



PART 11

STORY

Teller

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

2



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GROGRE THE GOLDEN OGRE



It was stormy: lightning flashed and fizzed, thunder boomed and muttered. Grogre the ogre was riding through the dark, rolling rain clouds on the back of his friend, Zagon the dragon. Although Grogre was only a little boy ogre, he had just killed an evil Slime Monster. And because he had not killed from hate but from wisdom, he had been changed from a pink to a Golden Ogre. Now he was

returning home to his fierce, red father ogre. "Soon be home, my boy," said Zagon as they soared towards the valley where Grogre's village lay hidden.

"What's that Zagon — right over there?"

"Hmm, I'm not certain. A very black rain cloud, perhaps?"

"It's right over my valley. It's not a rain cloud. I don't see rain falling — I see arrows!"

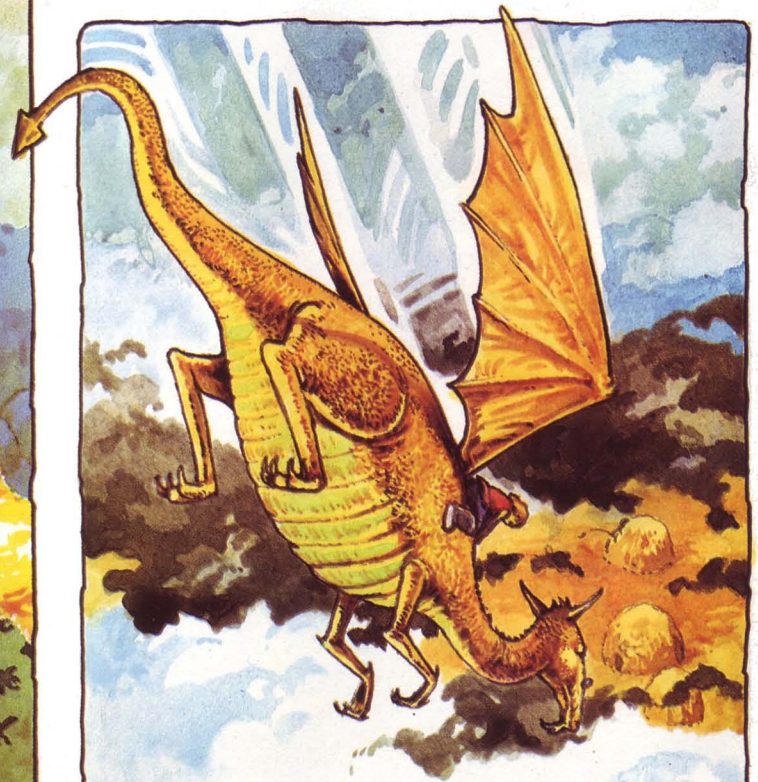
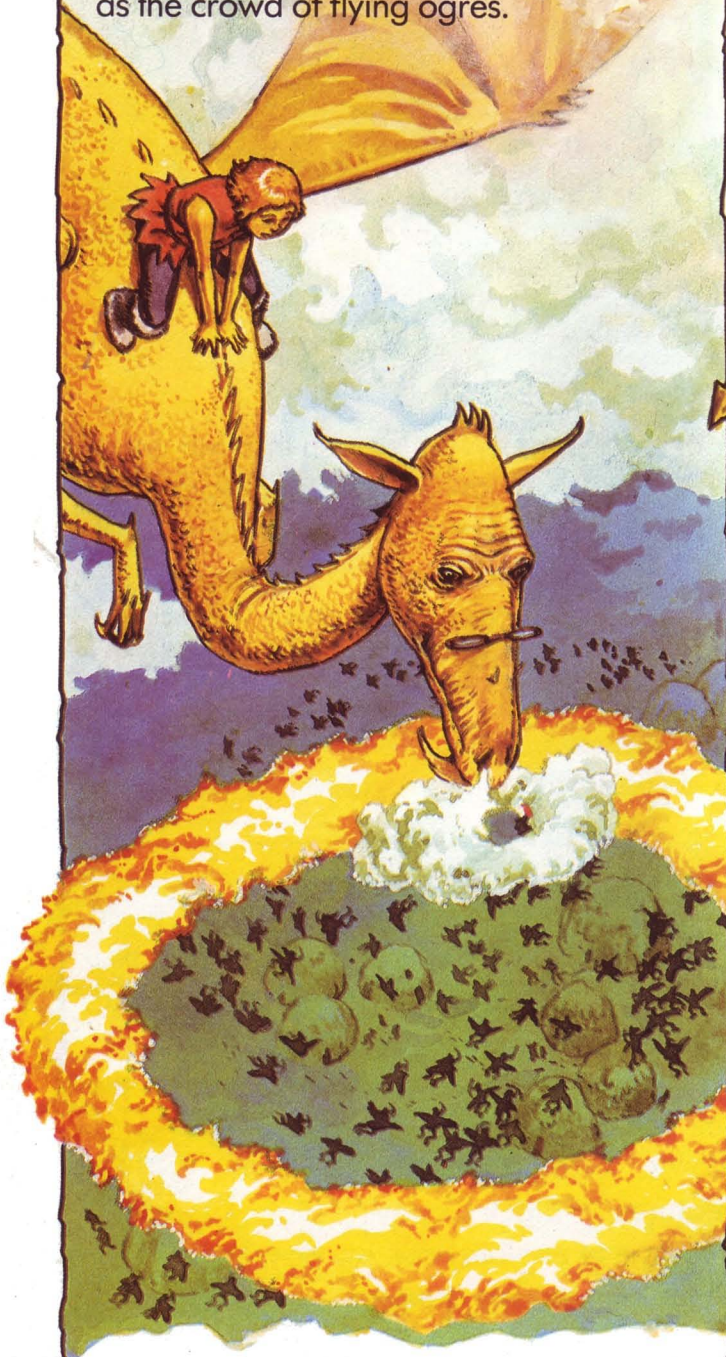


Zagon was a bit short-sighted. "What else do you see, my boy?" "Lots of birds — no, bats. But they're much, much bigger than any bats I've ever seen: their bodies are like frogs, all dark green. There are creatures riding on their backs, firing arrows and waving swords." Grogre gulped, "Horrible creatures." "Black Ogres!" "Black Ogres?" "No time to explain now, my boy. Your village is in terrible danger."

Zagon flew faster still, higher and higher until he and Grogre were above the thick, swirling mass of flying ogres. "Now, hold on tight Grogre. I'm going to do something rather difficult and I'm a bit old and out of practice." Zagon took a very deep breath, then blew a bright circle of yellow flame down towards the Black Ogres. The circle of flame grew wider and wider — as wide and as big as the crowd of flying ogres.



There was a dazzling flash of light; streaks of orange, yellow and white fire flew out from the heart of the flames. A sound like a thousand sausages sizzling filled the air. The Black Ogres vanished in the inferno.



"Zagon, good old Zagon!" cried Grogre. But something was wrong. Zagon was not flying properly; he was almost falling — right into Grogre's village. "Zagon, Zagon, what's wrong?"

Zagon could hardly speak. "Try not to let go, Grogre. I can't fly very well. I'm too old for fire, too old."

Grogre saw that they were hurtling straight towards his own house.



Zagon made one last tremendous effort. He flapped his wings hard. Their fall slowed down just above the roof of Grogre's house and then Zagon stopped flying completely.



Crash through the roof they went, crash through the ceiling, crash into Grogre's fierce father's bedroom, and crash on to his father's huge bed which broke into a dozen pieces.

In rushed Grogre's father and mother with Bogre, the village doctor and magician, pushing his way through a crowd of Red Ogres. "I'm all right," Grogre called to them. "Help the dragon."



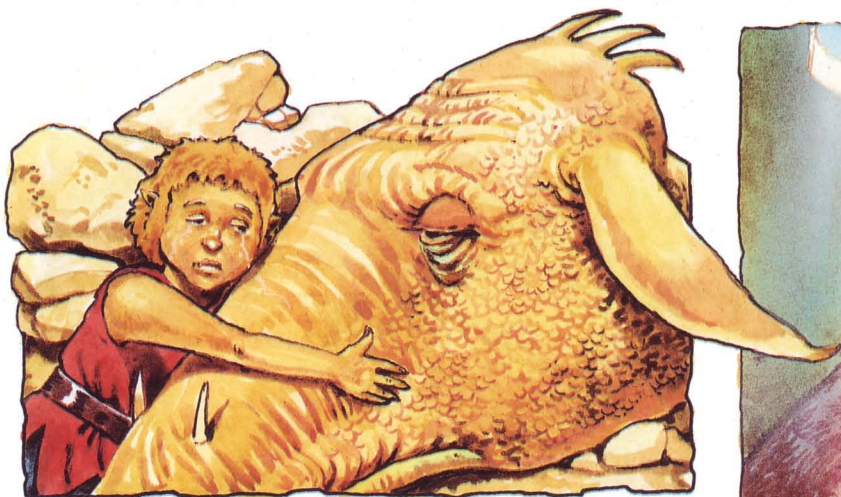
Grogre's father looked angry — some sparks flew from his horns. "Zagon! I can't understand why *he* would save us. That's the dragon who stole my silly son and maybe killed him or something. Grogre wasn't strong and brave like me. But, eh, well, I miss him. He's about your age." Grogre's father looked harder. "He looks rather like you, same nose, same eyes, same mouth, same size . . ." "Same name!" shouted Grogre's mother.

