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PART 12

STORY Teller

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

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STORY Teller 2

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THE BOOK

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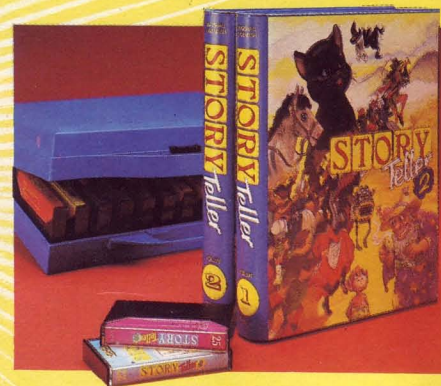
THE TAPE

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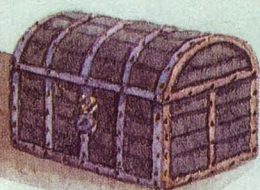
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BOX OF ROBBERS

Martha was all alone in the house and feeling very bored. "I know," she thought after a while, "I'll fetch my doll's house from the attic and play with that." So she climbed the stairs to the little room under the roof. Inside there were boxes and trunks, piles of old carpet, furniture and bundles of clothing. And in a dusty corner she found her doll's house.

Martha was about to pick it up, when she noticed the black wooden chest her Uncle Walter had sent from Italy. Martha had been told there was no key, and that Uncle Walter had forbidden anyone to open it.

It was a big chest, studded with big brass nails. Martha longed to see what was in it. "Oh, if only I had a key . . ." she thought. Then, she remembered the big basket of keys on the shelf in the linen cupboard. Perhaps one of them would unlock the

mysterious chest?

Martha tried one key after another. At last, an ancient brass key slipped into the lock. Martha heard a click — and as the lid flew up, she jumped back in amazement.





Slowly and carefully, a man stepped out, stretched himself, then bowed to her politely. He was tall and thin and his face was suntanned.

Then, another man emerged from the chest, yawning. He was middle-sized, and his skin was as tanned as the first.

While Martha stared, open-mouthed, a third man crawled out of the chest. He had a suntan, too, but was short and fat.

And they all wore long, red velvet jackets, braided with gold, and sky-blue satin breeches. Their hats had broad brims and ribbons fluttered from the crowns. They had big, gold rings in their

ears and knives and pistols in their belts. Their black eyes glittered, and they wore long, curling moustaches.

"My! You were heavy!" exclaimed the fat one. "You squeezed me out of shape."

"There's no need to be disagreeable," said the middle-sized man.

"Permit us to introduce ourselves," said the thin man to Martha. "This is Luigi," — the fat man nodded. "And this is Beni," — the middle-sized man bowed. "And I am Victor. We're Italian bandits."

"Bandits!" cried Martha, in horror.

"Perhaps in all the world there are



not three bandits more terrible and fierce," boasted Beni.

"That's true," said Luigi nodding.

"But . . . it's wicked!" cried Martha.

"You're right," said Victor. "We're extremely wicked."

"That's true," said Luigi nodding.

"But it's . . . it's naughty!" said Martha.

"Naughty?" gasped Beni with a horrified look. "I little thought to be called that — and by a lady! Oh! Oh! But how are we to be bandits, unless we're wicked?"

"Well, stop being bandits!"

Luigi sat down on an old chair and

wiped his forehead with a yellow silk scarf. Beni and Victor stared at Martha with pale faces.

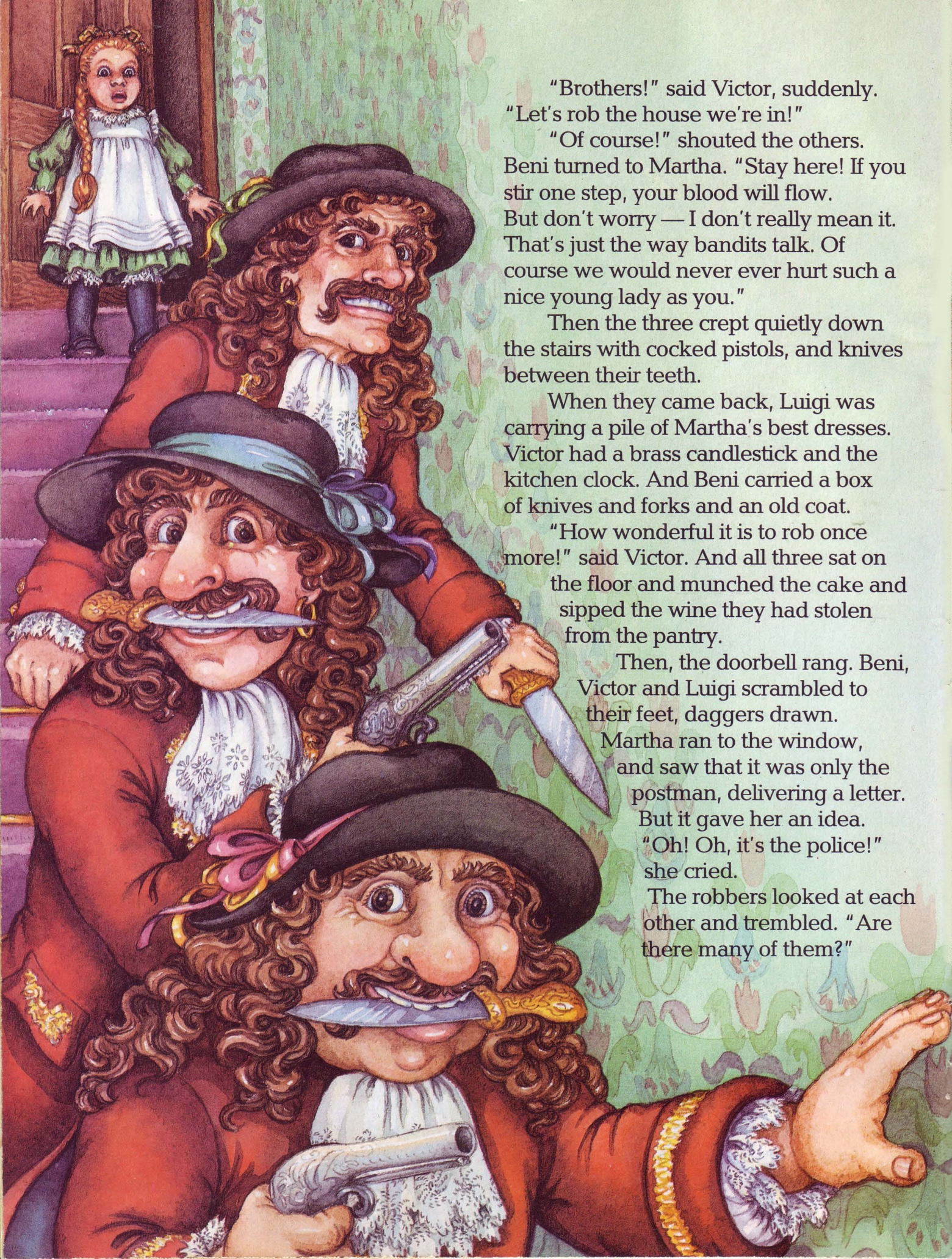
"But what shall we do for a living?" all three said.

"Oh there's lots to do. You could drive a bus or be a clerk — or, or become policemen."

