

Abdulla leaned back and with all his strength threw the bottle as far as he could out to sea. "I'll give you all Arabia!" shrieked the genie as the bottle flew through the air. Then the bottle fell — *plop* — back into the water. And no sound could be heard except for the waves breaking gently on the shore.

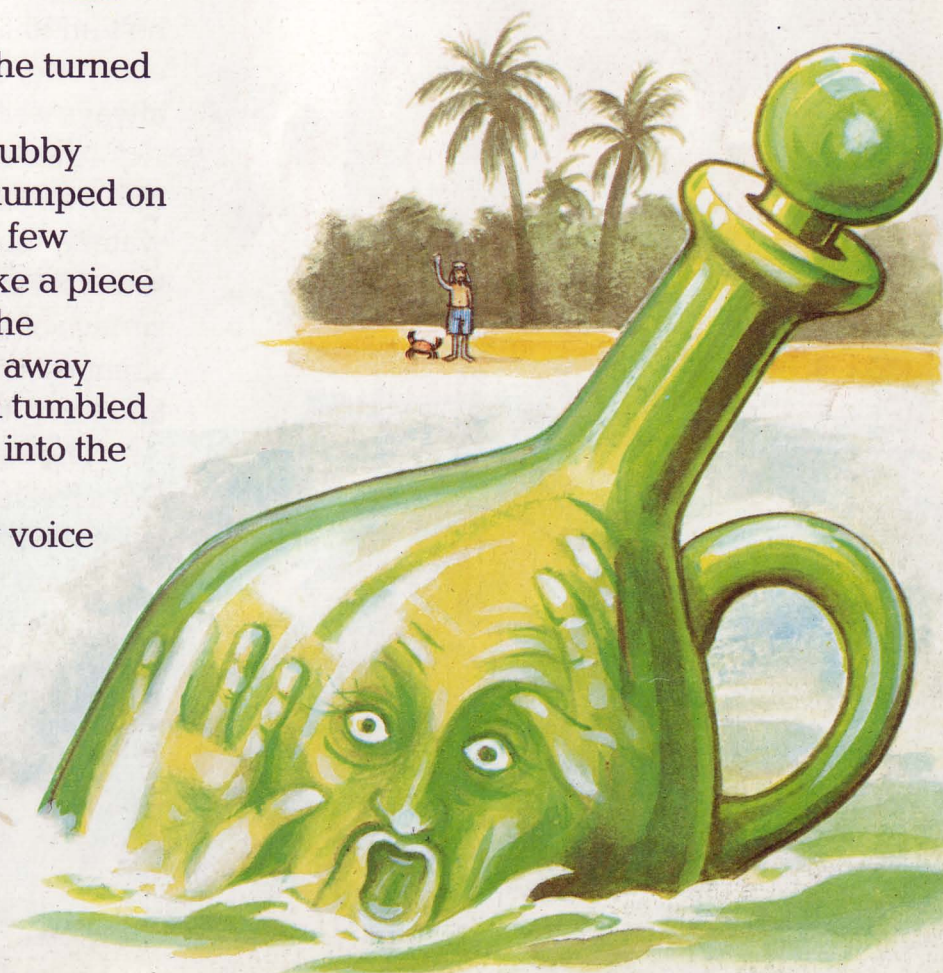
Later that day Abdulla returned to the beach and put up a notice. It read: '*Beware of the genie in the bottle. No fishing.*' Then he rolled up his net and moved to a new stretch of the beach.

"Pah," scoffed Abdulla as he turned to walk away. "Then *prove* it."

The hairs on the genie's grubby chest began to bristle and he thumped on the sky with rage. Then, after a few moments thought, he melted like a piece of butter into all the colours of the rainbow. The colours dissolved away and a shower of smoke and ash tumbled out of the sky and poured back into the little bottle.

"See!" said a funny hollow voice from inside. "I told you so."

Quick as a flash, Abdulla snatched the stopper out of his pocket and jammed it into the neck of the bottle. He pushed and turned and turned and pushed until it was wedged fast.





# DOT AND THE KANGAROO

## Dot And The Hunters



"Goodbye Kookaburra!" called Dot as she and the Kangaroo set off in search of the Platypus. All the other animals said *he* could help Dot find her way home.

"I've never seen a Platypus," said Dot as they passed along the bottom of a deep gully. "What's he like?"

"Oh, he's all right, really," said the Kangaroo, "but he's such a *weird* creature. The animals say he's a bird and the birds say he's an animal — or a fish. He's left alone by everyone, except the Humans. They're always writing books about him."

After a while they came to a shady pool. The Kangaroo hopped to the edge of the water and made little grunting noises, and soon Dot could see something black on the surface of the water. It was the bill of the strangest creature she had ever seen — small and furry, but with webbed feet like a duck!

The Kangaroo licked a spot of dirt off Dot's forehead and said, "Now be very careful what you say to him."

"I am the *Ornithorhynchus Paradoxus*,"



said the Platypus to Dot. "Are you going to write a book about me, too? Humans! You come out here, dig up my home, and think you can write books about me. Me, whose ancestors have been in the world for millions of years!"

Dot tried to explain about losing her way, but the Platypus looked bored. At last she burst out, "Well, *someone* must know where it is!"

"Of course," said the Platypus, yawning. "You simply have to ask the Wagtail."

"Oh, thank you!" cried Dot. "How clever you are, Platypus!"

"I told you, my name is *Ornithorhynchus Paradoxus*!" And he swept back to the pool.

"So! We must find Willy Wagtail!" said the Kangaroo. "Hop in and let's get going."

All day they searched, bounding through the bush. But although many creatures had seen him, or heard his rattling, chattering song — *clicki-ti-clack, clicki-ti-clack* — he had always flown off just before the Kangaroo arrived. So after a drink at a water-hole, she found them a cosy shelter in the rocks where they could curl up for the night.

As Dot lay by the Kangaroo, she thought sadly of her parents looking for her. They would not know how well she was being looked after by her friends. The stars peeped through, and Dot tried to count them . . .

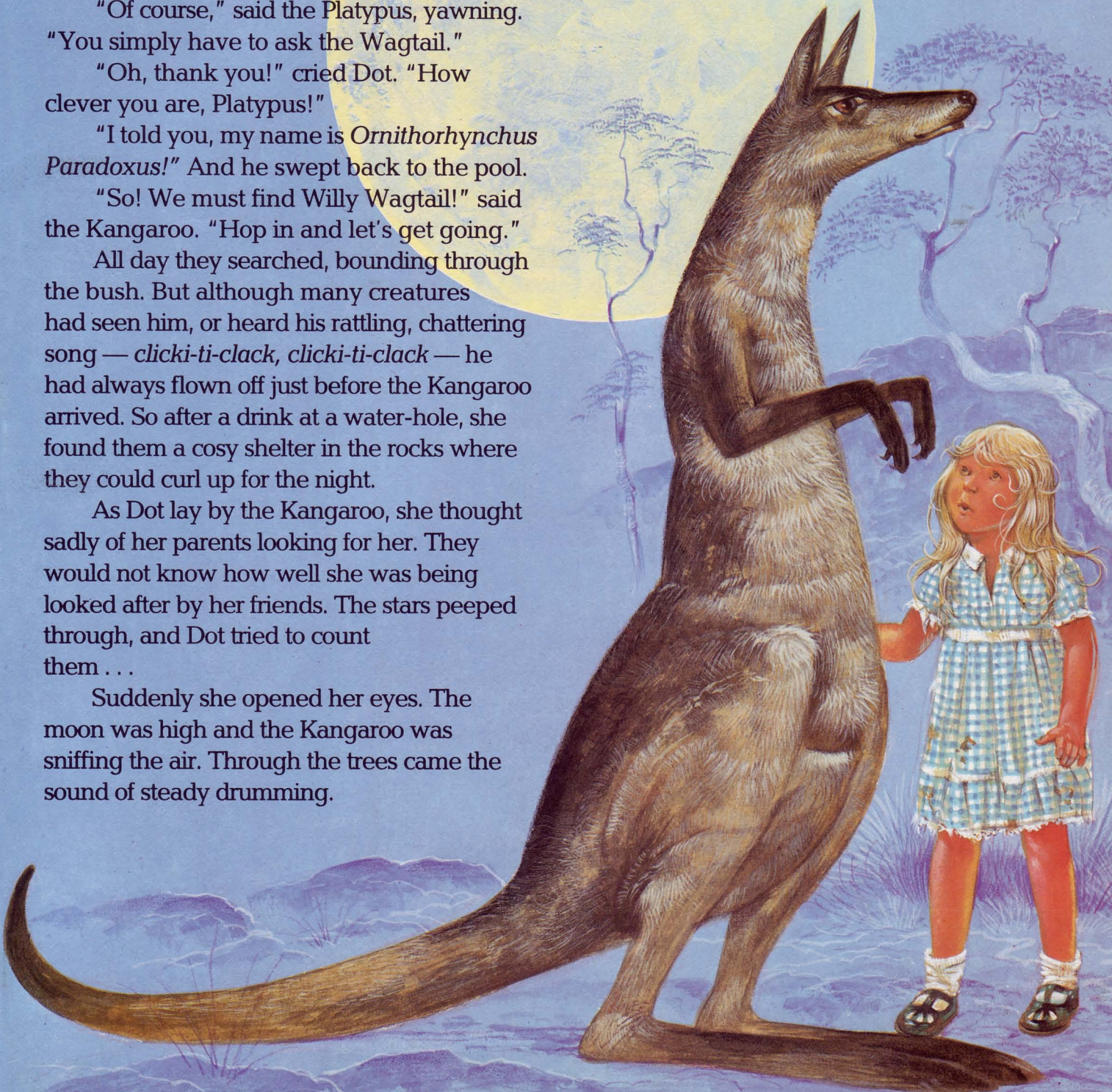
Suddenly she opened her eyes. The moon was high and the Kangaroo was sniffing the air. Through the trees came the sound of steady drumming.