Grogre's father did not know that this young Golden Ogre was his own son. He began to thank Grogre for saving the village from the Black Ogres. "It wasn't me who saved the village, it was Zagon the dragon." "Zagon the dragon?" said Grogre's mother. "Our son Grogre used to have a friend called Zagon."



At last Grogre's mother and father had recognised him. Grogre gently touched their horn-tips and kissed their green lips. Bogre came up and said in his gruff way, "Reckon your dragon friend's had it." "No, Zagon can't die," said Grogre, and he ran to where Zagon lay covered by three big, Red Ogre blankets.

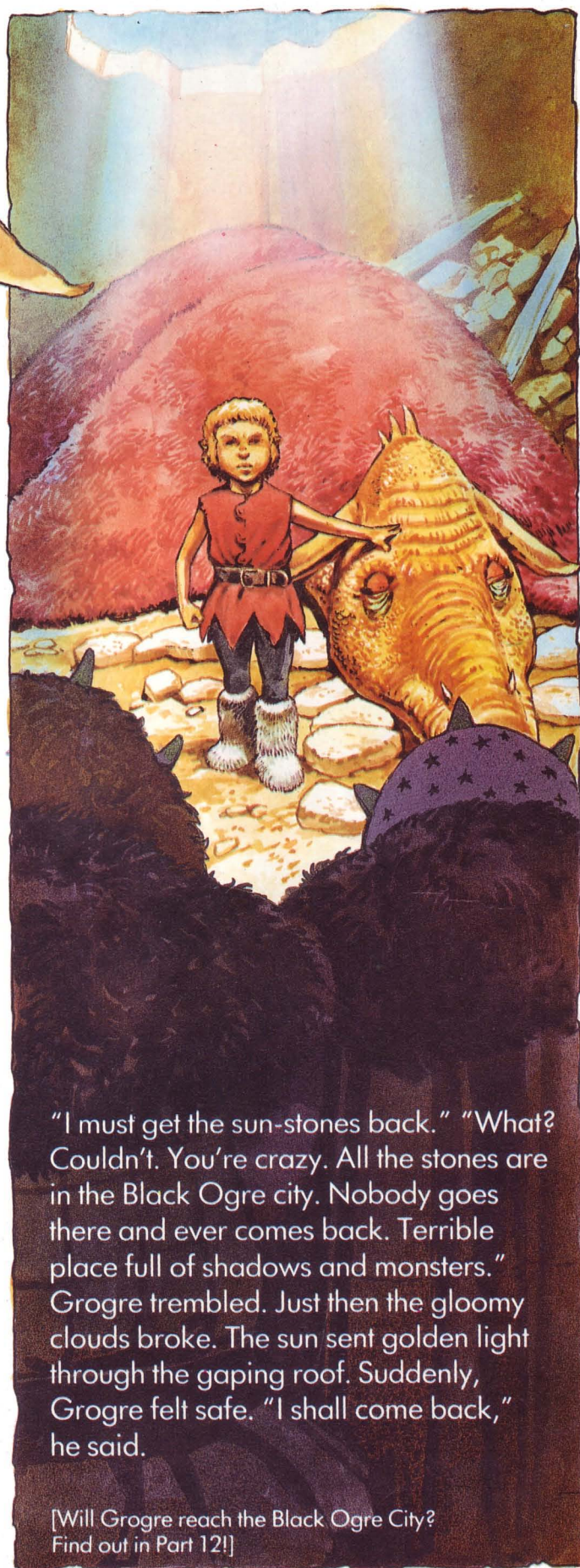




Zagon's breathing was very faint, his eyes were closed. "Zagon, oh Zagon. Can't you hear me? It's Grogre." Zagon did not move. Golden tears began to fall from Grogre's eyes. They splashed softly on to Zagon's tired face. Zagon's eyes opened. Quietly, quietly came the words, "The last sun-stone . . . they must not have it . . . never, never, never." Zagon's eyes closed again.



Bogre had heard too. "Sun-stone's gone. Slurm got it." "A slurm?" asked Grogre. "Don't know much do you? Black Ogres use 'em. Slurms and Black Ogres been killing and destroying and stealing sun-stones everywhere. Sun-stones can cure — they could cure your dragon — or could kill if you know how to use 'em. Maybe *they* know how?" "To kill?" "Yup."



"I must get the sun-stones back." "What? Couldn't. You're crazy. All the stones are in the Black Ogre city. Nobody goes there and ever comes back. Terrible place full of shadows and monsters." Grogre trembled. Just then the gloomy clouds broke. The sun sent golden light through the gaping roof. Suddenly, Grogre felt safe. "I shall come back," he said.

[Will Grogre reach the Black Ogre City? Find out in Part 12!]



Anyas garden

In a long-ago, far-away land, a little girl lived in the centre of a great garden. She had a pavilion for a home, and servants to look after her, and she played all day long in the garden. There were fountains and pools, and tall trees and hedges, and flowers in all the colours you can think of, all the year round. The garden went on for miles in every direction, and the girl, whose name was Anya, loved it very much.

One day she was playing happily in the garden when a wise man came up to her.

"Listen, child," he said, taking Anya by the hand. "When you were born, I made your mother a promise, that I would grant you one wish. So tell me, what would you like? I can make you rich, or beautiful, I could make you a princess, I could even make you a witch. Anything you care to ask for, I can do. But you can only ask once, remember."

Anya thought about all the things



He was tall and handsome and as soon as she saw him, Anya fell in love.

He took her hand and said gently, "My name is Kester, and I am the prince of a land far, far away from here. Will you marry me and come home with me?"

Anya loved the prince, but she loved the garden too. It was a cruel choice. Blinking back tears, she said, "If . . . if I can, I will come with you. But I may not be able to leave. A wise man, a guru, long ago granted me one wish and I chose to live all my life in this garden."

But the prince led her through a small gate in the wall and nothing happened to stop her from leaving. So she thought the guru must have lied about the spell.

that the wise man had offered her. But none of them promised happiness, and she was happy as she was. So at last she said, "Let it be that all my life I may live here, in the middle of this beautiful garden."

The man frowned. "Is that all?"

Anya nodded. "That's all. I'm happy here, I don't want anything else."

"At the moment, perhaps not, but you may when you grow older. Still, you have asked, and I have promised." And he turned, and walked away through the garden.

As the years passed, Anya grew to be beautiful. Many young men came to see her, and fell in love with the happy, laughing girl. They begged her to marry them, but she refused them all. She belonged here in the garden, and she never wanted to leave it.

Until, walking one morning between the banyan trees, she came across a young man she had never seen before.





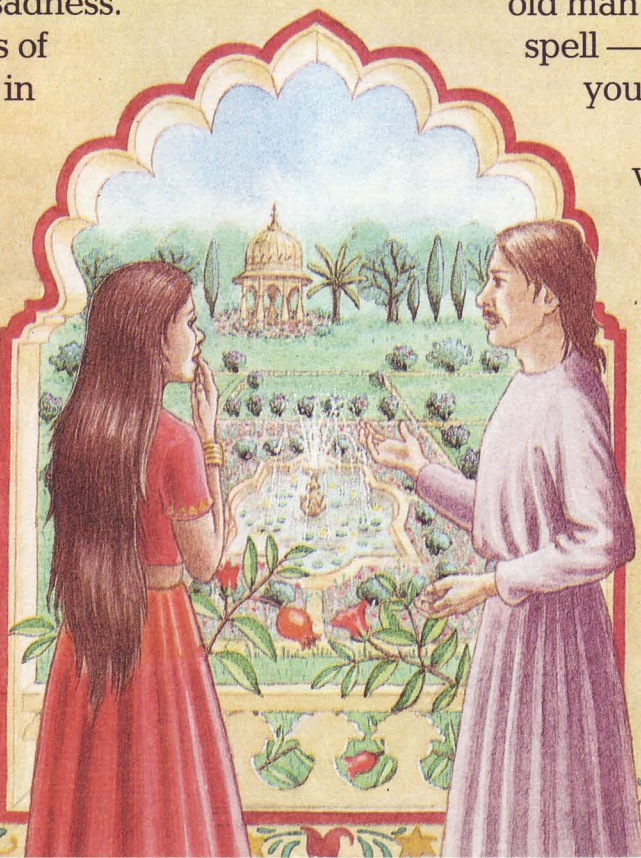
She married the prince that same day and together they rode off to his country. She loved Kester and was happy to be with him, but even so, she could not think of her garden without sadness.