"Policemen?" they said, shaking their heads. "But our business is to rob."

Martha tried to think. "I know it's hard, but you could try."

"No!" cried Beni. "Bandits we have always been and bandits we must remain! There are always people to rob!"



"Brothers!" said Victor, suddenly.
"Let's rob the house we're in!"

"Of course!" shouted the others.
Beni turned to Martha. "Stay here! If you stir one step, your blood will flow. But don't worry — I don't really mean it. That's just the way bandits talk. Of course we would never ever hurt such a nice young lady as you."

Then the three crept quietly down the stairs with cocked pistols, and knives between their teeth.

When they came back, Luigi was carrying a pile of Martha's best dresses. Victor had a brass candlestick and the kitchen clock. And Beni carried a box of knives and forks and an old coat.

"How wonderful it is to rob once more!" said Victor. And all three sat on the floor and munched the cake and sipped the wine they had stolen from the pantry.

Then, the doorbell rang. Beni, Victor and Luigi scrambled to their feet, daggers drawn.

Martha ran to the window, and saw that it was only the postman, delivering a letter. But it gave her an idea.

"Oh! Oh, it's the police!" she cried.

The robbers looked at each other and trembled. "Are there many of them?"



understand. Perhaps it's those cakes we ate."

"Could be," answered Luigi's voice.

So Martha sat on the lid and pressed it down with all her weight. With a click the chest snapped shut. And with a broad, happy smile, Martha turned the old brass key.

Now this story should teach us not to interfere with things that do not concern us. Because if Martha had not opened Uncle Walter's chest, she would not have had to carry all the robber's plunder downstairs.

"A hundred and twelve!" exclaimed Martha after pretending to count.

"Then we are lost!" declared Beni.

"Are they armed?"

"Oh yes," said Martha, "with guns and swords and pistols and axes and . . . and . . . cannons!"

All three groaned, but Beni said, "I hope they kill us quickly."

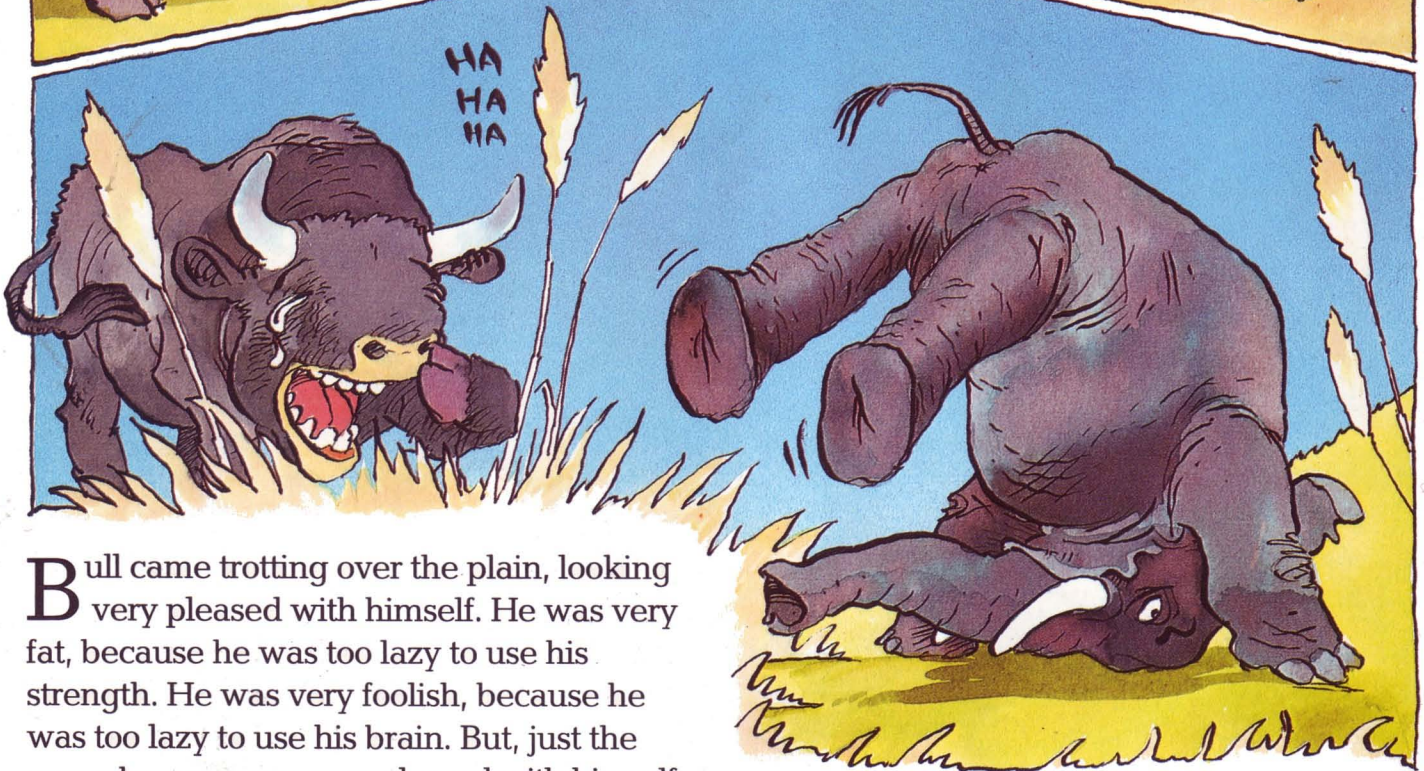
"You are my friends, aren't you?" said Martha turning from the window.

"Then I shall save you. I suggest you get back into the chest. I'll close the lid, then the police won't find you. But you must be quick! They'll soon be here!"

Into the chest jumped Luigi, lying flat on the bottom. Next in went Beni and, pausing only to kiss Martha's hand, Victor lay on top. When they were all settled in, Martha pressed the lid down tightly. "Try pushing down more," she said. "Squeeze down more. Squeeze down."

"I'm doing my best," snapped Victor. "We fitted nicely before. I don't





Bull came trotting over the plain, looking very pleased with himself. He was very fat, because he was too lazy to use his strength. He was very foolish, because he was too lazy to use his brain. But, just the same, he was very, very pleased with himself.

At the edge of the plain Bull met Elephant. He kicked his heels and shouted:

"I am the Challenging Bull of the plain,
The Bull of great strength and
remarkable brain.