"What is it?" she asked.

"Aborigines!" whispered the Kangaroo. "We must get away."

"But they won't hurt us, will they?" said Dot, who longed to see a human face again. "I'd love to see the dancing."

"If they see us, they'll hunt us with their dogs and kill us," replied the Kangaroo. "But if you *must* see them . . . follow me and be very, very quiet."







They hopped through the bushes, closer and closer to the noise. Inside the pouch, Dot could feel her friend trembling. Soon they could see men dancing, their bodies painted red and white. Others squatted on the ground, beating boomerangs and spears together or clapping. All of them chanted a strange, wailing song, while the camp fire lit up their faces with a horrid red glow.

"I'm frightened!" Dot whispered. "White humans aren't like that!"

"All Humans are the same underneath," said the Kangaroo. "They all

kill us. Look — the dance is about killing kangaroos. One of the dancers is pretending to be a kangaroo, and the other is pretending to hunt him."

Dot gave a shiver and whispered, "I wish I wasn't a Human!"

The gentle animal patted her. "There are a few good Humans," she said. "If you never wear kangaroo-skin boots and never, never eat kangaroo soup, you could grow up to be one."

"Oh I never will!" Dot promised.

They were so busy whispering that they







quite forgot to watch for the Aborigine dogs. The dingoes prowling the camp suddenly scented the Kangaroo, and barked.

The singing stopped, the voices began shouting. The Kangaroo grabbed Dot and took several enormous bounds. She seemed to fly through the night.

But the snarling dogs and yelling Aborigines were all chasing her now. Poor Dot was terrified. The moon was bright, and the huntsmen could easily see the leaping Kangaroo. She put such power into every leap that she began to gasp for breath.

"Kangaroo!" Dot cried. "Put me down! Without me you might get away!"

"Never again!" panted the brave animal. "That's how I lost my little Joey!"

Suddenly she came to a halt. She was perched on a rock. Ahead was a deep black gully — a great chasm in the earth. Far behind them Dot could see the hunters, but one dog was closer than the rest, its sharp teeth gleaming in the moonlight. The Kangaroo quickly lifted the girl out of her

pouch and hopped forward to face the dog. She stood straight and tall, and opened her little arms wide.

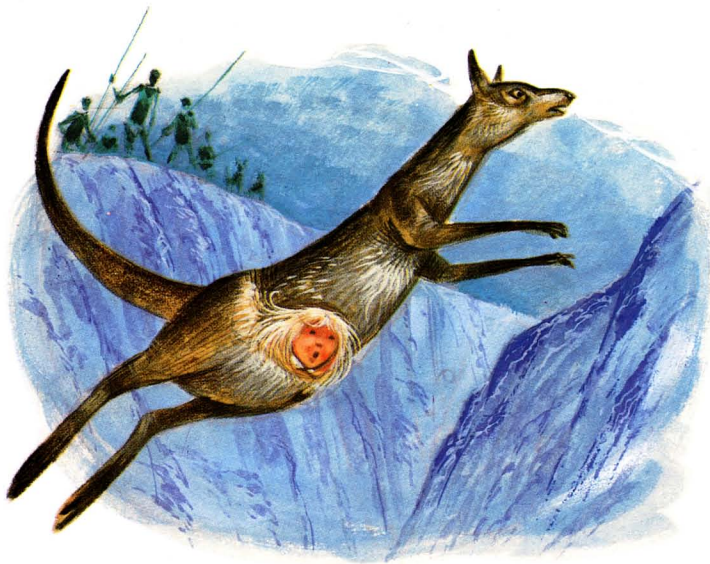
With a terrible snarl, the dog sprang at the Kangaroo's throat. But she seized it in her two black hands, kicked out with one of her powerful hind legs — and when she threw the dog to the ground, it was dead. But the other hunters were getting closer!

The only chance was to leap the chasm. The Kangaroo picked up Dot, put her back in her pouch and leapt towards the fearful gulf.

Again Dot cried, "Oh darling Kangaroo, leave me here and save yourself!" But she heard only the whistling of the wind. Then came the great spring. Dot held her breath and they flew through the air . . .







Yes, they had just reached the other side! No, the Kangaroo was slipping back into the gully! She fought for a foothold, found it, staggered forward, then fell exhausted on her face.

In an instant Dot was out of the pouch and had her arms round the poor animal's neck. "Oh don't die, dear Kangaroo! Oh please don't die!" she cried, burying her face



in the grey fur. But the Kangaroo lay gasping. Suddenly she heard a rude voice behind her. "Well, why don't you give friend Kangaroo some water? What fools Humans are!"

Dot turned and saw a little brown bird on long legs. "But there is no water."

"Booby!" sneered the Bittern. "It's under you. Just make a hole in the grass!"

Dot dug her hands into the grass and moss, and made a little hole. At once beautiful clear water welled up in it. She scooped it up and splashed it over the Kangaroo's panting tongue and matted fur. To her delight, the brown eyes opened, and she knew that her good friend was not going to die.

"You were very kind to tell me about the water," Dot said to the Bittern. But although the bird was very pleased to hear this, it was always so rude that it only pulled a face and said, "Yah!" When it had gone a few steps, it turned. "Hey, stupid! You'll find a dry cave beyond that gum-tree. It's quite good enough for Kangaroos and silly little Humans!"

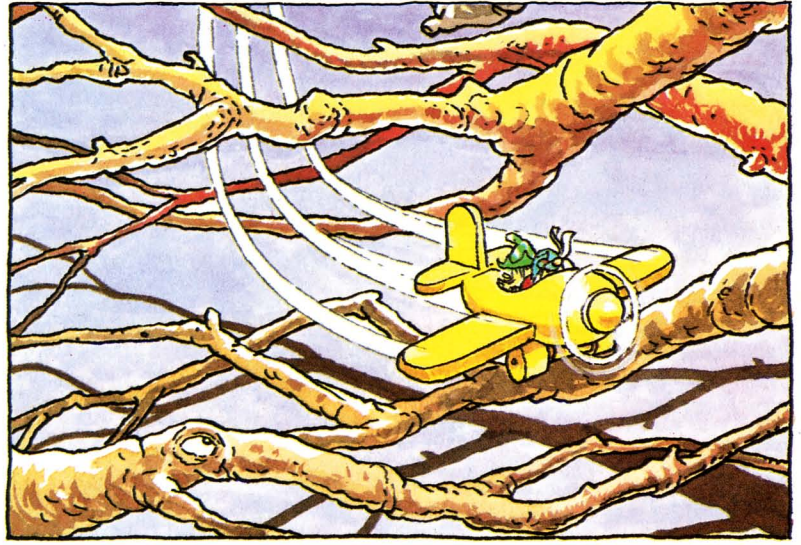
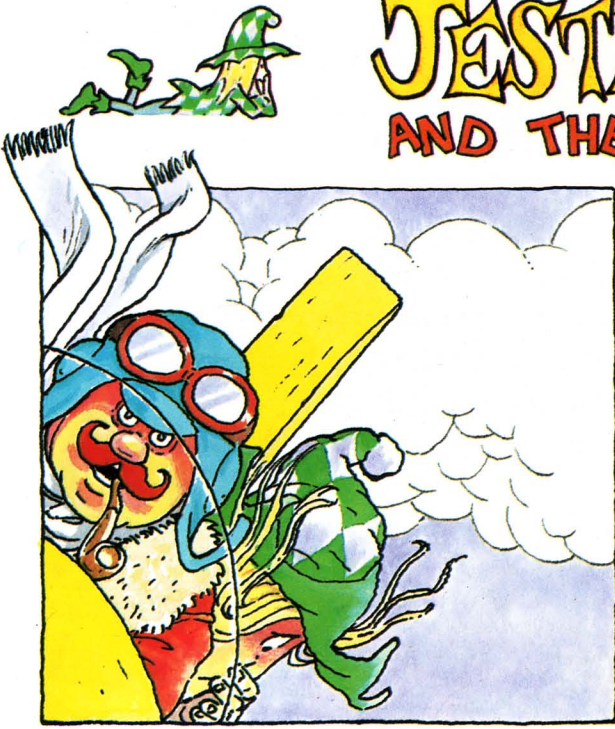
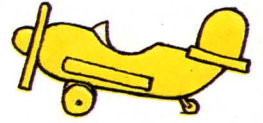
"Thank you, thank you!" called Dot as she helped the Kangaroo to her feet. How lucky she was to have found such friends in the bush. Soon she would find Willy Wagtail, too, and he would help her find her way home. "When I grow up," she thought, "I'll never let anyone hurt these friends of mine in the bush."