At last, after weeks of travelling, they arrived in Kester's country. He had a beautiful palace with high towers and marble walls. But all the land nearby was desert — golden sand stretching to the horizon. There was nothing green or growing to be seen, and that night Anya cried, thinking it was a terrible place to which her love had brought her.

But the next morning, Kester woke her and pulled her out of bed towards the window.

"Come and see!" he cried. "That old man of yours *did* make a spell — but he didn't put it on you. Look!"

Anya looked out of the window — and gasped. It was her garden! All her green, beautiful garden was there, surrounding the palace, running out for miles across the dry sand. "You see?" the prince said. "It doesn't matter where you live, you'll always have your garden."

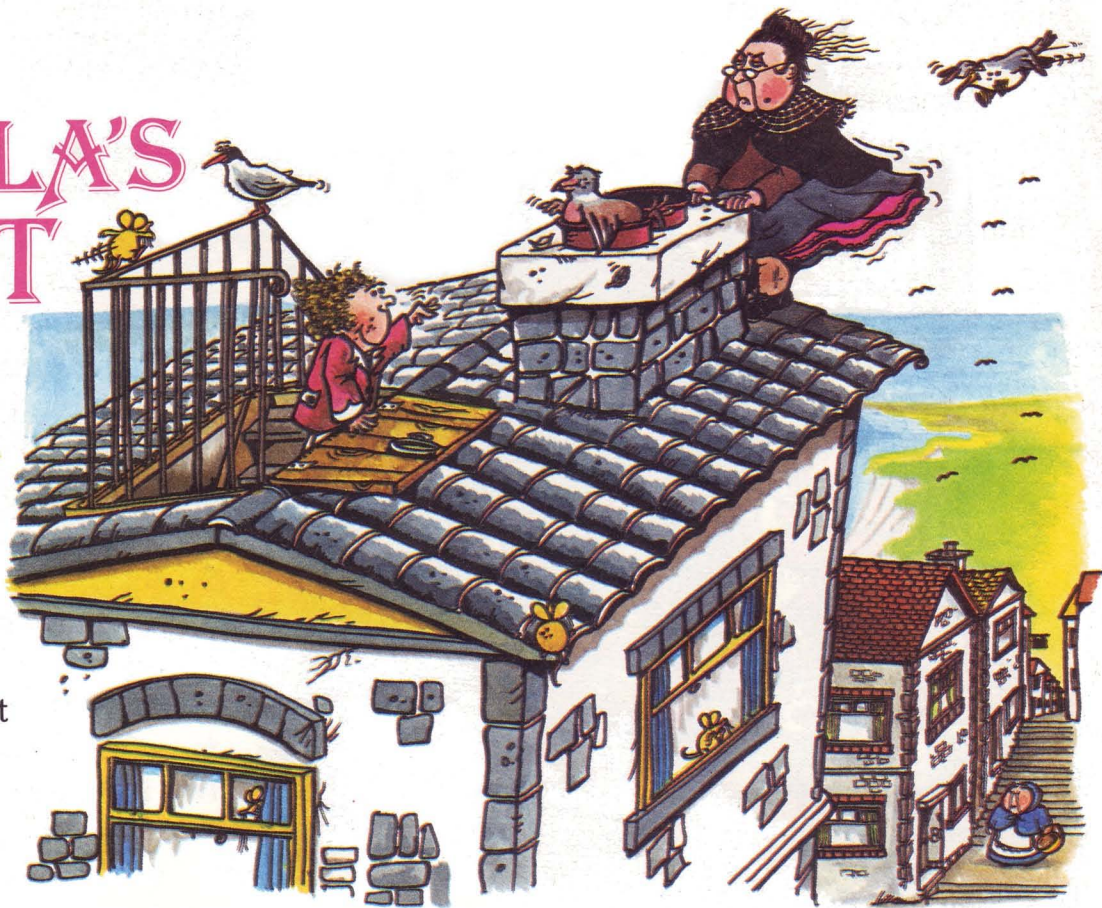


MISS PRISCILLA'S SECRET

Down by the harbour lived Miss Priscilla, the prim and proper schoolmistress of Blackpebble. The school-house was the tallest building in the town. On the ground floor Miss Priscilla taught reading, on the second floor writing, and on the third floor arithmetic. The higher she went, the stricter she became.

Detention was held in the attic.

It was here that Timothy was doing spelling exercises after school had closed. Timothy was the worst speller in the class. Suddenly a muffled squawk came from the roof. "Oh! Quentin must be stuck in the chimney-pot again!" sighed Miss Priscilla. Quentin Beak was her pet pigeon. As Miss Priscilla clambered on to



the roof to rescue him, a puff of wind caught at her skirts.

Far below, a laundress was passing by. "What a fine silk petticoat the schoolmistress is wearing," she thought. And she went on her way to the harbour to find her husband, the Blackpebble coastguard.

He was gazing idly through his

telescope at a ship nearing the headland. The name on its bow was the *Scarlet Cockatoo*.

Bored with his wife's tittle-tattle about Miss Priscilla's splendid silk petticoat, he dreamed his favourite dream — that one day he would win the 'Coastguard's Gold Medallion' for recovery of smuggled goods.

Suddenly he became very thoughtful indeed. "Now how could a poor schoolmistress afford such luxury? I think I'll visit Miss Priscilla this very day!"





which Miss Priscilla always kept locked. The schoolchildren were for ever telling each other creepy stories about what lay behind it.

Slamming the school-house door behind him, Timothy bolted down the path. He was half-way home when he remembered that he had left his homework behind. He would have to go back for it if he did not want another detention.

But when he went back into the hall he found the mysterious door was ajar!

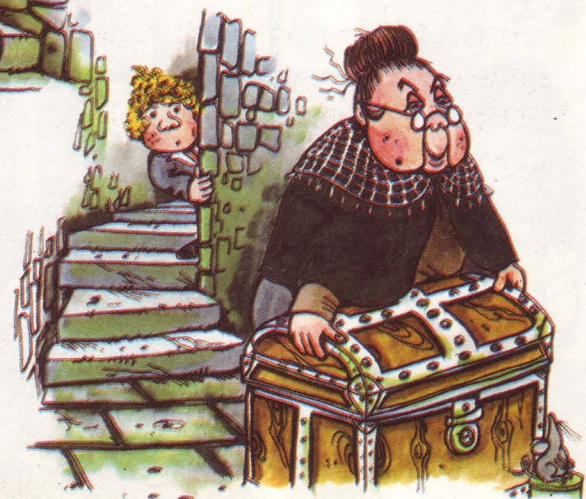
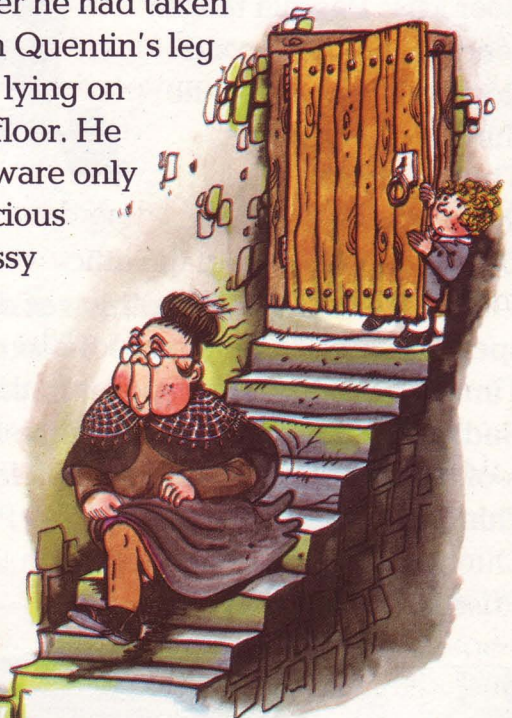
He did not notice that the piece of paper he had taken from Quentin's leg was lying on the floor. He was aware only of a delicious Christmassy smell.

Later, the laundress called at Blackpebble House with the latest gossip. "Imagine the schoolmistress wearing finer petticoats than I!" wailed Lady Blackpebble. "I think I'll pay a call on Miss Priscilla this very day!"

Meanwhile, Timothy was reviving Quentin Beak with drops of best brandy when he noticed a piece of paper attached to the pigeon's leg. "Look, Miss Priscilla! It must be a message. Perhaps Quentin is a carrier pigeon!"

"Nonsense, my boy! It is only a piece of rubbish. I have never known such a bird for getting itself into a mess." And she slipped the paper into her pocket. "Detention is over for today, Timothy. You may go home."

As Timothy was putting on his coat in the hall he noticed the mysterious door





familiar figure. "Miss Priscilla!" breathed Timothy. "You're a *smuggler!*"

The message which Quentin Beak had brought was from Julius Figwig, captain of the *Scarlet Cockatoo* — the very ship which the coastguard had been watching earlier. Julius had a smuggled cargo on board, and he wanted Miss Priscilla to collect it at once because a bad storm was brewing.