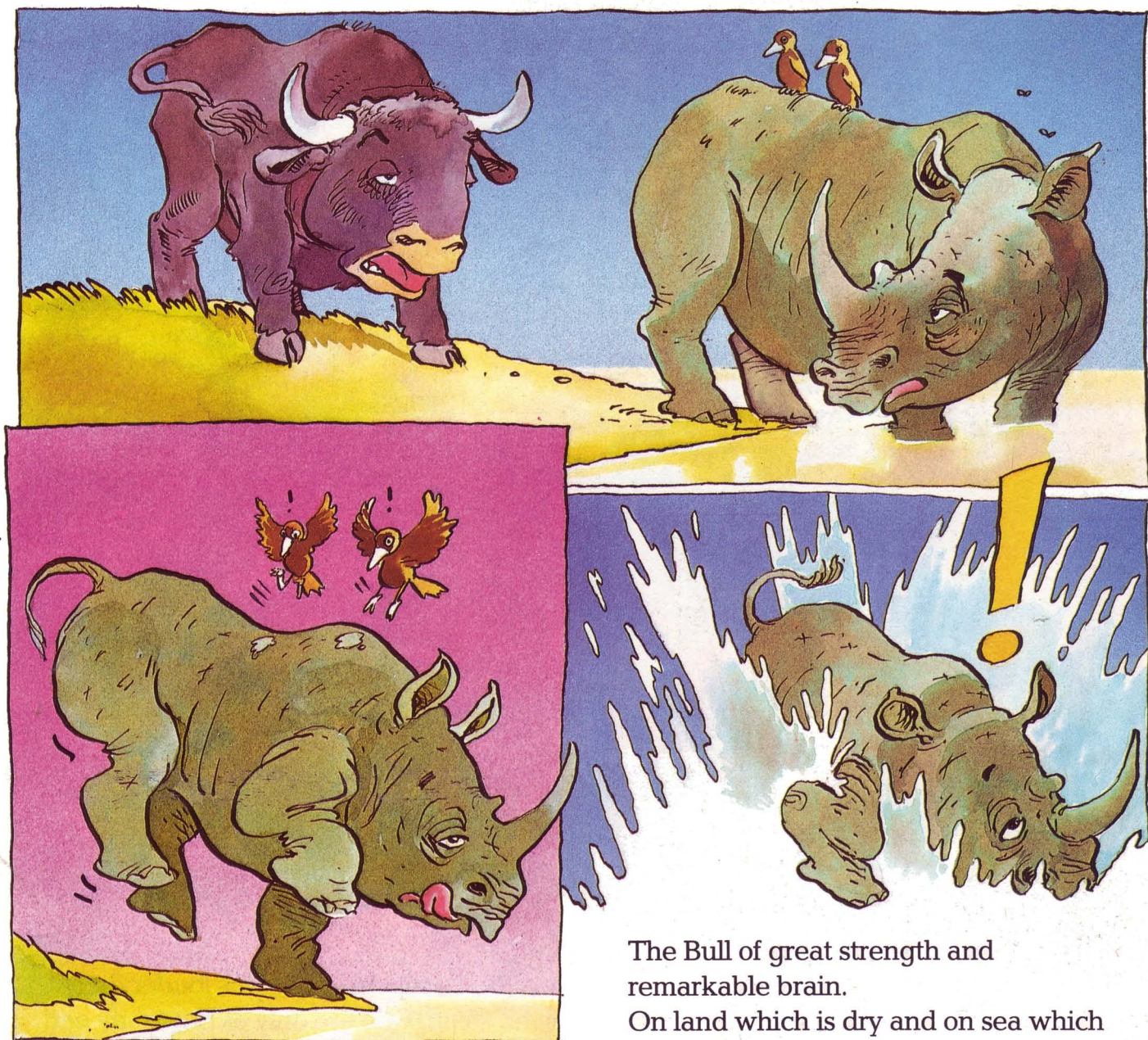
On land which is dry, and on sea which
is wetter,

Anything you can do I can do better.
I challenge you."

"What is your challenge?" asked
Elephant.

"I challenge you to stand on your
head."

Elephant knelt on his big front knees.
He rested the top of his head on the ground
and waggled and jiggled trying to stand on
his head. But however hard he tried he just
could not do it.



Bull began to bellow with laughter. He laughed until he lost his breath. Elephant stood up and said, "Well, show me how you stand on *your* head."

"I could have shown you yesterday," said Bull. "Perhaps I could show you tomorrow. But today I lay in the sun too long, and my head is aching. How can I stand on my head when it aches?"

And he tossed his horns and trotted away. At the edge of the swamp he met Rhinoceros. He lifted his head to the sky and shouted:

"I am the Challenging Bull of the plain,

The Bull of great strength and remarkable brain.

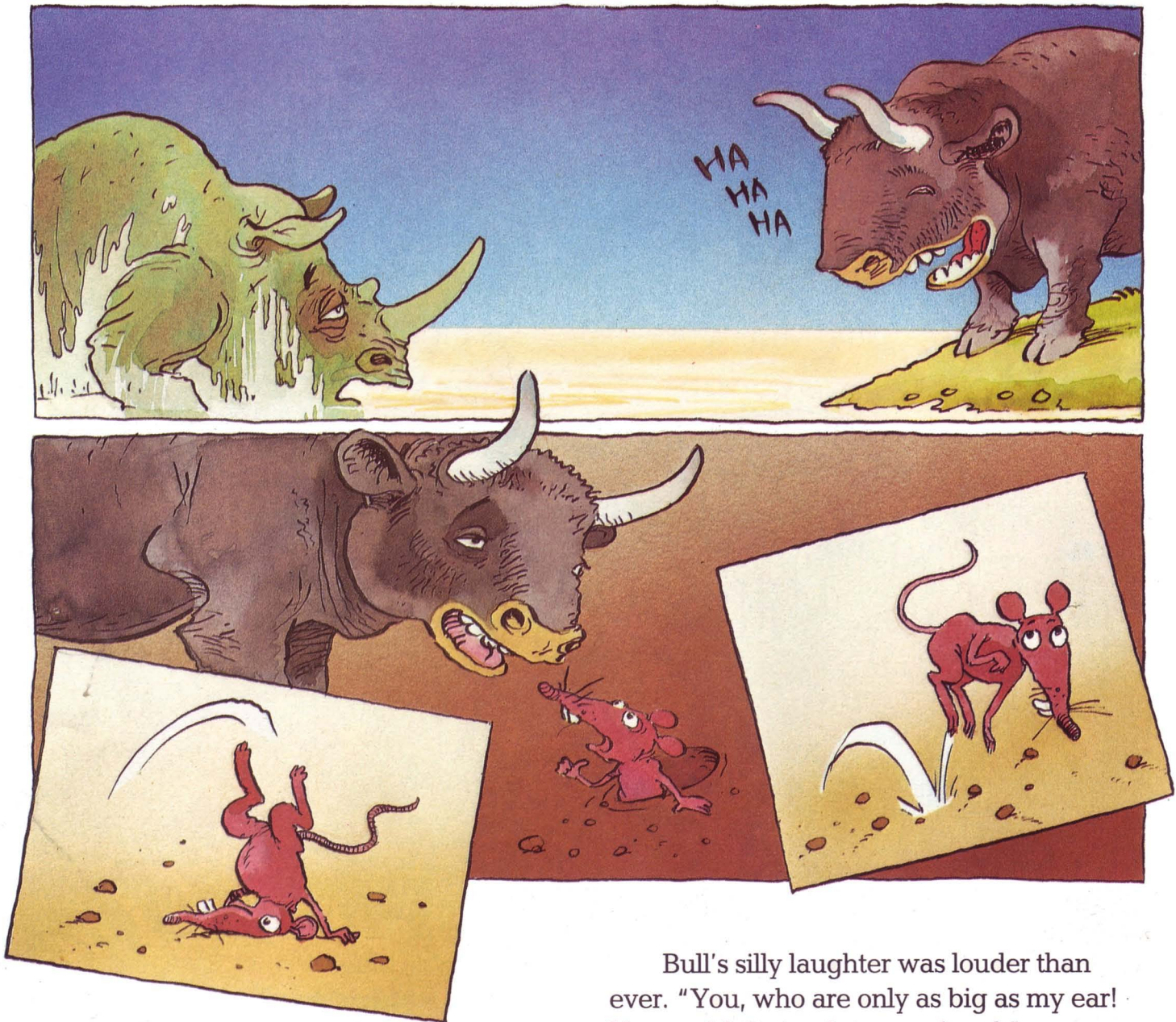
On land which is dry and on sea which is wetter,

Anything you can do I can do better. I challenge you."