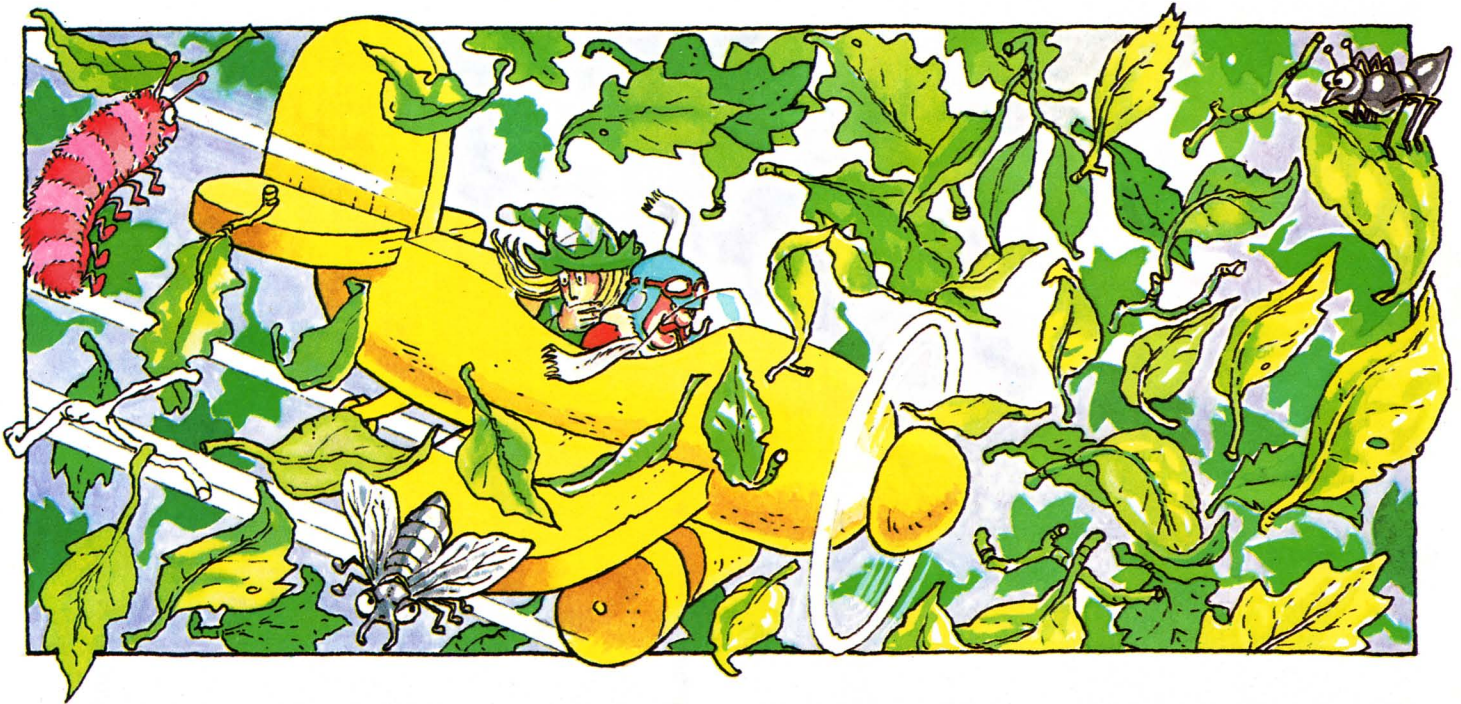
# JESTER MINUTE

## AND THE VANISHING CASTLE



Poor Jester shut his eyes and hung on for dear life in the little plane. He had never been in the outside world before. "I only h-hope Commander Windbag knows where he's g-going!" he thought.

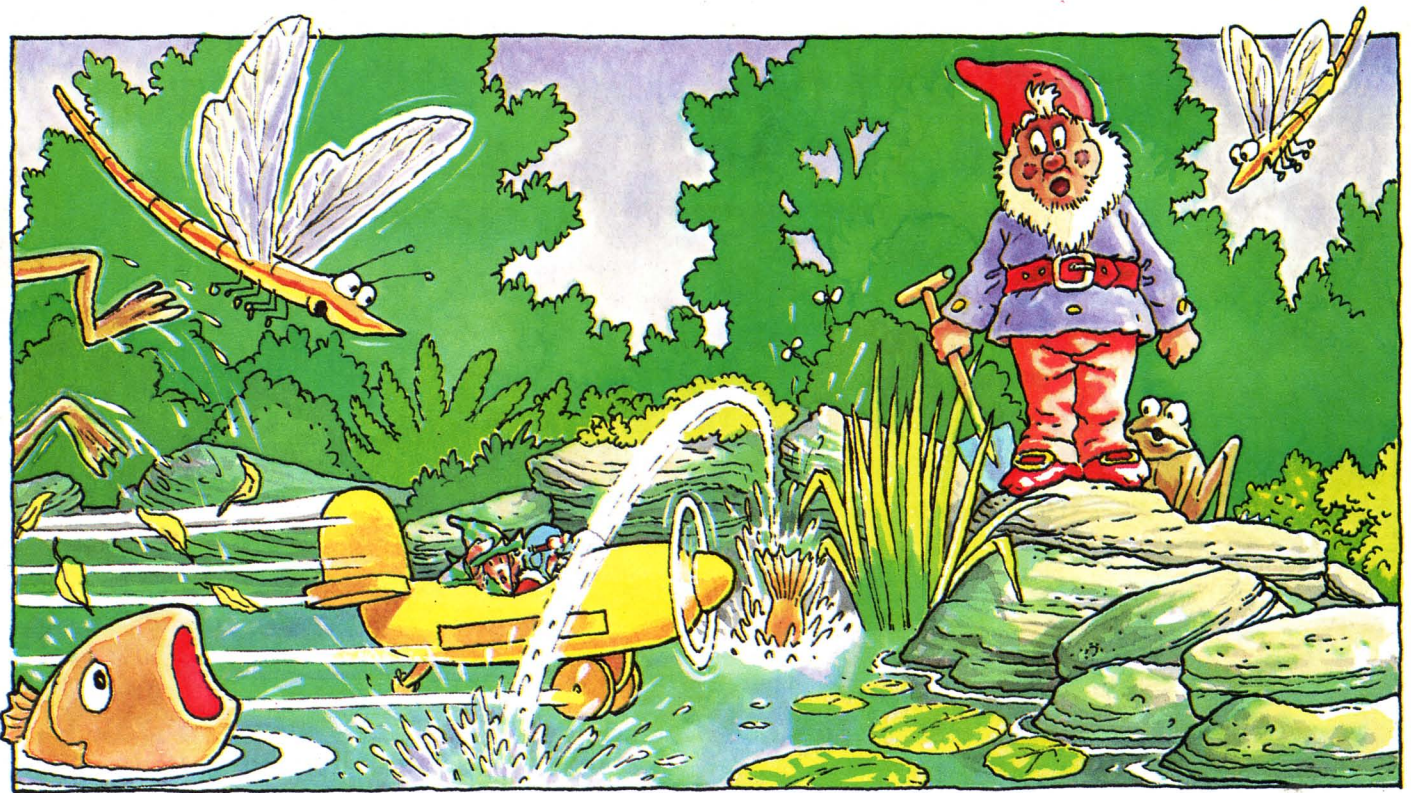
Commander Windbag didn't have a clue where he was going. He was desperately trying to avoid the huge branches that seemed to rush out of the sky straight at him. "Sorry about the bumpy ride, old chap!" he yelled. "We'd better fly a bit lower down!"



The next few minutes were a nightmare for Jester. Suddenly they were crashing through a forest of snapping twigs

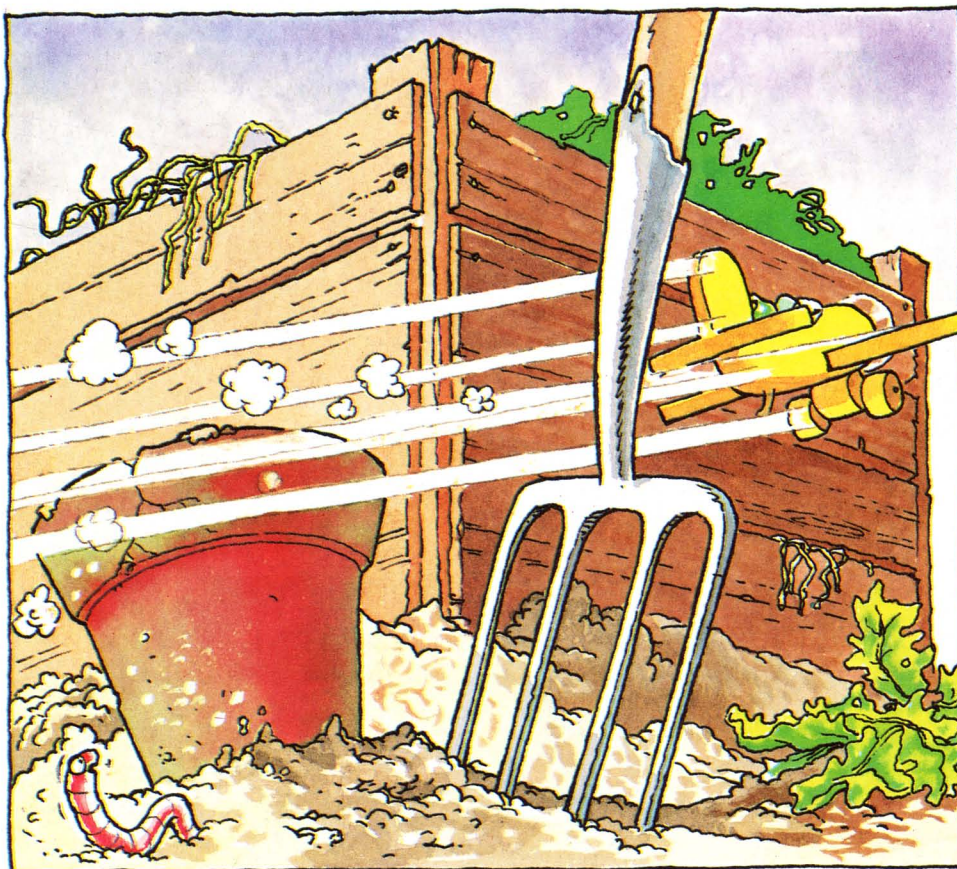
and crackling leaves. Buzzing noises filled the air as insects scattered in every direction . . .