"Well, Timothy," said

The air was filled with a mingling of tea, tobacco, brandy, fragrant perfumes and strange spices.

He peeped round the door just in time to see Miss Priscilla bounding down a flight of stone steps — in not at all her usual prim and proper fashion.

He sped silently after her. The Christmassy smell grew stronger. Down another flight she went, and yet another, until she came to a halt in front of an old oak chest at the bottom.

Timothy managed to hide himself behind a huge packing case. But then he took a deep breath . . . and sneezed! A terribly loud sneeze, for the packing case contained snuff!

"Gold doubloons and mizzen masts!" Miss Priscilla exclaimed — quite unlike her usual self. "Show yourself, you miserable landlubber."

Quaking, Timothy stepped forward. Standing amidst barrels and boxes, bottles and tea-chests, rolls of lace and gleaming silk was a strangely

Miss Priscilla in her schoolmistress voice, "as you have guessed the truth you will have to come with me. But I do hope you are better at keeping secrets than you are at spelling!"





Shivering with excitement, Timothy followed her through a long dark tunnel that smelled of seaweed. Then they climbed dozens of steps until, at last, a door creaked open and out peered Lucas Longshanks, the lighthouse keeper. They were at the top of Blackpebble lighthouse and Lucas Longshanks was a smuggler too! He was not at all happy to see Timothy.

"Don't worry about me, Mr Longshanks, sir!" cried Timothy, terrified that he was going to miss all the fun. "I can keep a secret!"

"Mebbee, mebbe not!" muttered Longshanks as he lit the oil-burner and sent the lighthouse beam shining out into the darkness. "But we're in for more

trouble than a storm tonight. I can feel it in my bones."

Indeed just at that moment the coastguard was unfolding the secret message which he had found on the school-house floor.

It contained nothing but a picture of a scarlet cockatoo. He was about to throw it away when he remembered the ship he had seen off the headland that evening, and immediately he guessed where Miss Priscilla's fine





straight for the *Scarlet Cockatoo* was the coastguard's boat.

In a panic he turned to run, and did the most terrible thing a lighthouse keeper can ever do. He knocked over the lamp and the beam went out!

From down below in the darkness came a terrible crunching sound. Horrified, Lucas Longshanks quickly relit the light, but it was too late — the coastguard's boat had struck the rocks and was sinking fast.

"Slithering sea-snakes!" cried Miss Priscilla. She jumped into the lighthouse boat and began to row for all she was worth.

"But you can't rescue the coastguard! He'll have us all put in irons!" screeched Julius Figwig after her.

But Miss Priscilla paid no

silk had come from. With no more ado he decided to row out to the *Scarlet Cockatoo* to see what was afoot.

Outside he bumped into Lady Blackpebble who insisted on going with him. She was determined to have some of that smuggled silk for herself.

By this time Miss Priscilla was happily scaling a rope ladder, as she transferred smuggled goods from the *Scarlet Cockatoo* to the lighthouse boat. Then the storm broke.

But Lucas Longshanks, keeping watch from the top of the lighthouse, had an even greater shock — heading

heed. As the *Scarlet Cockatoo* fled out to sea, she and Timothy hauled the bedraggled victims out of the water. Lucas Longshanks rushed to throw them a line.





beyond reproach. Besides which, the coastguard was in high spirits because the haul had won him the Coastguard's Gold Medallion.

But for some time afterwards, Miss Priscilla kept discovering a barrel of this and a case of that tucked away in forgotten nooks and crannies. So for several years the poor folk of Blackpebble would find mysterious gifts on their doorsteps on Christmas morning.

And Timothy, who could keep a secret far better than he could spell, never uttered a word.

Some time later the shipwrecked mariners were bundled up in blankets in the lighthouse kitchen, while Lucas Longshanks and Miss Priscilla handed round steaming mugs of comforting cocoa to everyone.

"Smuggling is a very serious offence, Miss Priscilla," began the coastguard sternly.

"But I only did it for excitement," Miss Priscilla pleaded. "And I wasn't going to keep the booty for myself..." Then she added honestly, "Well, perhaps a bale or two of silk and a cask of best brandy."

"For medicinal purposes," put in Timothy, thinking of Quentin Beak.

"However, in view of your valiant rescue of Lady Blackpebble and myself, I am prepared to overlook the whole affair, provided that you return the booty and promise never to go smuggling again."

"Oh, very well, but life as a schoolmistress is going to be very dull after this."

Lucas Longshanks was allowed to return to his duties, for until this trouble his lighthouse-keeping had been



SIMEON

the sorcerer's son



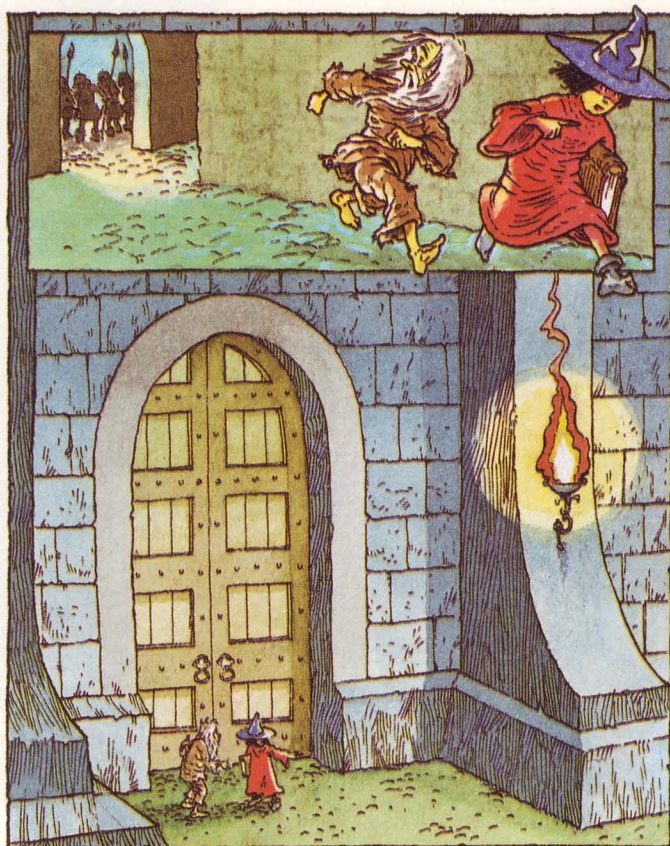
Simeon and the woodcutter were brought up from Baron Kroaker's dungeon to face the evil toad himself. "Now then, wizard," snarled the Baron, "use the spells in this book of yours to make this worthless woodcutter twice as tall. And no tricks, or I'll have you both thrown from the highest tower in my castle!" He rubbed his hands and thought to himself, "If the boy's magic works, he can make me tall and handsome. But let him experiment with the woodcutter first!"

Simeon found the right spell in his book of magic. "Oh dear," he thought. "This is going to be difficult." The spell was long and complicated, and judging by the gaps in his awful writing, there was quite a lot missing. Simeon gave a cough and read out the magic words: "Lavender and lemon, beauty and balm; gossamer and velvet and you'll ne'er come to harm." All eyes were fixed on the woodcutter, waiting for him to grow tall and handsome.

Suddenly the spell worked — but not quite as Simeon had intended! The guards stood staring at the Baron. They just could not believe their eyes.



Baron Kroaker had been quite short to begin with. But now he had shrunk to the size of a mouse! Toads came running from all over the castle to see what had happened to their leader. He hopped about among their boots, speechless with rage and spluttering, "Revenge! Revenge!"