"What is your challenge?" asked Rhinoceros.

"I challenge you to hop on three legs."

Rhinoceros bent his front, left leg beneath him, and made a hop that changed to a wobble. The wobble got worse and Rhinoceros toppled, and fell with a splash, into the muddy swamp. Bull began to bellow with laughter. He laughed until it hurt his ribs. Rhinoceros rose from the swamp, and said, "Well, show me how you hop on *your* three legs."



"I could have shown you yesterday," said Bull. "Perhaps, I could show you tomorrow. But today I ran in the prickly grass and it hurt my legs. How can I hop on three legs when they hurt?"

And he tossed his horns and trotted away. He went to the top of a hill, but he did not see anyone. There was no-one to challenge.

"Ha! They're afraid that the great Bull of the plain will challenge them."

Then, out of a hole popped little Red Rat.

"You can challenge *me*, if you like."

Bull's silly laughter was louder than ever. "You, who are only as big as my ear! You couldn't stand on your head."

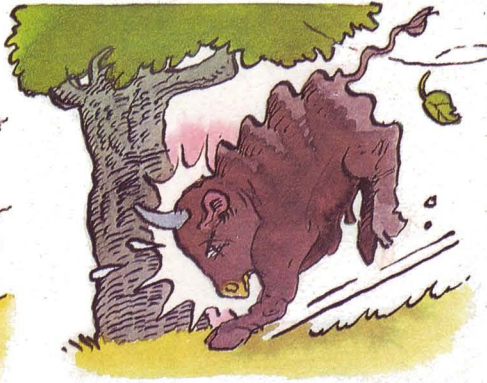
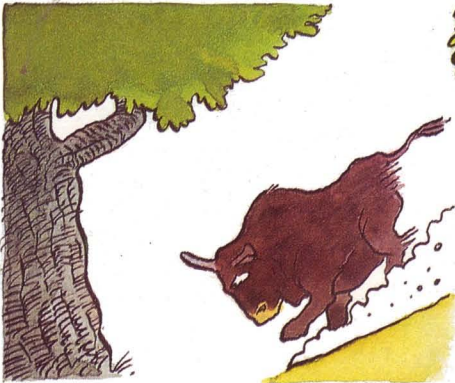
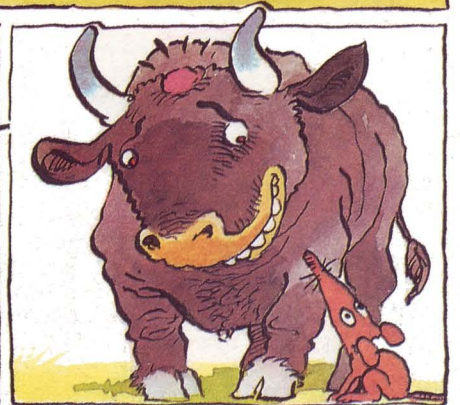
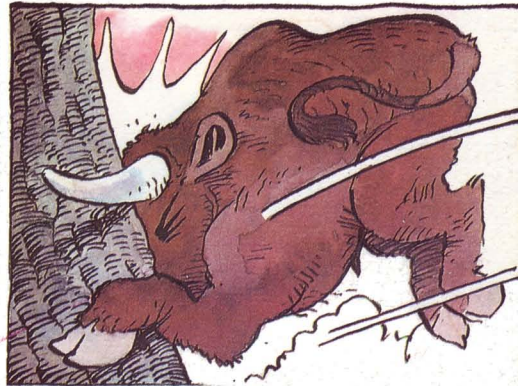
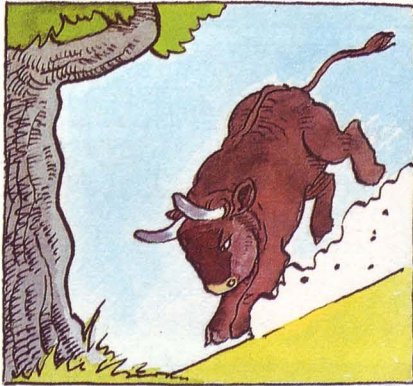
"It just so happens I can," said Rat. And he stood on his head, kicking his legs, and smiling all over his upside-down face.

"Oh well," said Bull. "It's easy enough if your head doesn't ache. But you couldn't hop on three legs."

"It just so happens I can," said Rat. And he bent his right, front leg and bounced up and down like a red, rubber ball.

"Oh well," said Bull. "It's easy enough if your legs don't hurt, but you couldn't . . . you couldn't . . ."

"What?" said Rat.



Bull was not laughing any more. His little brain was trying to think. He looked down the hill and saw a huge tree with branches like the arms of a giant.

"You couldn't knock down that tree," he said.

Little Red Rat sighed deeply.

"It's a very big job for a very small rat. But you are a big Bull. Why don't you try?"

Bull's little brain could not find an excuse. "I'll charge and knock it down with my head," he said.

With a thunder of hooves he charged down the hill, straight at the tree trunk. Bang

went his head as he crashed into the tree.

The tree did not even shiver. Bull came back to the top of the hill.

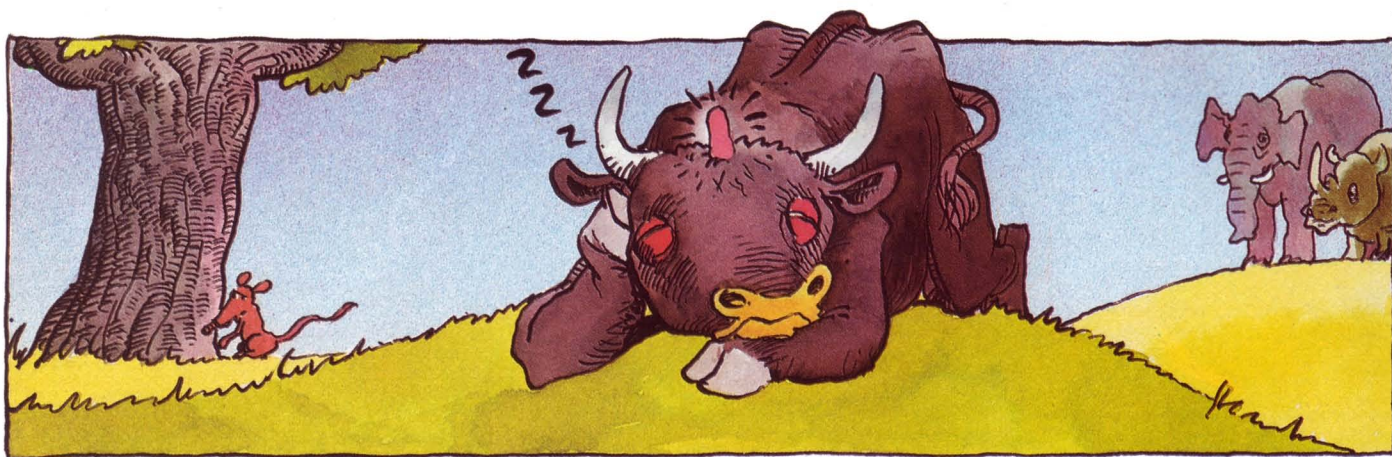
"Of course, that was only the first hit to loosen the roots," he said casually.