Then they were swooping across a fishpond, the wings of their plane almost touching the water. "Mind those r-r-rocks!" shouted Jester.

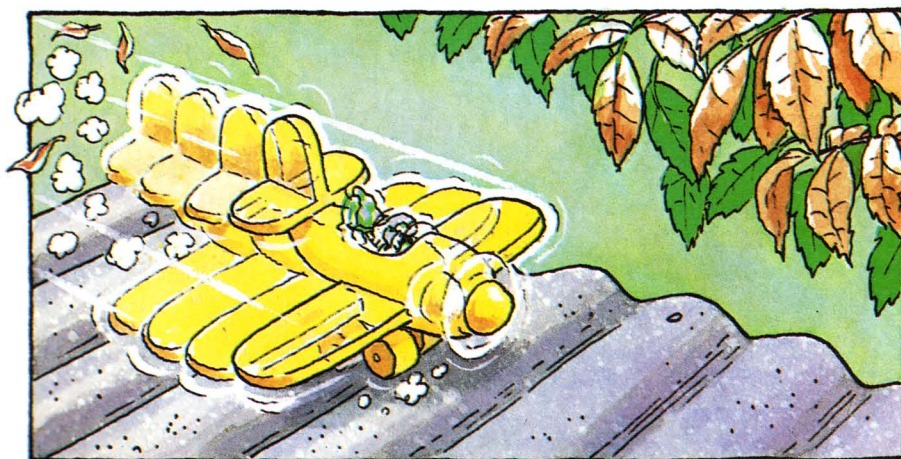
Up they went again, soaring, looping and flying sideways through every nook and cranny in the garden. But there was still no sign of Jester's missing castle.



At long last came the words that Jester was longing to hear . . .  
 "Hold on to your hat!" yelled the Commander.  
 "We're coming in to land!"







Seconds later they were bumping to a stop on the roof of the garden shed. "This is h-hopeless," mumbled Jester, clambering out of the plane. "We've looked e-everywhere!" But Commander Windbag did not give up so easily . . .



"I know one place we haven't looked," he said, pointing downwards. "Of c-c-course!" cried Jester, "in the sh-sh-shed! Come on, let's g-g-go!"



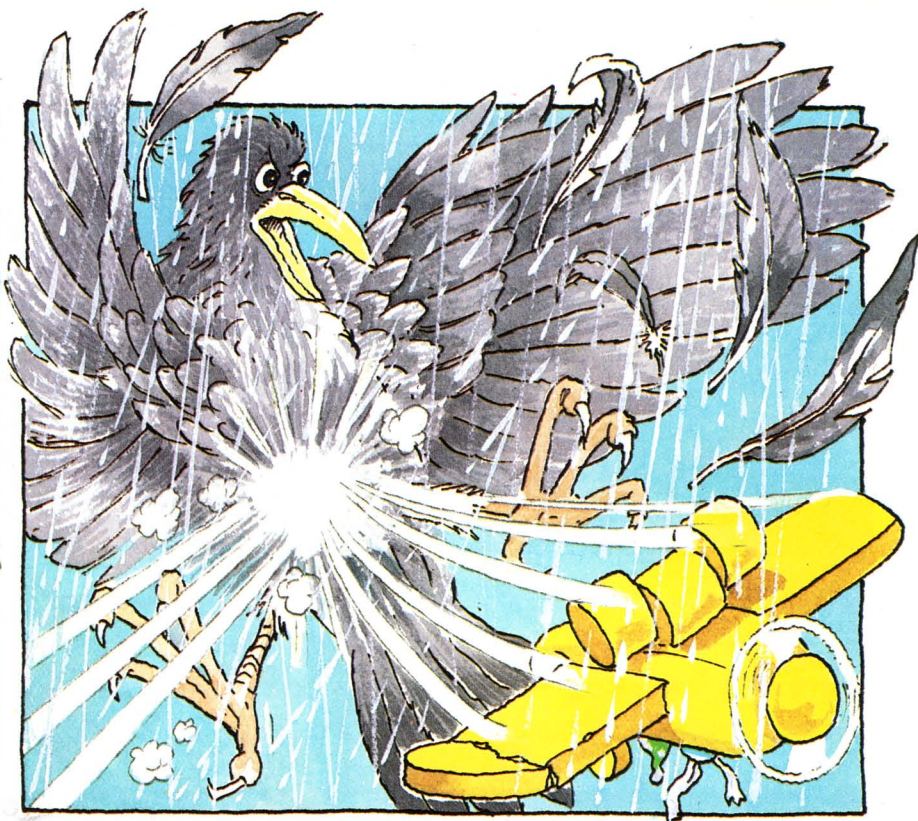
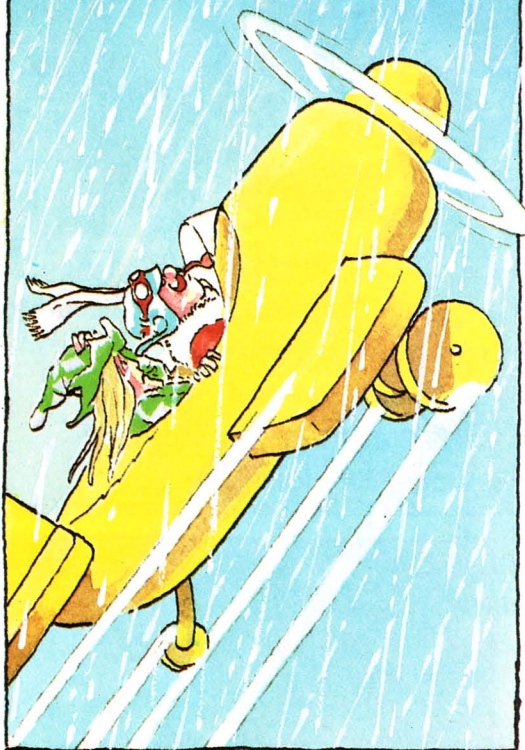
By climbing down an old drainpipe they were able to peer in through the window. "By jove, Jester, there's your castle!" And there was *indeed* a castle inside the shed. But it was a bright red shiny one, with glittering turrets and pure white flags. Poor Jester was so disappointed. "N-no, I'm afraid that's not *my* castle."



They climbed wearily back on to the shed roof. "I *am* sorry, old boy," said the Commander, quietly for once. "I think we'd better get back. It's starting to get dark." Worse still, it was beginning to rain.

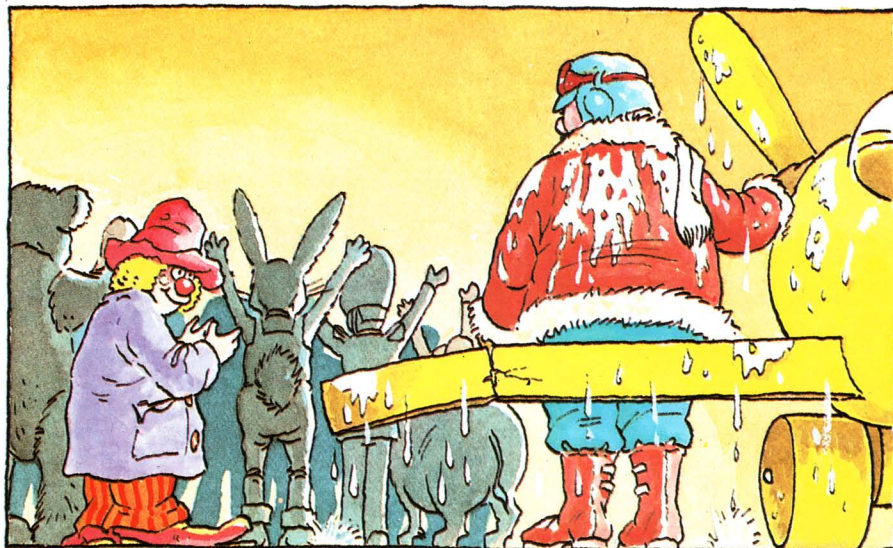


The plane took off from the roof, but even with his goggles on the Commander could hardly see where he was going.