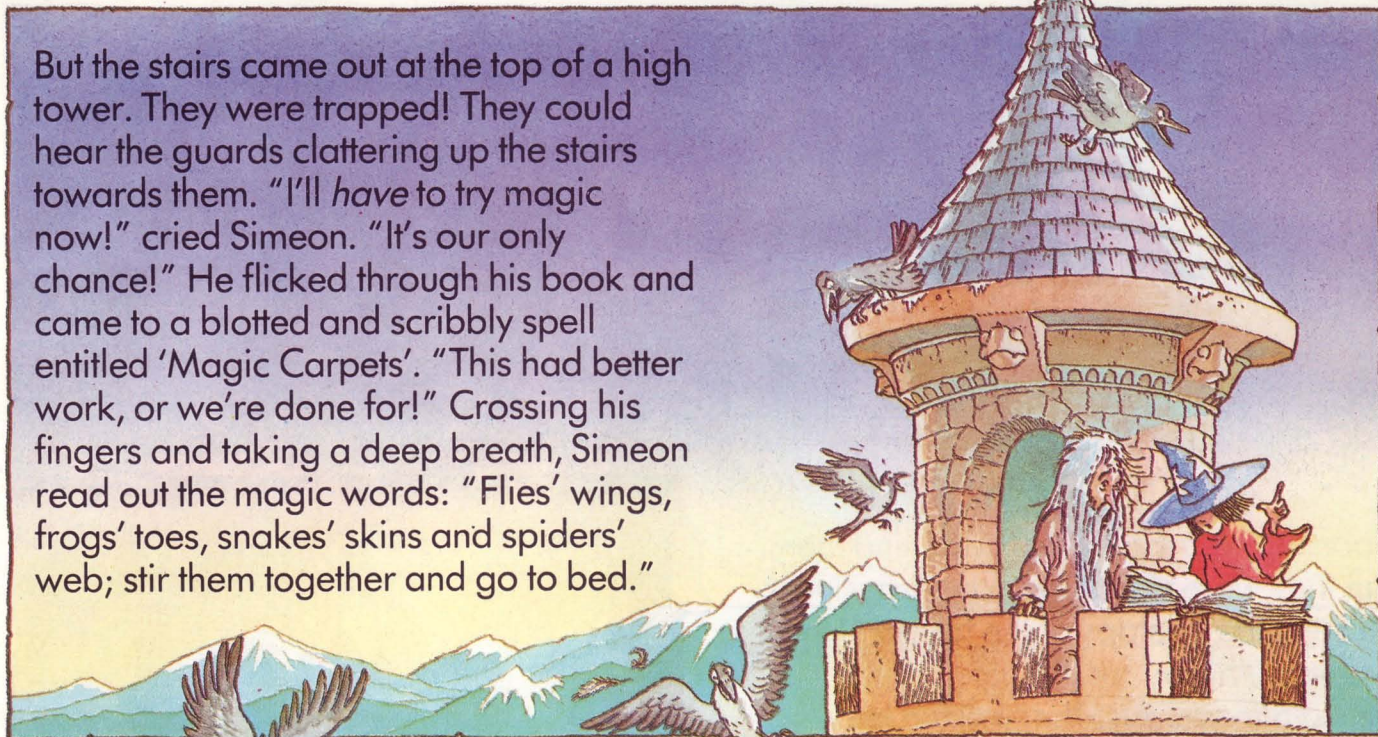


In the confusion, Simeon and the woodcutter saw their chance. "Quick!" cried Simeon. "We've got to find the castle gate before they miss us . . ."

Tired and breathless they reached the castle entrance. But the great doors were bolted shut. "Can't you open them with magic?" "Too late!" gasped Simeon, hearing shouts and running footsteps. "Up these stairs quick. There must be another way out of here!"

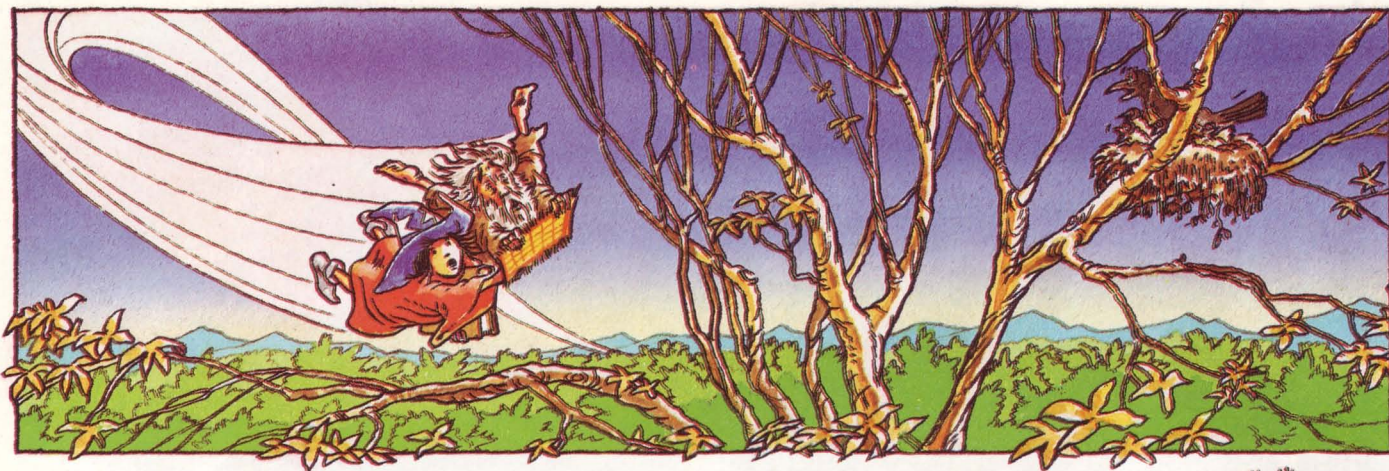


But the stairs came out at the top of a high tower. They were trapped! They could hear the guards clattering up the stairs towards them. "I'll *have* to try magic now!" cried Simeon. "It's our only chance!" He flicked through his book and came to a blotted and scribbly spell entitled 'Magic Carpets'. "This had better work, or we're done for!" Crossing his fingers and taking a deep breath, Simeon read out the magic words: "Flies' wings, frogs' toes, snakes' skins and spiders' web; stir them together and go to bed."



There was a flash of red, and out of thin air, a magic carpet appeared. But once again Simeon's magic was not perfect. The carpet was no bigger than a man's handkerchief! "It's not big enough to sit on," said Simeon, "but it's better than nothing."

"Let's see if it can fly!" They grabbed the little carpet tightly, and Simeon commanded it to fly. To his great surprise — and just in the nick of time — they found themselves soaring into the air, high above the castle turrets.

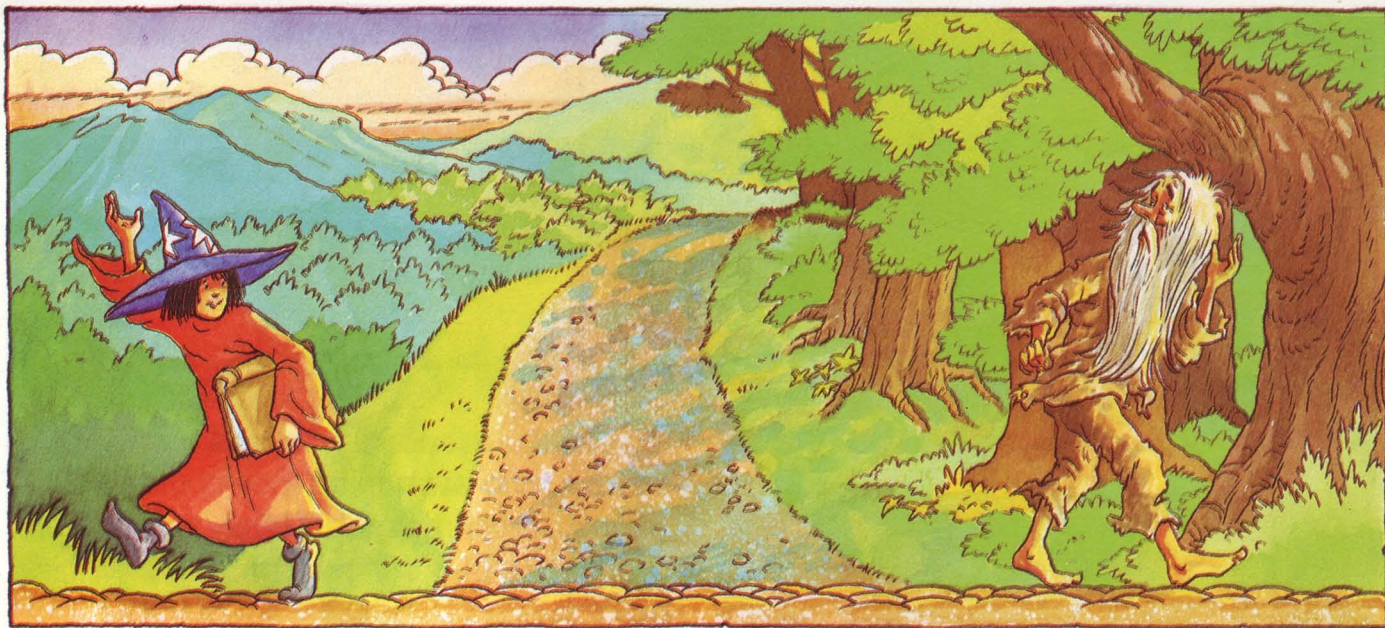


Soon they left the castle far behind them. But they were skimming dangerously close to the treetops of the forest. "I think we're too heavy for this little carpet!" yelled Simeon. And they felt the leaves brushing their legs. "Look out!" yelled the woodcutter — but it was too late. The little carpet crashed headlong into a tree. Simeon and the old man fell head-over-heels through the branches below. Luckily, the leaves broke their fall, and they landed at the bottom of the tree.

"We're right at the edge of Kroaker's forest!" cried the old woodcutter. "We've made it!"

"That'll teach the Baron not to fool around with a real wizard!" laughed Simeon, picking himself up. "Come on, let's get out of this rotten forest."