Then he ran down the hill again, straight at the tree. Crash! went his head as he banged into the trunk. A single leaf came floating down.

Bull staggered to the top of the hill.

"Oh dear, I feel dreadful. I feel really dreadful."

Then he fell down on the grass with his eyes closed.



Rat went quietly down the hillside. Nibble, nibble, nibble, went his teeth. Nibble, nibble, nibble at the thick tree trunk. Elephant came, and Rhinoceros came, and they sat on the hill-top to watch. Hour after hour, hour after hour, Rat's little teeth nibbled.

The tree sighed and rustled its leaves. It groaned and shuffled its branches. Nibble, nibble, nibble. The tree swayed on its trunk. It held its branches up to the sky. And as the sun sank low and the shadows lengthened, the tree moaned and tilted towards the hill.

Rat, Elephant and Rhinoceros ran back out of danger. But the Challenging Bull stayed just where he was, fast asleep in the

darkening shadows. For a minute the tree seemed to hang in the air. Then, splintering, snapping, cracking and swishing, it threw itself on to the ground.

Nobody spoke. Nobody moved. Then the leaves of the fallen tree rustled again, and the branches began to shuffle again. Something was underneath it.

Up came the face of the Challenging Bull, dusty and dirty and very surprised. Elephant, Rhinoceros and Rat looked at him, and laughed. They laughed until they lost their breath. They laughed until it hurt their ribs. But Bull did not laugh. He did not think it was funny at all.

Barney's Winter Present

Barney, the little brown stoat who lived in Scotland, was very worried indeed. It was getting colder and colder. All the other animals had made cosy winter homes.

Badger had dug a deep burrow in the woodland with his powerful claws. Red Squirrel, after hiding his nuts, was fast asleep in his tree house. Hedgehog slept soundly under a pile of autumn leaves, snug and warm.

"Och dear, what will I do? How can I hibernate if I've no cosy winter home?" sighed Barney.

"Och, no!" he cried. "It's beginning to snow. What am I going to do?" Then he looked down at his nice brown coat and saw that

it was beginning to turn white.

"That's because I'm worrying so much," he thought.

"I'll go and ask old Otter's advice."

Otter lived down by the loch, under the roots of a tree. Barney shouted loudly, "Otter, please wake up. I need your help!"

"What do you want?" asked a deep voice.

"I've no winter home to sleep in and I'm worried that my coat is turning white."

"Sorry, there's no room here. Why don't you ask Wise Owl?"





"No fear. He'd have me for supper. I'll ask Hedgehog instead." But all Barney could hear from the pile of leaves was the sound of snoring. "He'll probably sleep until spring arrives," he sighed. Next, he went to Red Squirrel's tree. "Red Squirrel, please wake up. I need your help," he shouted as loudly as he could.

"Is it springtime?" he asked sleepily.

"No, of course not. I've no cosy winter home to sleep in and I'm so worried that my coat is turning white," explained Barney.

"Hmm . . . well . . . I must have some nuts first, I'm hungry. Now, where did I store them I wonder?"

"I saw you hiding them at the foot of the big fir tree over there."

"Thanks," said Red Squirrel, scurrying over the snow which was beginning to cover the ground like a big white carpet. "Now, let's see how we can solve your problem. There's no room in my tree. I know — go and find a winter house to sleep in, you'll stop worrying, and your coat will turn brown again. Brrrrr! I must get back to sleep again."

"So much for Red Squirrel's help," said Barney, gloomily. "I just don't know how to start making a winter home."

Suddenly two wild ponies came galloping towards him, over the soft powdery snow.

"Watch where you're going!" yelled Barney.

The ponies stopped in surprise. "Och, it's a little white stoat," said one. "They cannot be seen so easily in the snow with their white coats."

"D-d'you mean to say that *all* stoats have white coats in winter?" asked Barney in astonishment.

"Of course they do," said the other pony, "then they're not so easily seen by hunters and other animals who want to have them for supper."



"That's right," said the first pony. "They're even whiter in the north of Scotland, all except for their tails. They always stay black at the tips."

"Och dear!" cried Barney, feeling very foolish. "I thought my coat was turning white because I was so worried about having no winter home!"

The wild ponies laughed and laughed. "Your new winter coat is a present from Mother Nature," they explained. "She gives us warmer coats in winter too. We don't need to hibernate."

Barney was thinking very hard. "Well then, I don't need a cosy home to sleep in all winter. I don't hibernate like the hedgehogs and squirrels."

"Of course you don't. You're just like us. It's easy enough to find shelter

day or night, if we really need it."

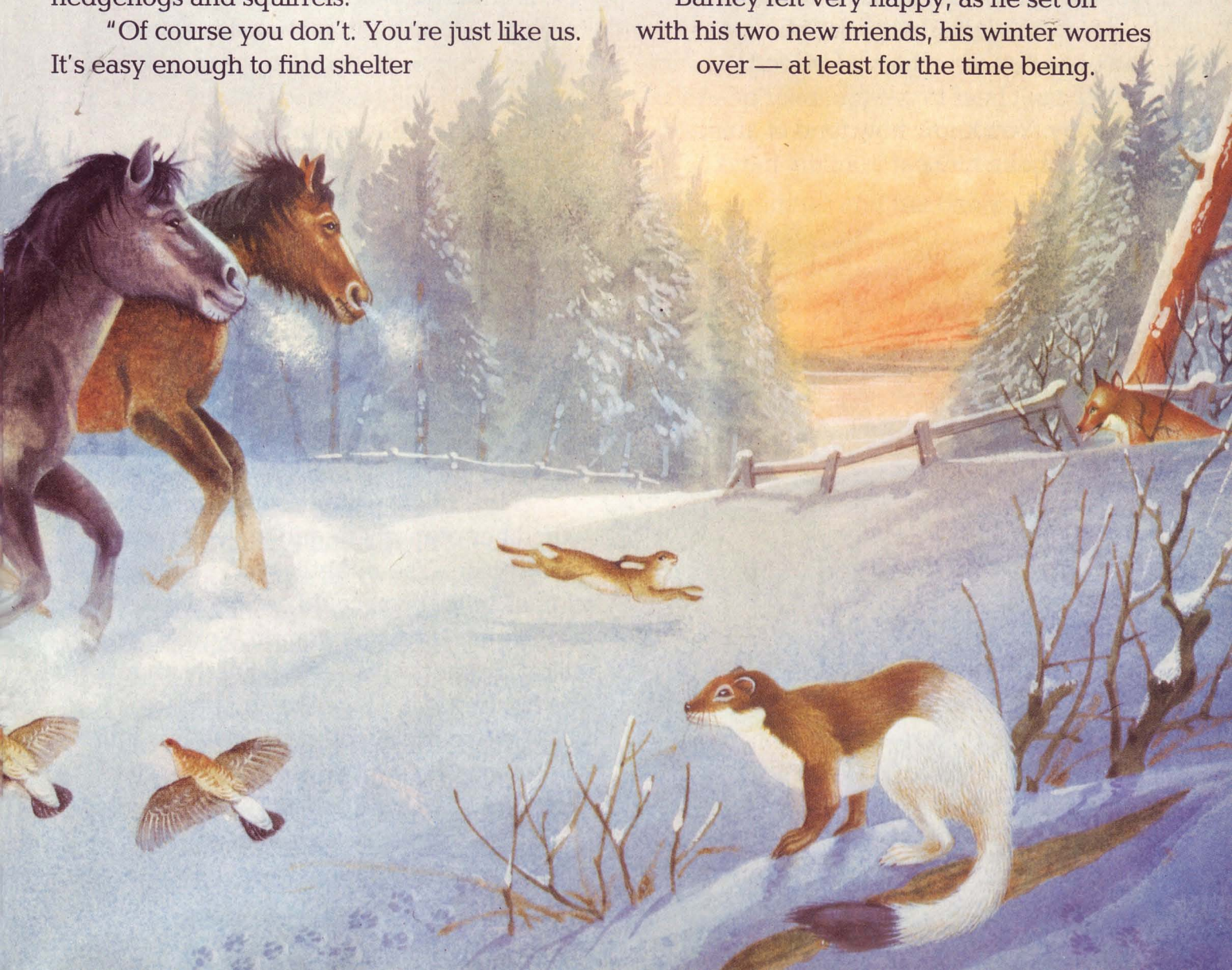
"This is great news. Thank you for helping me," smiled Barney.