Suddenly there was a deafening thump and a great screech. Dark feathers whirled through the air. They had collided with a huge blackbird. "The starboard wing is broken," shouted the pilot, "but I think we can still fly."

"I h-h-hope so," muttered Jester.



Up and up they climbed. They were both soaking wet when at last they flew in through the window and down on to the safety of the attic floor. In the distance was a crowd of cheering, clapping people. Commander Windbag jumped down from the plane and strode off to investigate.



"Hello, Cuthbert!" he shouted. "What's all the cheering about?" "It's for Jester," chuckled the clown. "He's won the competition for the smartest home! But nobody can find him anywhere."

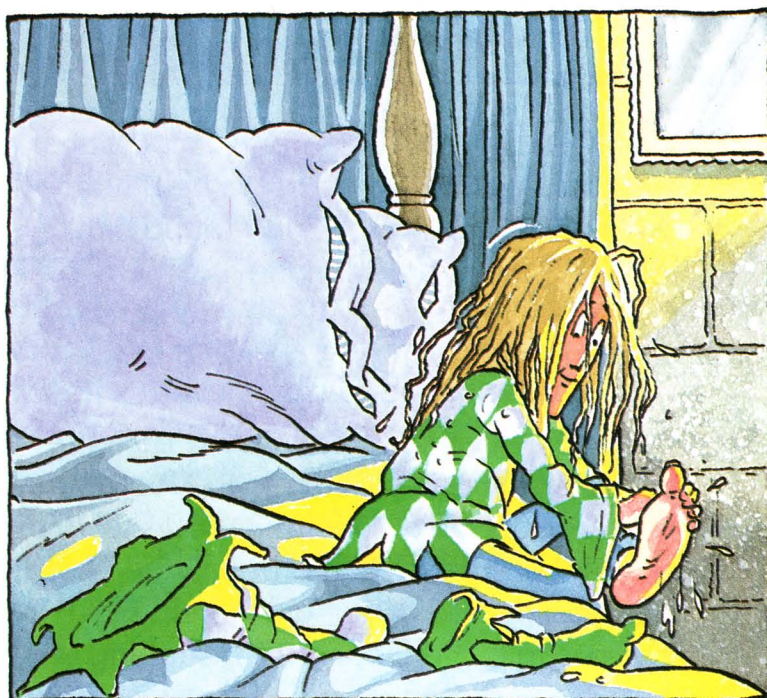


Commander Windbag hurried off to help the bedraggled Jester out of the plane. "Come on, old chap," called the excited pilot. "I've got a surprise for you."

Jester could not believe his eyes. There, right in front of him, was the bright red shiny castle, with glittering turrets and pure white flags!



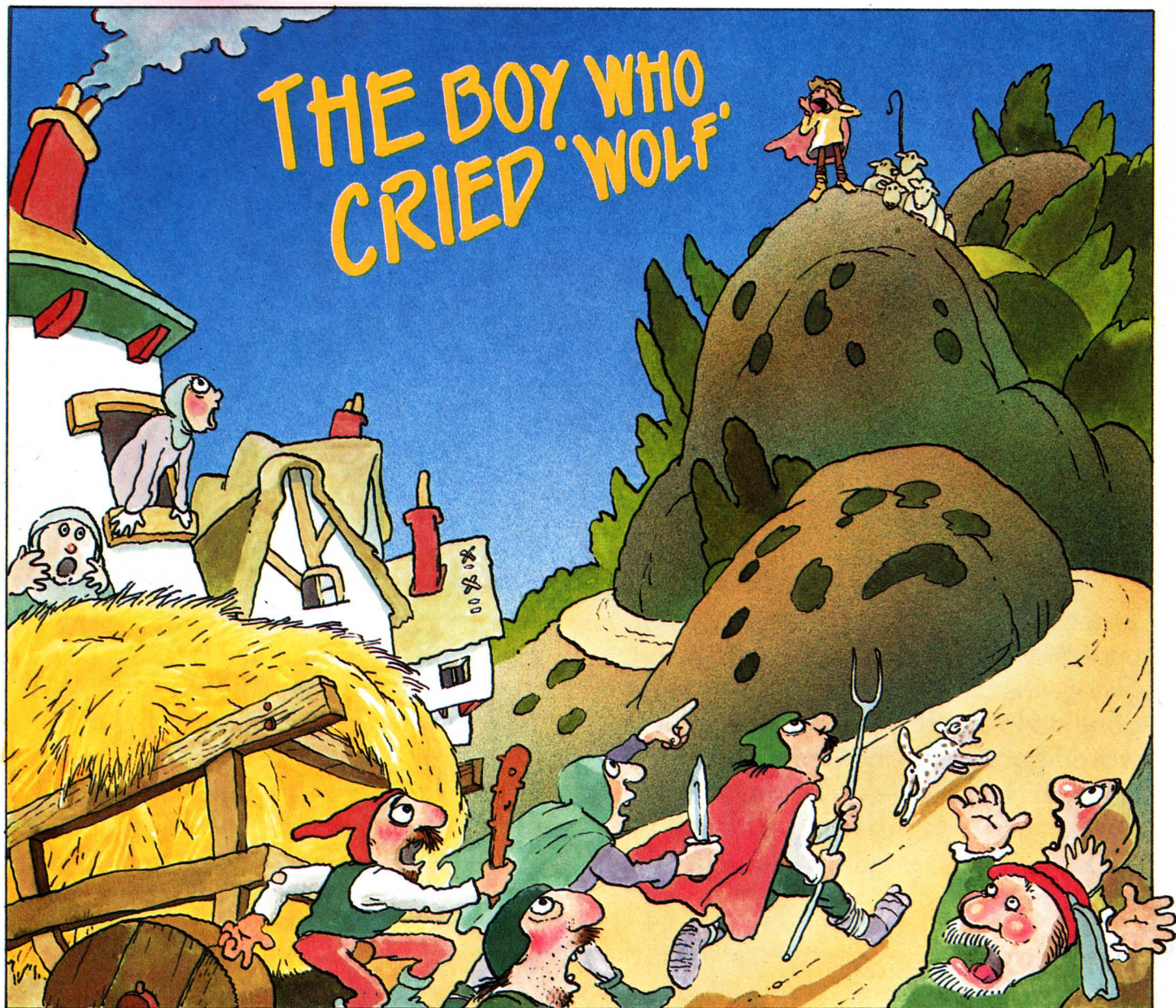
Jester was speechless. Before he could understand what was happening the prize-giving was all over and the merry crowd had gone off to award the second prize. Jester waved goodbye to the Commander and went to inspect his brand new home. But inside, everything was just like his old castle. "How very s-s-strange," he thought. "This is my old castle!"



"I d-d-don't think I n-need any adventure books for a while, after all th-this. Just a nice, long sleep." But there was one thing he had to do before he got into bed. Jester sat down and wrote a very important letter.







Once there was a shepherd boy who looked after the sheep for all the people in his village. Some days it was pleasant in the hills and the time seemed to pass quickly. On the other days the boy grew bored and restless — there was nothing to do but watch the sheep nibbling at the grass from morning till night.

One day he decided to amuse himself, and he walked to the top of a crag above the village. "Help! Wolf!" he shouted at the top of his voice. "A wolf is eating the sheep!"

The moment the villagers heard the

shepherd boy shouting they rushed out of their houses and up the hill to help him drive the wolf away . . . and found him laughing his head off at the trick he'd played on them. Angrily, they returned home, and the boy, still giggling, went back to watching the sheep.

A week or so later, the boy became bored again and walked to the top of the crag and shouted: "Help! Wolf! A wolf is eating the sheep!" Once again, the villagers rushed up the hill to help him. Once again, they found him laughing at their red faces and were very angry, but





there was nothing they could do except scold him.

Three weeks later the boy played exactly the same trick, and again a month after that, and yet again a few weeks after that. "Help! Wolf!" he would cry. "A wolf is eating the sheep!" Every time, the villagers dashed up the hill to help him, and every time they were met with the sight of the shepherd boy falling about with laughter over the trick he'd played on them.

Then, late one winter evening, as the boy was gathering the sheep to take

them home, a wolf really *did* come prowling around the flock.

The shepherd boy was very scared. The wolf looked huge in the fading light and the boy had only his crook to fight with. He raced to the crag, yelling: "Help! Wolf! A wolf is eating the sheep!" But none of the villagers came to help the boy, for nobody believes a liar, even when he tells the truth.

"He's played that silly trick once too often," they all said. "If there *is* a wolf, then it will just have to eat the boy this time." And it did.



# NEVILLE TOOGOOD



Neville Toogood was too good to be true. He never made a noise. He helped old ladies across the road. He drank prune juice because it was good for him, and he washed at least twice a day without anyone telling him to. His bedroom was always tidy, and in school his teachers thought he was wonderful.

"Neville's a little angel, isn't he?" his mother would say. And other boys' mothers would say, "A little angel, yes." But secretly they thought, "What a pain in the neck!"