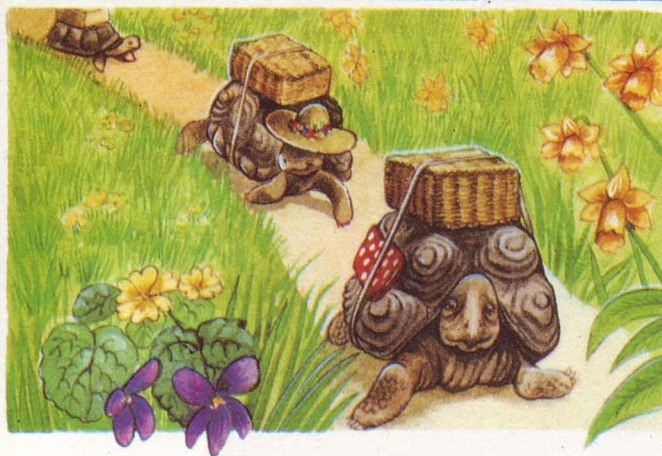
Eventually they reached a cross-road, and the old man said, "Goodbye Simeon, and thank you for everything." "'Bye, and please don't tell anyone about our adventure! My father might find out!" It was late afternoon when Simeon got back to his father's tower. He just had time to go up to his room and hide his spellbook before dinner.



After the meal, his father leaned back in his chair and began to recount one of the great adventures he had had during his life as a wizard. It was a long story, full of evil and magic and great escapes. "And when you grow up, Simeon," said



Wizard Walburg finally, "and I've taught you all my magic, you'll have adventures just as exciting as mine, won't you?" But no answer came. Simeon sat slumped in his chair — fast asleep.



The Tortoises' Picnic

There were once three tortoises — a father, a mother and a baby. And one fine spring day they decided that they would like to go for a picnic. They chose the place they would go to, a nice wood some distance off, and began to get their stuff together. They got tins of salmon and tins of tongue, and sandwiches, and orange squash, and everything they could think of. In about three months they were ready, and they set out, carrying their baskets on their backs.

They walked and walked and walked, and time went on, and after about eighteen months they sat down and had a rest. But they knew just where they wanted to go and they were about half-way to it, so they set out again. And in three years they reached the picnic place. They unpacked their baskets and spread out the cloth, and arranged the food on it, and it looked lovely.

Then Mother Tortoise began to look into the picnic baskets. She turned them all upside down, and shook them, but they were all empty, and at last she said, "We've forgotten the tin-opener!" They looked at each other, and at last Father and Mother said, "Baby, you'll have to go back for it."





"What!" said the baby. "Me! Go back all that long way?"

"Nothing for it," said Father Tortoise. "We can't start without a tin-opener. We'll wait for you."

"Well, do you swear, do you promise faithfully," said the baby, "that you won't touch a thing till I come back?"

"Yes, we promise faithfully," they said. So Baby plodded away, and after a while he was completely lost to sight among the bushes.

And Father and Mother waited. They waited and waited and waited, and a whole year went by, and they began to get rather hungry. But they had promised, so they waited. And another year went by, and another, and they got really very hungry.

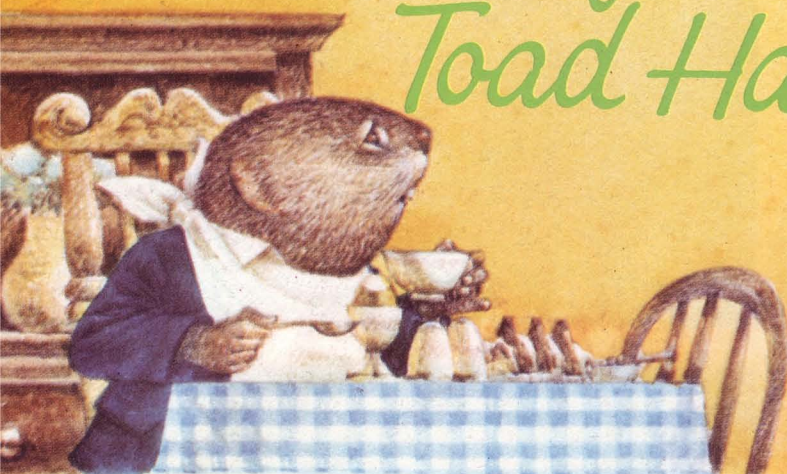
"Don't you think we could have just one sandwich each?" said Mother Tortoise. "He ought to be back by now."

"Yes, I suppose he ought," said Father Tortoise. "Let's just have one sandwich — while we're waiting."

They picked up the sandwiches, but just as they were going to eat them, a little voice said, "Aha! I knew you'd cheat." And Baby Tortoise popped his head out of a bush. "It's a good thing I didn't start for that tin-opener," he said.



Toad of Toad Hall



Early one summer's morning, as Rat and his friend Mole were finishing their breakfast, there was a loud knock on the door of Rat's riverside home.

"See who it is, will you Mole, while I finish my boiled egg?"

In a few moments a very excited Mole returned with Badger. Rat looked worried because he knew that Badger never visited anyone unless it was very serious.

"Sorry to barge in like this, Ratty, but really, something *must* be done!"

"Done?" asked Rat. "Done about what?"

"Why, that silly ass Toad, of course. At this very moment yet another expensive motor-car is being delivered to Toad Hall. He's a public menace, roaring round the countryside, terrorising the neighbourhood. He's already spent six weeks in hospital, you know, having smashed up several cars. We must do something or he'll be in serious trouble with the police — unless he kills himself first, of course."

"But what can we do?" asked Rat. "You know what he's like. Once he's got a craze he just won't listen to reason."



"Well I suggest we take him in hand. I've decided we must do something today."

"Hooray!" shouted Mole. "We'll teach him a lesson he'll never forget!"

"Well said, Mole. We'll rescue the poor animal from his own stupidity. He'll be the best behaved Toad there ever was."

So Badger, Mole and Rat set off for Toad Hall. When they got there, they saw a brand-new, shiny motor-car parked outside the front door. It looked very powerful, very expensive and was painted bright red — Toad's favourite colour.

Then they saw Toad swaggering down the steps. He was dressed in an enormous overcoat, a pair of goggles, a large check cap and a huge pair of leather gloves.

"Hello," shouted Toad cheerfully. "You're just in time to come for a spin in my new motor. Hop in!"



Without a word, Badger strode up the steps and beckoned to the others. "Take him inside," he said sternly. Then turning to Toad he said, "Your driving days are over, Toad." And before the astonished Toad could say anything, Mole and Rat grabbed him by the scruff of his neck and bundled him, shouting and screaming, into the house.





struggling Toad to the floor. Rat sat on him, while Mole took off his motoring clothes, piece by piece, and then stood him on his legs again.

"You knew it would come to this sooner or later, Toad," said Badger, pushing Toad into the study. "I'm going to give you a good talking to." And with that he disappeared with Toad into the study.

"What's the use of talking to Toad?" asked Rat. "He'll say anything, and as soon as we've gone, go back to his old ways. What he needs is a good thrashing!"

An hour later a very dejected and sorrowful Toad was brought in by Badger.

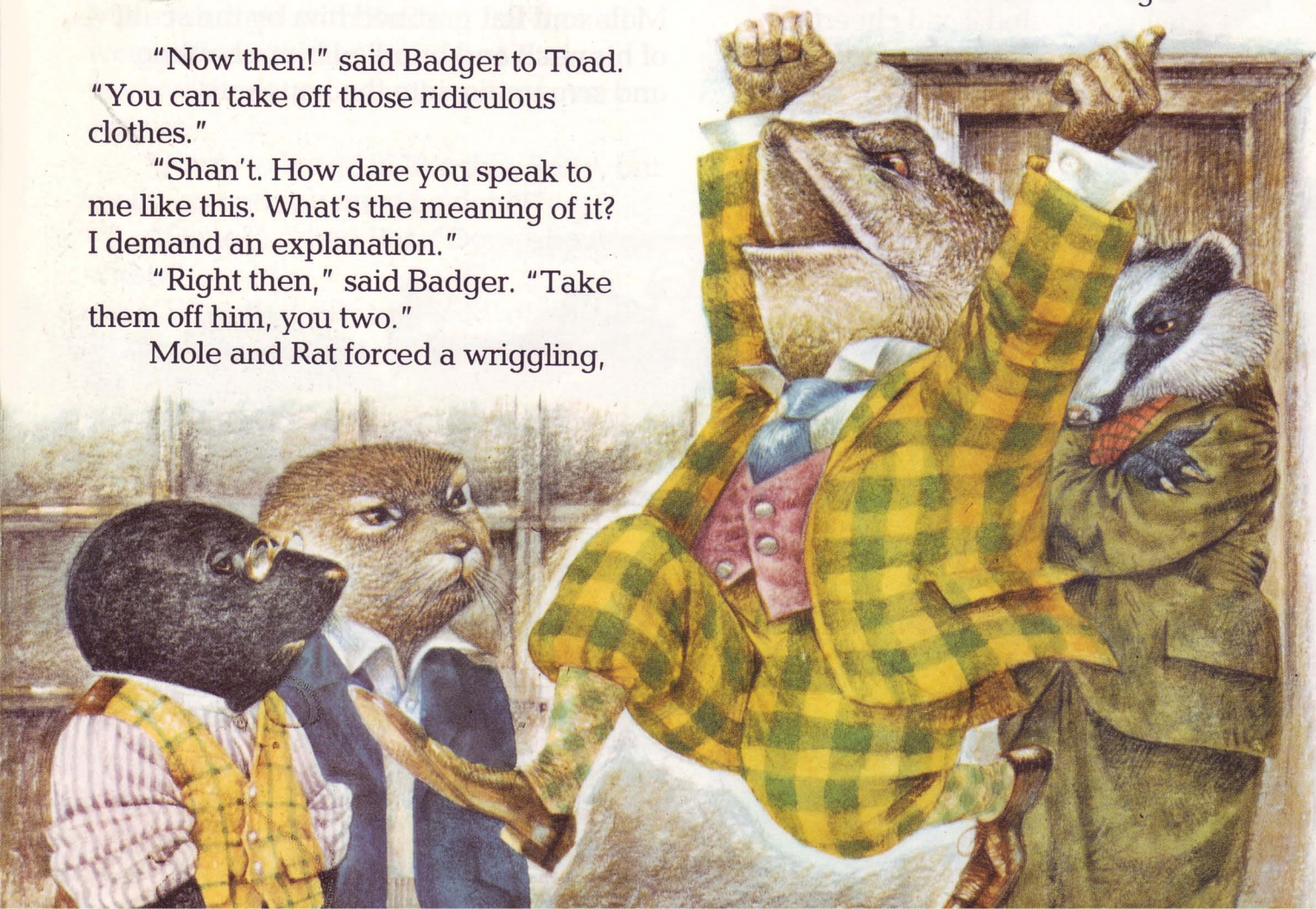
"Now then, Toad, I want you to promise to Mole and Rat that you will never drive a car again."