"Och, by the way, do you know that your lovely white fur is called 'ermine'?" the ponies smiled.

"Well fancy that!" laughed Barney.

"Come with us," said the ponies. "We know where there are some stoats just like you, not too far away."

Barney felt very happy, as he set off with his two new friends, his winter worries over — at least for the time being.





Toad of Toad Hall

Toad lay on the floor of his prison cell, crying and wailing and refusing all food. "Oh, oh unhappy and forsaken Toad," he sobbed, "how can I hope to be free again?"

Now the jailer had a daughter, a good-hearted girl who said to her father one day, "I can't bear to see that poor beast so unhappy. You know how fond of animals I am. I'll make him eat from my hand,

and sit up and do all sorts of things."

And as the days passed, Toad grew better and more like his old self again. But one morning the girl did not seem to Toad to be paying proper attention to his witty sayings and sparkling comments.

"Toad," she said thoughtfully, "just listen, please. I have an aunt who's a washerwoman . . ."

"There, there," said Toad, "never mind. Think no more about it. I have several aunts who *ought* to be washerwomen."

"Do be quiet Toad. I'm trying to think and you hurt my head. As I said, I have an aunt who does the washing for all the prisoners in this castle. She takes the washing home on a Monday and brings it back on Friday night. Today is Thursday.

"Now this is what occurs to me. If you asked her properly — and gave her a few gold coins — she might let you have her clothes so that you could escape dressed as the official washerwoman. You're very alike in many ways — particularly about the figure."

"We're not alike," said Toad in a huff. "I've a very elegant figure. And you surely wouldn't have Mr Toad of Toad Hall going about the country disguised as a washerwoman!"





But after much soul-searching and protestation, Toad finally agreed to the plan.

So the next evening the girl brought her aunt into Toad's cell, and in return for a few gold coins, the old lady gave Toad her cotton dress, apron, shawl and black bonnet.

Shaking with laughter, the girl dressed Toad in the old lady's clothes. "You're the very image of her," she giggled. "Now goodbye, Toad, and good luck."

With a quaking heart Toad set out. It seemed hours before he crossed the last courtyard and heard the wicket-gate in the great outer door click behind him, felt the fresh air of the outer world upon his brow and knew that he was free.

He walked quickly towards the lights of the town, not knowing in the least what he should do. But as he walked along he saw some red and green lights a little way off, and heard the sound of puffing and

snorting engines and the banging sound of shunted trucks.

"This is a piece of luck," he thought. "A railway station is the thing I want most in the world at this moment." Toad sighed contentedly and pulled his shawl about him.



He made his way to the station and found a train bound for Toad Hall leaving in just half an hour!

"More luck!" said Toad, as he went to the ticket-office to buy his ticket.

Then, to his horror, he remembered that he had left both his coat and waistcoat behind him in his cell and with them his money! Full of despair, he wandered blindly down the platform where the train was standing, tears trickling down each side of his nose. Very soon his escape would be discovered, the hunt would be up, he would be caught, loaded with chains and dragged back to prison. What was to be done?

As he pondered, he found himself opposite the engine.

"Hello, mother!" called the driver. "What's the matter with you? You don't look very cheerful."



"Oh, sir!" said Toad, crying again. "I'm a poor, unhappy washerwoman and I've lost all my money and can't pay for a ticket. And I *must* get home tonight somehow. Whatever am I to do? Oh dear, oh dear!"

"A bad business, indeed," said the engine-driver. "Lost your money, you say, can't get home, got kids, too, waiting for you, I shouldn't wonder?"

"Any amount of 'em," sobbed Toad. "And they'll be hungry — and playing with matches — upsetting lamps and quarrelling and carrying on generally. Oh dear, oh dear! What am I to do?"

"Well, I'll tell you what *I'll* do. You're a washerwoman. Very well. If you'll wash a few shirts for me when you get home and send 'em along, I'll give you a ride on my engine."

Toad's misery turned to rapture as he scrambled up into the cab of the engine. Of



course, he had never washed a shirt in his life, and could not if he tried. "But," he thought, "when I get home to Toad Hall, I'll send the driver some money to pay for his washing and that'll be the same thing or better."

The guard waved his flag, the engine-driver whistled and the train moved out of the station. But as the speed increased, and Toad thought of what he would have for supper as soon as he got home, he suddenly noticed that the engine-driver was leaning over the side of the engine and listening very hard.

"That's very strange," said the driver. "We're the last train running tonight, yet I

could swear that I heard another engine following us.

"It is an engine," he called out presently, "coming along at a great pace! It looks as if we're being pursued. How very peculiar!

Toad froze, and, crouching in the coal-dust, tried hard to think of something to do.

"They're gaining on us fast!" cried the driver. "And the engine is crowded with men like ancient warders, waving halberds. And there're policemen with truncheons and men who look like detectives, waving revolvers and walking sticks. And they're *all* shouting the same thing — 'Stop, stop, stop!'"