Then one day Neville got a pain. It wasn't a pain in the neck. It was a bit further down his back — and anyway it was more of an itch. He tried to scratch it but he couldn't reach.

At bedtime he said goodnight to his mother and father, and put himself to bed. He was just putting on his pyjamas when he noticed the reflection of his shoulders in the

mirror. There were two large red lumps!

That night, he could only get to sleep by lying on his face, and in the morning his pyjama jacket didn't fit him. He looked in the mirror again, and there they were, two small wings!







There was worse to come. As he cleaned his teeth (brushing up and down, of course, not across) a dazzle of light flared up off his head and took the shape of a halo. Neville was turning into an angel.

Poor Neville. The wings made his jumper lumpy, and the halo gave him a headache. "I don't want to be an angel," he thought. "I'll look such a cissy floating around in a white frock. Nobody likes me much now. Nobody will even speak to me when I'm a fully fledged angel." He put on his parka to hide the wings, and pulled up the hood to hide the halo.

But when he handed in all his homework (on time, as usual), he actually felt the wings sprout, and long white feathers dropped down below the parka. There was only one escape from becoming an angel. He would have to do something really BAD — the badder the better.

"Neville, do take your coat off, dear," said the teacher, smiling warmly at her

favourite pupil. Neville coughed nervously. "No," he said. His teacher could hardly believe her ears. "Neville," she said firmly. "Take off your coat!"

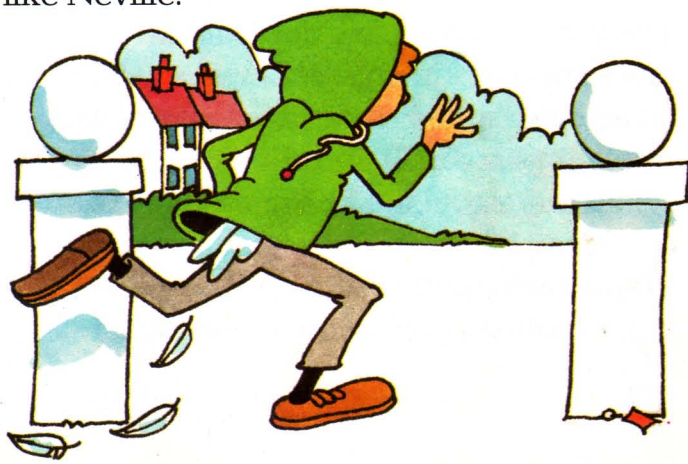
"Shan't. Won't! You can't make me, you silly old boot!" he shouted, pulling a face. At once, a feather moulted out of his wings.

"NEVILLE!"



Hugging his coat round him, he fled out of the classroom, out of the school, and up the street. He stopped by the fire station and drew a picture of the teacher in chalk on the wall. Underneath he wrote: '*Bad is Beautiful*' and '*Wickedness is Wonderful*'. When he set off for the shops, he left behind a pile of angel feathers on the pavement — enough to stuff a pillow.

But oh, how he hated it. Being naughty was extremely hard work for a little angel like Neville.







In the supermarket, he took away the bottom tin in the baked beans display. He pulled the plugs out of the refrigerators and defrosted all the chickens. He drove a trolley through the paper towels, and twin-pack toilet rolls rained down on the shoppers. "What? Well, the little devil!" they shouted, and the manager shook his fist.

Neville felt for his halo. It had faded, except for a warm patch at the back of his head. And it went altogether after he had thrown a few pebbles at the ducks on the pond. By the time he had let down a couple of car tyres, rung a few doorbells and stolen some sweets from a baby, he was very nearly having fun. A devilish sort of laugh kept gurgling up in his throat, and his angel feathers were falling like rain.

"You little devil!" shouted a man whose windows he broke. But Neville sped on, past the Salvation Army band on the corner,

and stole their collecting tin as he went.

Back at home, he played trampolines with his boots on — until the bed broke. He got out all his toys . . . and didn't put one away again.

"Make me some dinner, mother," he demanded. "And do it *now*."

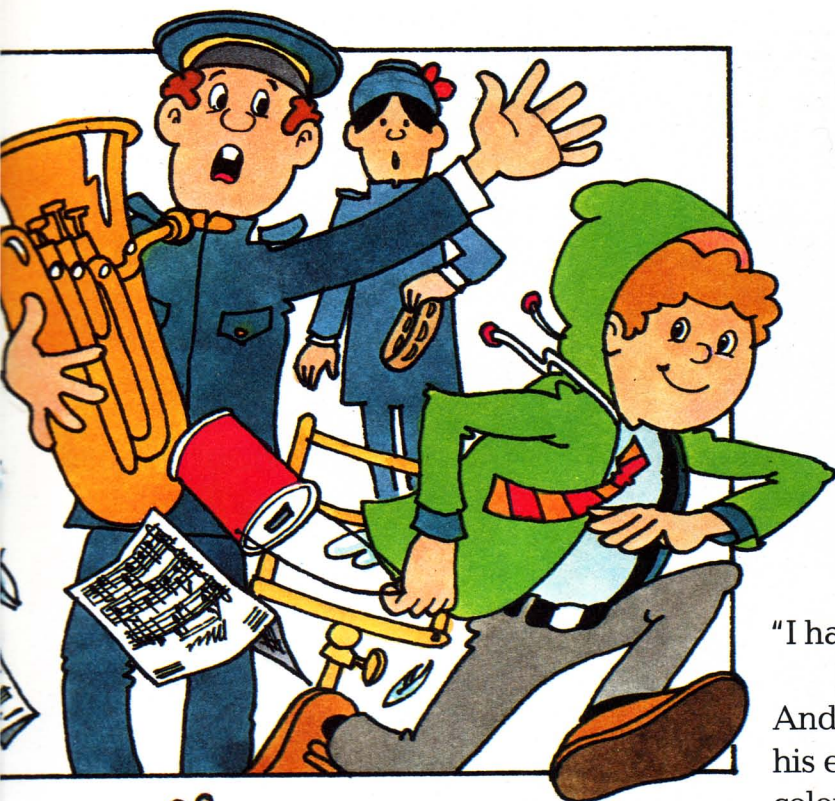
"Have you washed your hands, dear?" said his mother.

"No, and I'm not going to wash ever again, or brush my teeth — not even back and forth."

"Neville!" shouted his father. "What's the matter with the boy, mother? Is he ill?"

To tell the truth, Neville didn't feel at all well. He had an awful pain in his forehead. "Well it can't be my halo," he thought.





"I haven't done anything *good* all day!"

He ran to the bathroom mirror to look. And there were two small red lumps above his eyebrows. His eyes had gone a funny colour, and he had another pain in the seat of his pants.

It was not until the next morning that Neville understood. By that time, he had a fine set of horns, and a pointed tail hung down to his knees.

Neville was a devil!

Poor Neville. He had to start being good all over again. He said sorry to his mother, returned the collecting tin to the Salvation Army, and went to scrub the fire station wall. He apologised to his teacher.

"I wasn't myself yesterday," he said. And she asked him why he was wearing a bandage round his head. "I banged my forehead," he lied — and the tail tucked up inside his trousers grew a little longer.

Only after three days of being good did the tail and horns wash off in the bath.

Neville breathed a sigh of relief and promised himself that he would never be really naughty again. But, just in case the wings or the halo came back again, he always made a point of brushing his teeth back and forth, instead of up and down as everyone told him he should.





# The PIED PIPER OF HAMELIN



A rat! A fat, black rat alive with leaping fleas, trailing its long tail through the butter and nibbling the cheese. First one, then two, then ten, then twenty: a plague of rats.

At the start only a handful of houses in Hamelin had a rat: then all the houses in Hamelin had a hundred rats. And every day there were more. First a hundred and then a thousand: then ten thousand and then . . . a million rats.

The people of Hamelin tried everything to be rid of the rats. They chased them with sticks, threw water over them by the bucketful, and baited traps with poisoned cheese. But for every ten rats they killed, there seemed to be twenty more. First the people drove the rats out of their houses. Then the rats drove the people out of their houses — and soon everyone was gathered in the town square, in front of the Mayor's house.

"Get rid of the rats!" they shouted  
"You're the Mayor — get rid of the rats!"

The Mayor came out of his large house, shaking a big black rat off the hem of his robe. "What's everybody doing here? Clear the square. Clear the square!"

"What are you doing about the rats?" they demanded.

"Um, well, er . . . I'm thinking about it," said the Mayor.

"It's not good enough!" the people shouted. "Get rid of the rats, or we'll get rid of you!"

Suddenly, a clear voice rang out above all the shouting. It silenced everyone, even the Mayor. "I will get rid of the rats."

The crowd parted. A stranger walked towards the Mayor — tall and thin and upright, dressed in strange colourful clothes.





His jerkin was a vivid green, with studs and buckles and gold embroidery. His waistcoat was a rich, cherry red to match the long, trailing feather in his hatband. And his orange leggings were striped with emerald green. His eyes were a piercing, animal yellow, and a long moustache hung from his top lip like two limp rats' tails.

"You can get rid of the rats?" asked someone in the crowd.

"I can. They'll leave if I tell them, and never come back."



"Well, do it, man! Do it!" urged the Mayor.