"Now then!" said Badger to Toad. "You can take off those ridiculous clothes."

"Shan't. How dare you speak to me like this. What's the meaning of it? I demand an explanation."

"Right then," said Badger. "Take them off him, you two."

Mole and Rat forced a wriggling,





"We shall have to take turns to guard him," said Badger. "He's obviously mad and can't be trusted for a moment."

So each animal took it in turns to guard Toad's room day and night. At first, Toad was very difficult. But gradually he quietened down and amused himself by setting up four chairs in his room to resemble a motor-car. Sitting in a front seat, and with a fixed look in his eyes, he would utter strange noises, resembling those of a car. Then, growing more and more excited, and making louder and louder sounds, he would turn a complete somersault and lie on the floor on top of the upturned chairs with a deep look of satisfaction on his face.

"I won't promise! I won't!" screamed Toad. "It's all very well saying to you I won't drive again, but I didn't really mean it. You just made me say it. I won't promise! I won't! I love driving. There's nothing like it in all the world."

"Very well," said Badger. "I feared it would come to this. Take him upstairs you two, and lock him up in his bedroom. He's to stay there until he's said he's sorry for what he's done and promises never to drive again."

"Then you'll have to keep me there for ever," screamed Toad, hitting out at Rat and Mole. "I'll never promise, never!"

Kicking and shouting abuse, Toad was bundled into his bedroom by Rat and Mole. And he continued to shout abuse through the keyhole for a very long time. Then finally all was quiet.



But as time passed, Toad lost interest even in this, and grew restless and bored. Then, one morning, when Mole and Badger were out walking, he called out to Ratty in a feeble voice, "Run down to the village, will you Ratty, and fetch the doctor? I really do not think there's much a doctor can do, but one can only hope."

Alarmed by Toad's condition, Rat hurried out of the room and, locking the bedroom door behind him, ran down the drive to the doctor's.



In a flash, Toad dressed, stuffed bank-notes into his waistcoat pocket, tied the sheets of his bed into a crude rope, climbed out of the window and slid lightly to the ground.

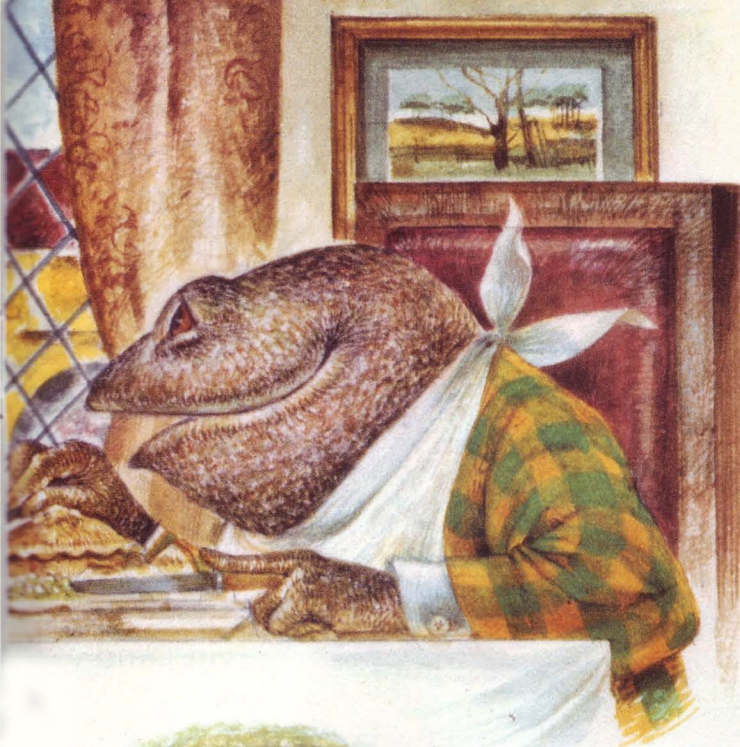
Striding along the road, in the opposite direction to that taken by Rat, Toad came to a little town. And feeling very hungry after his walk, he marched into an inn, ordered a large lunch, and sat down to eat.

Half-way through his meal, Toad suddenly stopped. In the distance he could hear a familiar and friendly sound. The sound grew louder and louder until, with a loud *poop-poop!* a splendid car swept into the inn-yard. Poor Toad was so overcome with emotion he had to grab the leg of the dining-room table to steady his nerves.

He watched with wild excitement as the driver and passengers got out and entered the inn. Quickly and quietly, Toad got up from the table, paid his bill and sauntered down to the inn-yard.

"There can't be any harm," he said to himself, "in my just looking at it!"