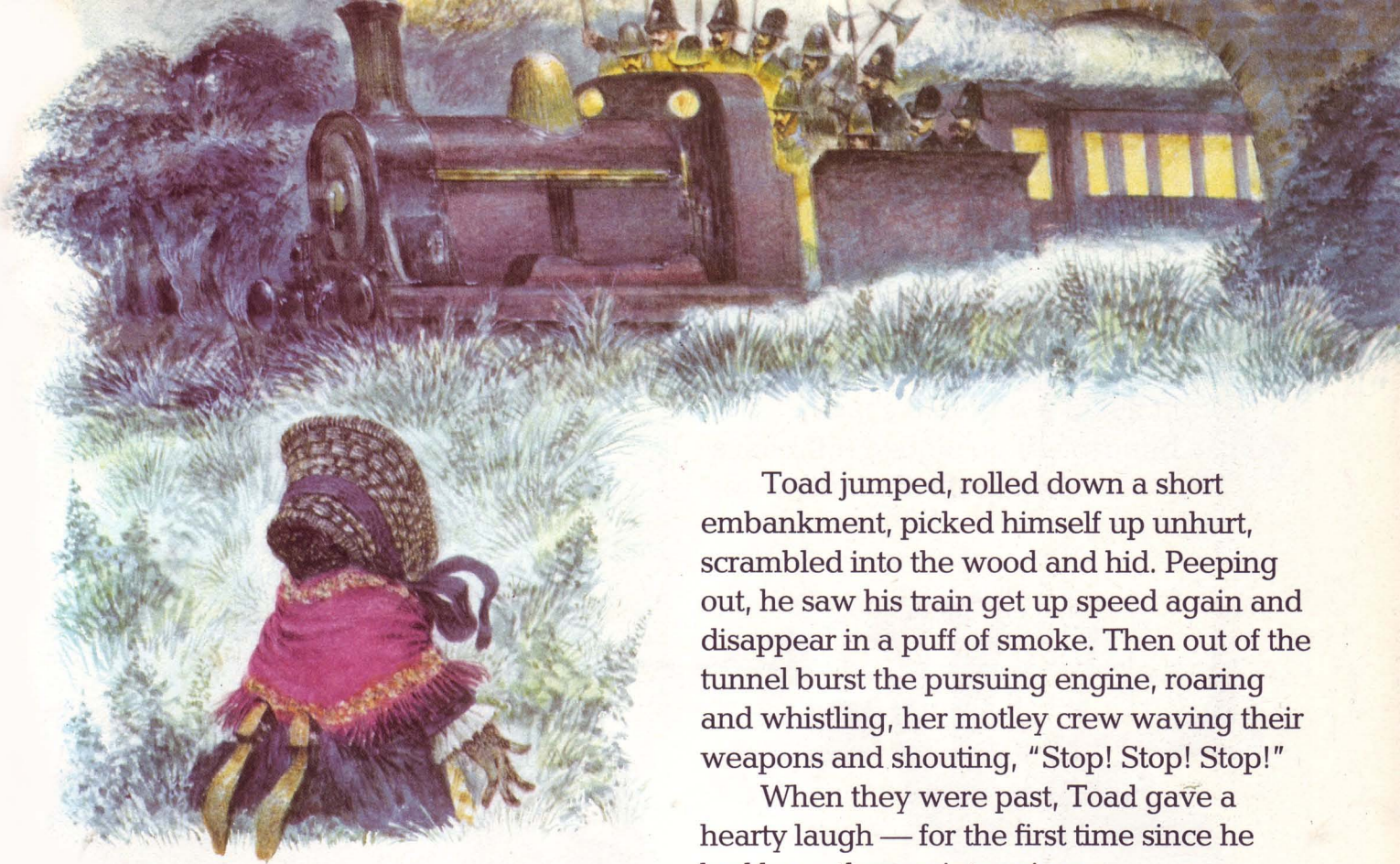


Toad fell on his knees among the coals, and raising a clasped paw, cried, "Save me, oh save me, dear, kind, Mr Engine-driver. I'm not the simple washerwoman I seem to be! I've no children waiting for me at home. I'm Toad — the well-known, popular Mr Toad of Toad Hall. I've just escaped from prison. And if those fellows on that engine recapture me, it'll be chains and bread-and-water and straw and misery once more for poor, unhappy Toad!"

The engine-driver looked down at him sternly and said, "I fear that you've been a wicked toad. But you're in trouble and distress, so I won't desert you. I don't like being ordered about by policemen when I'm on my engine. And the sight of an animal in tears always makes me feel queer and soft-hearted. So cheer up, Toad! I'll do my best, and we may beat them yet."

Shovelling furiously, they piled up more coal. The furnace roared, the sparks flew, the engine leaped and swung, but still





their pursuers gained on them.

"It's no good, Toad. There's just one thing left for us to do, and it's your only chance, so listen carefully to what I tell you.

"A short way ahead is a long tunnel and on the other side of that, the line passes through a thick wood. I'll put on all the speed I can while we're running through the tunnel. When we're through, I'll put on the brakes as hard as I can, and the moment it's safe you must jump and hide in the wood, before they get through the tunnel and see you. Then it's full speed ahead again, and they can chase me if they like, for as long as they like. Now, be ready to jump when I say!"

The train shot through the tunnel and the engine rushed and rattled and roared, until at last they shot out at the other end. Quickly, the driver shut off the steam and put on the brakes. Toad got down on to the step, and as the train slowed down, he heard the driver shout, "Jump!"

Toad jumped, rolled down a short embankment, picked himself up unhurt, scrambled into the wood and hid. Peeping out, he saw his train get up speed again and disappear in a puff of smoke. Then out of the tunnel burst the pursuing engine, roaring and whistling, her motley crew waving their weapons and shouting, "Stop! Stop! Stop!"

When they were past, Toad gave a hearty laugh — for the first time since he had been thrown into prison.

But he soon stopped laughing when he realised that it was now very late and dark and cold, and he was in an unknown wood, with no money and no chance of supper and far from his friends and home.

So at last, cold and hungry, he sought the shelter of a hollow tree, where, with some branches and dead leaves, he made himself as comfortable a bed as he could, and slept soundly till the morning.

[What fate awaits Toad now! Find out in Part 13]



Minnie the Floating Witch



Minnie the witch lay on the grass by the river, flicking through her book of spells. The Head Witch had said it was time she practised casting a few, but the day was hot and sunny — much too nice for doing any work.

"How to turn a frog into a prince . . . (yawn) . . . take three spoonfuls of moondust . . . (yawn) . . . stir into a cauldron of . . . um . . . bat juice . . ."

Minnie lay back on the grass and looked up at the small, fluffy clouds drifting across the sky.

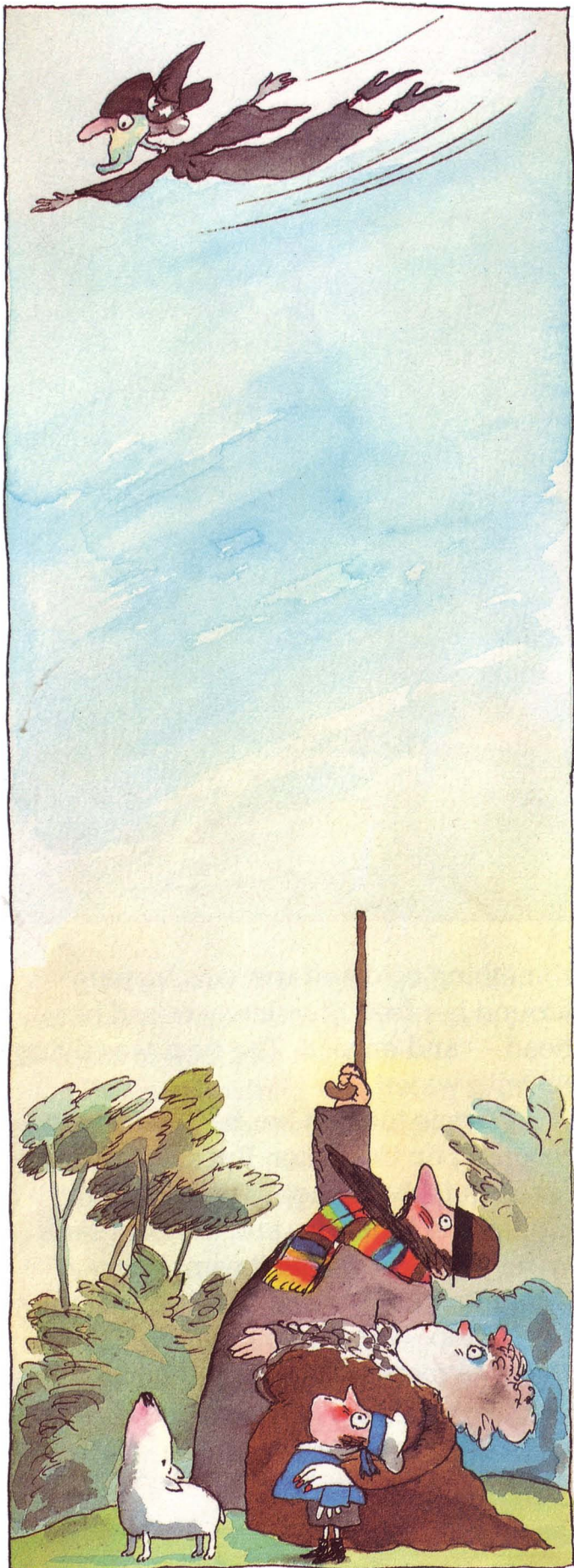
"Oh, wouldn't it be nice to be a cloud just floating along," she thought.