"I shall want paying," said the stranger from between his thin lips. "A shilling a rat." The news swept through the crowd in whispers. "A shilling a rat! He wants a shilling a rat!"

"A shilling a head?" screeched the Mayor. "Do you think we're made of money? Do you know how many rats we have here in Hamelin?"

"I've made a rough count," said the stranger. "About a million."

"You must give us time to think about it," said the Mayor. "I shall go and consult the town council. It's an awful lot of money."

"There are an awful lot of rats," said the stranger, and he almost smiled.

"The council will want to know who they are dealing with. What name shall I tell them?"





can send him packing without a penny!"

"That's the answer," cried the town clerk. "What a plan! No wonder you're the Mayor!"

The Pied Piper was still sitting on the fountain wall when the Mayor came out of the town hall. "Well? Have you made up your minds?"

"We have indeed, young man," said the Mayor. "We'll gladly pay you a shilling a head if you get rid of all of them and they don't come back again. You have our solemn word on it. When can you start?"

"I'll do it tonight," said the Pied Piper. "Tell everybody to stay indoors."

The Mayor smiled generously, gathered up his robes and walked in a mayor-like way back to his house. His five children met

"People call me the Pied Piper," the stranger replied. "You have until sunset to decide. I'll wait here until then." And he sat down on the edge of the fountain in the square. Opening the leather bag, he took out a brass pipe. There he sat, cleaning the pipe with a piece of rag, as the midday sun passed overhead. The Mayor scurried over to the town hall, straightening his chain of office.

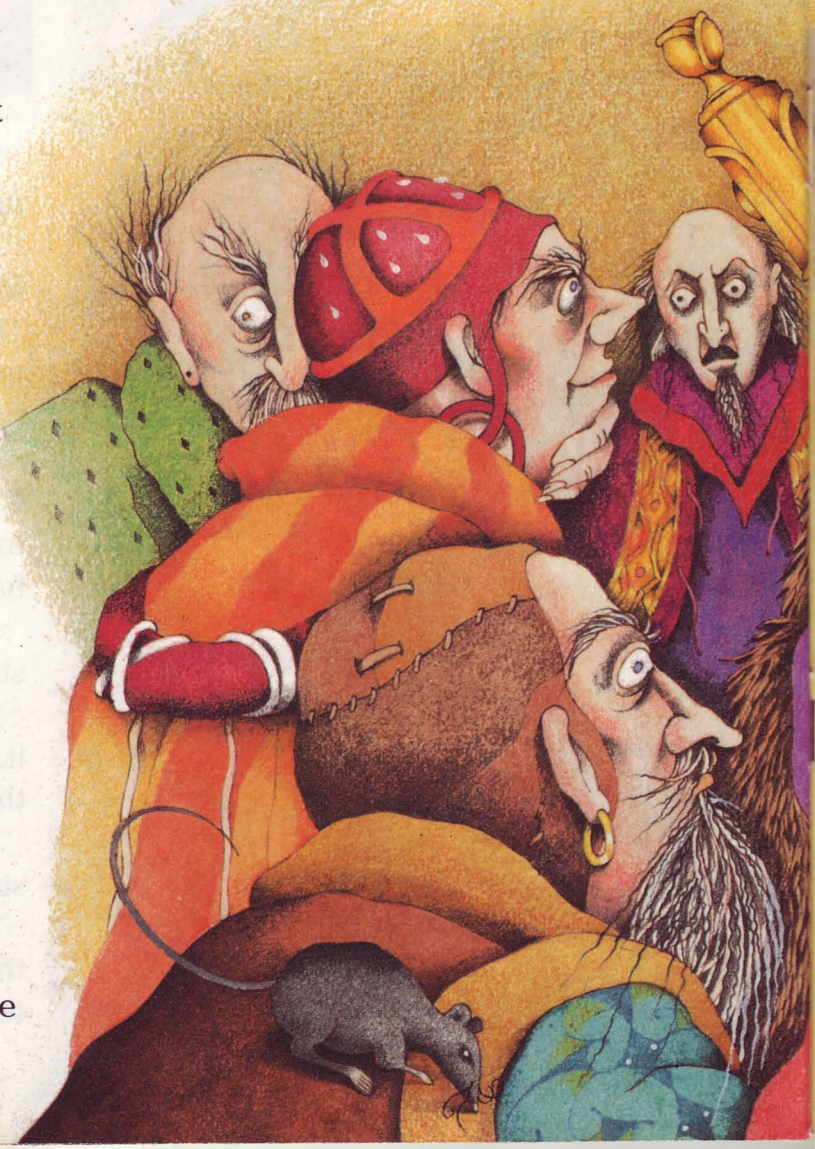
"There's a man out there who says he can get rid of the rats. In fact he looks a bit like a rat himself. Funny eyes."

"What's he charging?" the councillors asked. "Can we afford him?"

"He wants a shilling a head."

"A shilling a head! What a price! We'll have to put up the rates and the people won't like that. They may not like rats, but they hate parting with their money!"

"Who said anything about paying?" The Mayor grinned. "Why not agree to his price and let him get rid of the rats. When they are gone and he asks for his money, we







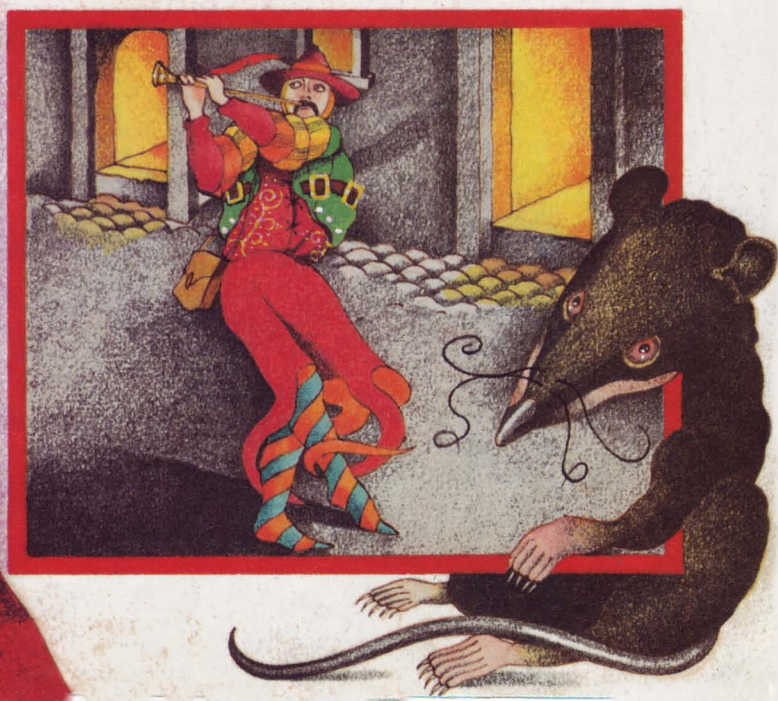
him on the steps in tears: "The rats have eaten the dinner, Daddy, and bitten the baby. What are you doing about them?"

"There's nothing to worry about, children," he said. "Tomorrow, there won't be a rat left in Hamelin and we'll be able to sleep peacefully in our beds. It was the smartest thing this town ever did when it made me the Mayor!"

When the sun had gone down, and the people of Hamelin were at home in their rat-infested houses, a lonely figure appeared in the town square. The Pied Piper, his brass flute in his hand, stood looking at the rising moon.

He put the flute to his lips and began to play — a sad, haunting melody, a tune unknown to any of the citizens of Hamelin as they listened in their lighted windows. Such a lot of music from such a small pipe! It floated across the square and into every alley, it echoed in every doorway, it drifted over every rooftop. Nobody in Hamelin could escape hearing it. Nor could the rats.

Something moved in the darkness. It was a fat, black rat sitting back on its haunches, its head to one side, listening. The shadows seethed with rats.





The Pied Piper played on and on. He barely seemed to draw breath. Then he waded through the sea of rats, and the waves of fur parted on each side of him. He walked in the direction of the city gates. And the rats trailed behind, drawn more strongly by the music than by a smell of food.

The city of Hamelin stands near the Weser River. When the Pied Piper came to its banks, he stopped playing and stood still. The rats stood still too, and a million faces watched him.

"Jump!" shouted the Piper.

It was the deepest, darkest hour of the night when the Pied Piper arrived back in Hamelin, at the Mayor's front door.

But he knocked loudly and somewhere a dog barked. Few people stirred. For the first night in months they were sleeping undisturbed by rats in their beds. The Pied Piper knocked again . . . and at long last the Mayor appeared in his night-clothes. "The rats have gone," said the Piper. "You owe me one million shillings."

And the rats at his feet threw themselves into the river. Not one refused. Not one hesitated at the brink. Row upon row, they flung themselves headlong into the icy river and disappeared. Last in line came the largest rat of all — the millionth rat. Fat with stolen cheese, it was slow-moving and slow to arrive at the river bank. The Pied Piper speeded it on its way with a kick to its black rump, and it hurtled into the river and sank like a stone.







"Gone? One million of them? Well, where's your proof? Where are they?"

"You wanted them gone from Hamelin. The rats are all drowned in the river and I claim my shilling a rat."