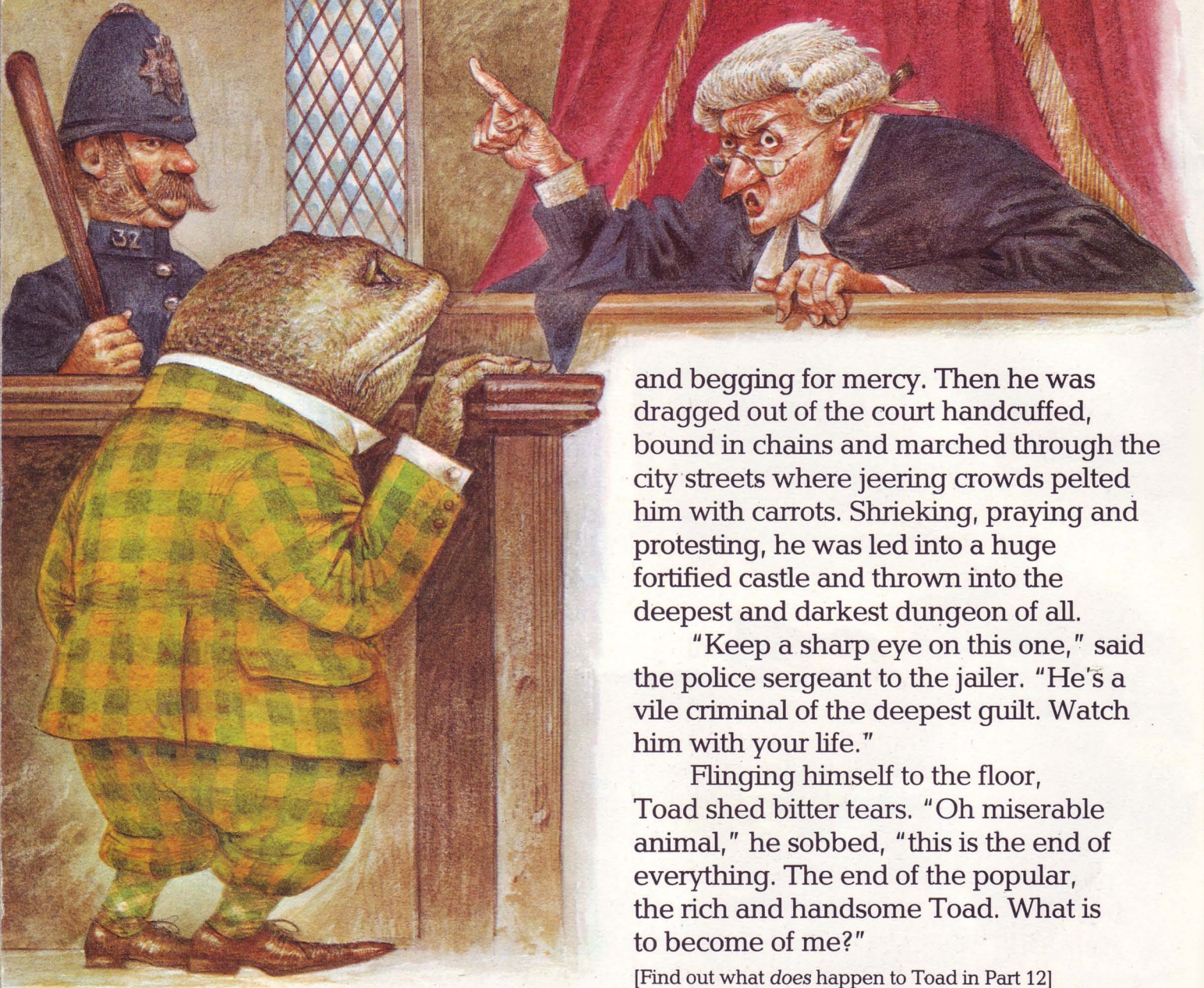


The car stood in the middle of the inn-yard, gleaming in the sunlight. Toad walked boldly up to it, and examined it very closely.

"I, er, wonder," he said to himself. "I wonder if this sort of car starts easily?"

The next moment, hardly knowing what he was doing, Toad got hold of the starting handle, gave it a brisk turn, then, as if in a dream, found himself in the driver's seat. With a great roar, he swung the car out through the yard and sped off down the high street in a cloud of dust. He was last seen hurtling into the countryside, singing at the top of his voice.





and begging for mercy. Then he was dragged out of the court handcuffed, bound in chains and marched through the city streets where jeering crowds pelted him with carrots. Shrieking, praying and protesting, he was led into a huge fortified castle and thrown into the deepest and darkest dungeon of all.

"Keep a sharp eye on this one," said the police sergeant to the jailer. "He's a vile criminal of the deepest guilt. Watch him with your life."

Flinging himself to the floor, Toad shed bitter tears. "Oh miserable animal," he sobbed, "this is the end of everything. The end of the popular, the rich and handsome Toad. What is to become of me?"

[Find out what does happen to Toad in Part 12]

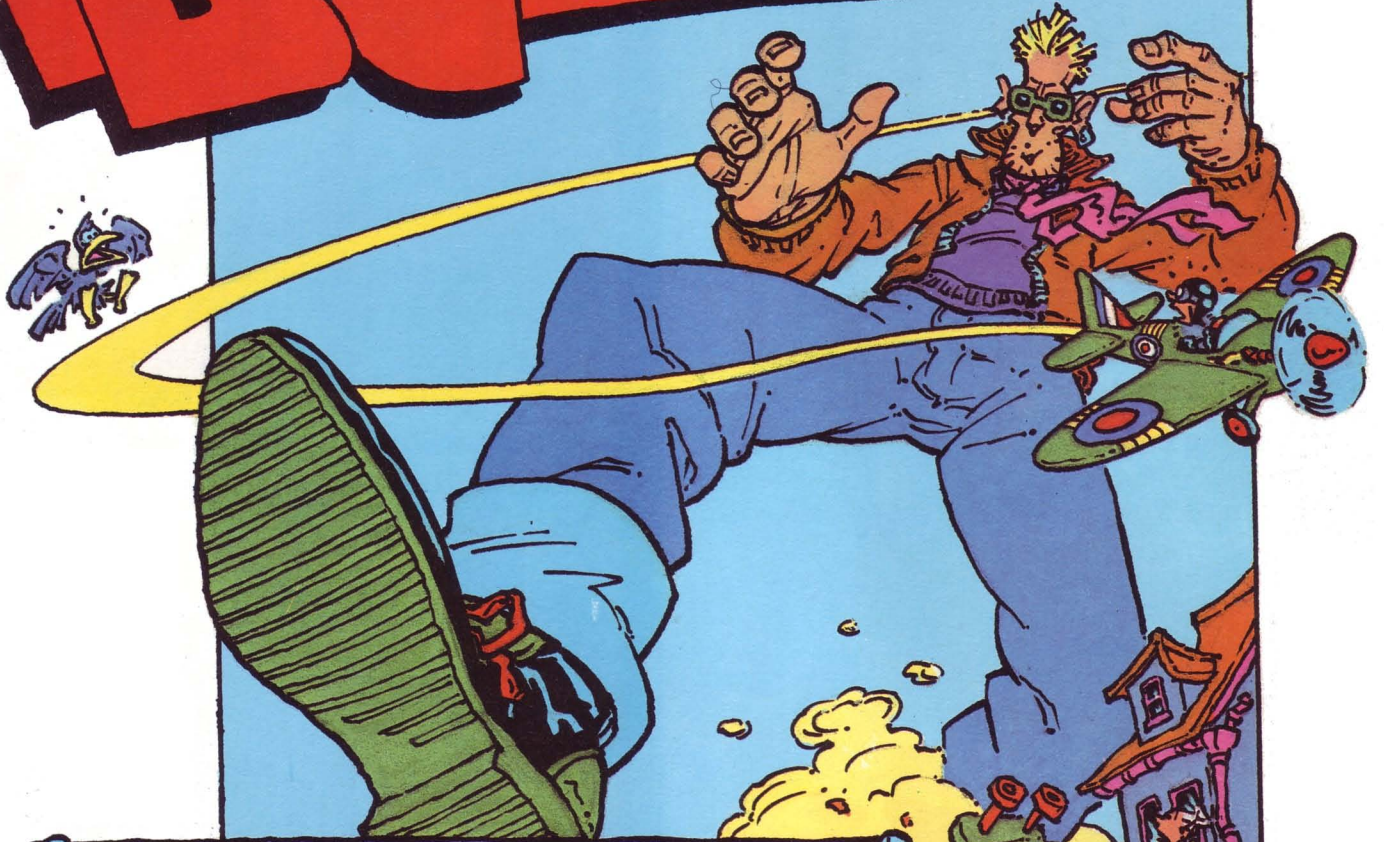
But Toad's joy was short-lived. His next appearance was in a court-room charged with stealing a car, reckless driving and being very rude to a fat, rosy-cheeked policeman.

"Prisoner," said the judge sternly, "pull yourself together and try to stand up straight. You are a hardened ruffian and rogue. The only difficulty I see, in an otherwise clear case, is what punishment to give you. Taking into account the gravity of your crimes, and your insolent, arrogant manner, twenty years imprisonment, is to my mind, lenient."

Toad fell to his knees, whimpering



BIG GUMBO!



Great big gawky Gumbo Cole
Couldn't stop growing to save his soul.
Gave up eating, gave up drink,
Sat in the closet, hoped to shrink;
But he grew and grew till he burst the door,
His head went through to the upper floor,
His feet reached down to the cellar door.
He grew still more till the house came down
And Gumbo Cole stepped out on the town
And smashed it in like an old ant-hill!
Never stopped growing, never will,
Ten times as tall as a telephone pole,
Too big for his breeches — Gumbo Cole!

PETER RICHARDSON © 1984



IN PART 12 OF

STORY

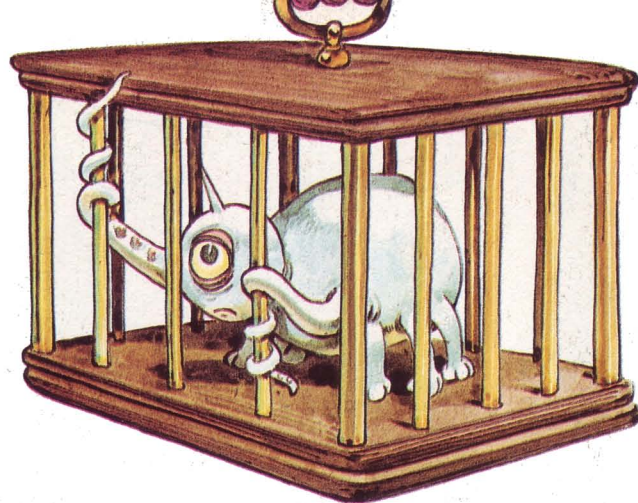
Teller

2

GROGRE THE GOLDEN OGRE frees a baby Slurm – but where will it lead?

TOAD OF TOAD HALL is out and running!
Join him in his great escape!

"Anything you can do, I can do better!" That's what **THE CHALLENGING BULL** tells Elephant, Rhinoceros and the Little Red Rat



People keep funny things in their lofts – but few as odd as Martha's **BOX OF ROBBERS**

PLUS **MINNIE THE FLOATING WITCH**
and **AN ESKIMO BABY**

Stories read by
RICHARD BRIERS, PATRICIA HODGE,
NIGEL LAMBERT & ANTONIA SWINSON