"Nonsense. I'm not going to pay for rats in a river! A shilling a head, we agreed — and you haven't brought me a single head! Now be off with you!" He tried to slam the door: the Pied Piper's angry yellow eyes frightened him. "Take your foot out of the door and I'll give you a hundred shillings, just so that we part friends. All right?"

"You can keep your hundred shillings," said the Piper, baring his sharp, pointed little teeth. "I'll find some other way for you and your town to pay for my services." And he turned and strode off.

When he had gone, the Mayor breathed a sigh of relief and then he dragged his oldest son out of bed. "Run round to the town clerk's house and tell him to organise a party at the town hall for midday. Wine and food for everyone in Hamelin."

"Can the children come too, Daddy?"

"Certainly not. Do you think the town is made of money? The children will have to stay at home *and behave themselves*. Now hurry."

What a party it was! They drank toast after toast to the Mayor. After looking round to see that the tall, sinister stranger had not come, he climbed on to a table and gave a speech. "Finally and in conclusion," he said, "I sent the foreigner away with not so much as a brass penny. In short, I saved you from the rats free of charge!"







Outside in the town square the only grown-up in Hamelin not to be invited to the party sat by the fountain. The Pied Piper was polishing his flute again.

Soon he put the pipe to his lips and began to play. It was not the sad, haunting tune of the night before, but cheerful, dancing music. Such a lot of music from such a small pipe! It floated across the square and into every alley, it echoed in every doorway, it drifted over every rooftop. They did not hear it at the town hall, of course, the music at the party was so loud that it drowned the Piper's tune. But the children heard it.

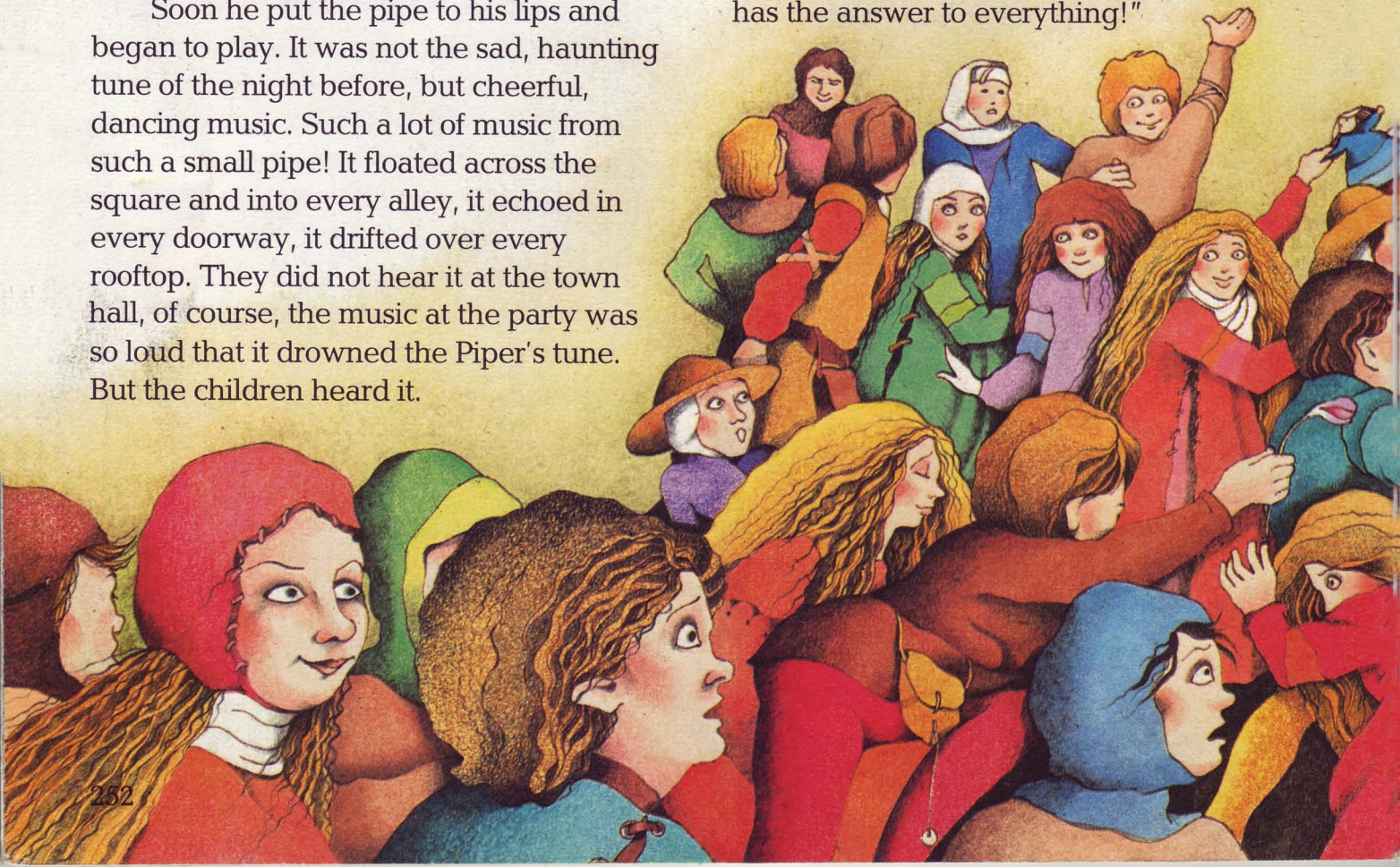
First one child ran into the square and stood staring at the Piper. Then another flashed past, turning somersaults. Then another, and another. Some danced, some skipped, some leap-frogged, some hopscotched across the paving stones. Soon every child in Hamelin was playing in the square. The Pied Piper got to his feet and walked towards the city gates. And a sea of children followed after him. Some ran home and fetched their baby sisters and brothers to carry in the parade. They sang as they walked out of Hamelin towards the river. No-one got tired as they crossed the river by the bridge and climbed the slopes of the violet mountain.

That afternoon the grown-ups returned home from their celebration.

Slowly, one by one, the parents realised that their children were missing.

"The Mayor has five children. He must know where they've gone."

"That's it! Ask the Mayor! The Mayor has the answer to everything!"





They found the Mayor sitting on the steps of his house, weeping for the loss of his five children. "If only I had kept my promise!" he was saying over and over again. "If only I had kept my word!" Clutched in his hand was the note he had found pinned to his door. It read: *For the removal of one million rats: 253 children of Hamelin. Payment received.* It was signed, 'The Pied Piper'.

As the Mayor handed over his chain of office to the unhappy townspeople, the notes of a pipe could just be heard from the slopes of the violet mountain beyond the river. But the children of Hamelin were never seen again.





# IN PART 10 OF **STORY**Teller

**NEW SERIAL**

Mike yearns to own a Spaceblazer. Then one night, as he gazes longingly at a poster of his dream machine, it suddenly bursts into life...

Finally, with the help of her animal friends in the bush, DOT FINDS HER WAY HOME...

In **THE ENCHANTED HORSE** a beautiful toy stallion carries a young Persian prince to a far-off land filled with battle, love and glory.

PLUS

The classic clash between  
**DAVID AND GOLIATH**

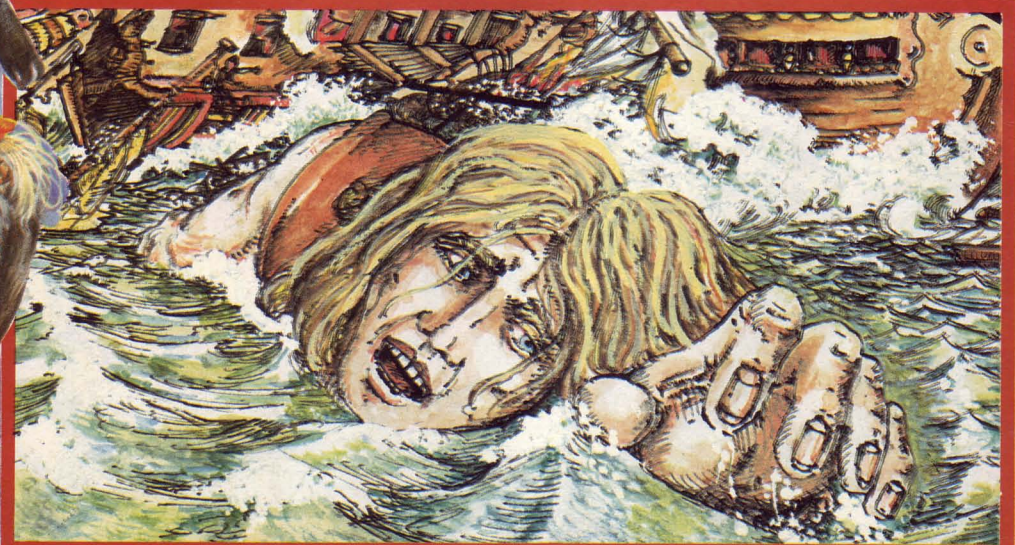
The scandalous **MR TOM NARROW**

and

**NEW SERIAL**

**GULLIVER'S TRAVELS:**

Shipwrecked and marooned  
on the distant shores of  
Lilliput, Gulliver wakes to a  
strange and threatening  
future...



Readers include  
**JOANNA LUMLEY,**  
**MICK FORD**  
& **CAROLE BOYD**