Suddenly she sat up.

"Ooh, that's what I'll do. I'll learn to float!" she cried, and quickly turned the pages of her book of spells.

"Ah, here we are, *How to change into a cloud*.

Cottonwool, cottonwool,
Clouds up high,
That's where I want to be,
Up in the sky.
Abracadabra."



Whoosh! In a flash Minnie found herself soaring up, up into the clouds and then floating — very, very gently — through the sky.

"Oh, this is the life," thought Minnie as she drifted along. "I wish the Head Witch could see me now."

"What's that funny black thing?" asked the people on the ground as they saw Minnie floating by.



Just at that moment the spell wore off and Minnie plunged down, down, down — splash into the river.

"Help! Help! I'm sinking," she shouted as she struggled to the bank.

"Why don't you learn to swim?" suggested a frog as he watched Minnie struggle out of the water.

"I'm not interested in swimming," she snapped. "What I want to do is float. Now what else floats apart from clouds? I know — a boat. Let's find a spell for a boat."





Again she looked through her book of spells.

"Ah. Here, here we are . . .

In the river, in the river
Conjure up a boat,
So I can lie in it,
And on the river float.
Hey presto!"

And in front of her was a little red boat — bobbing up and down at the water's edge. With a squeal of delight, Minnie jumped in and pushed off. As the boat floated out into the middle of the river, she lay back and sighed happily.

"Now this is what I call floating. Marvellous."

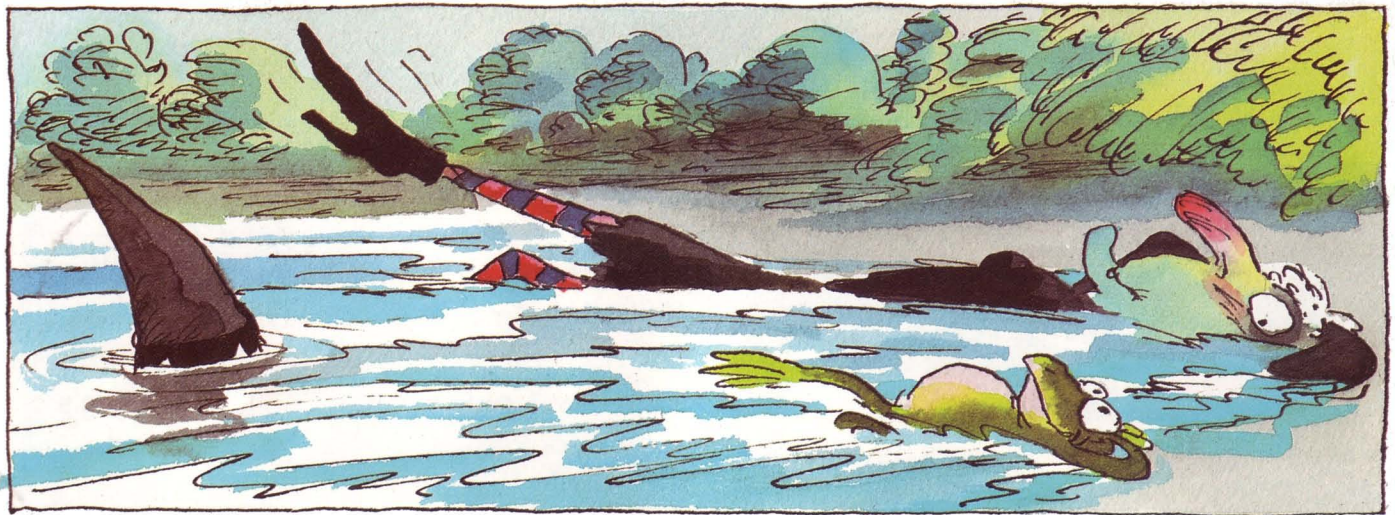
Then, suddenly, she realised

something cold and wet was lapping around her feet. She slowly raised her head — and gasped. The boat was filling up with water!

Minnie took off her hat and began scooping up the water. But she could not scoop quickly enough. The water got higher and higher — and the boat sank lower and lower, until it completely disappeared.

"Help! Help!" shouted Minnie as she once more struggled to the river bank.





"You're always ending up in the river," sniggered the frog. "Why don't you learn to float like me?"

"That's just what I was trying to do," said Minnie. "But it doesn't seem to be that easy."

"Don't you believe it. All you have to do is copy me."

And the frog rolled on to his back and slowly floated away.

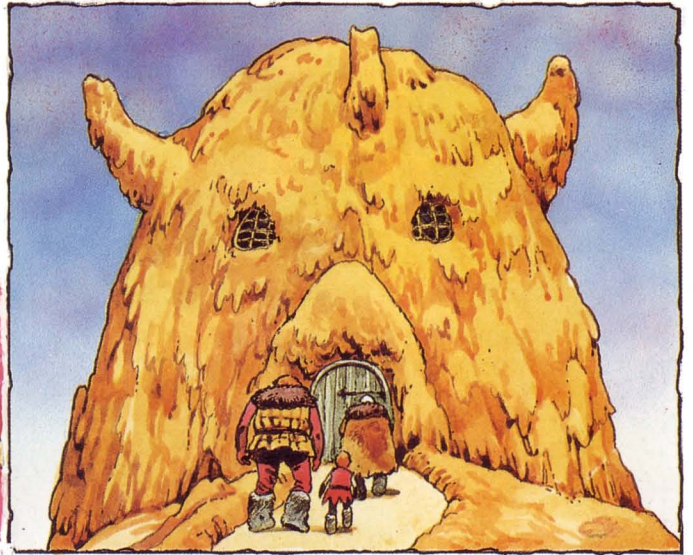
Minnie spent the rest of the afternoon learning how to float. The frog was a good teacher and it was not long before he and Minnie were floating side by side. "This is delightful," she said. "Far better than trying silly spells that go wrong."

She closed her eyes dreamily and listened to the gentle lapping of the water. And on the bank, the book of spells lay forgotten, the pages fluttering in the breeze.

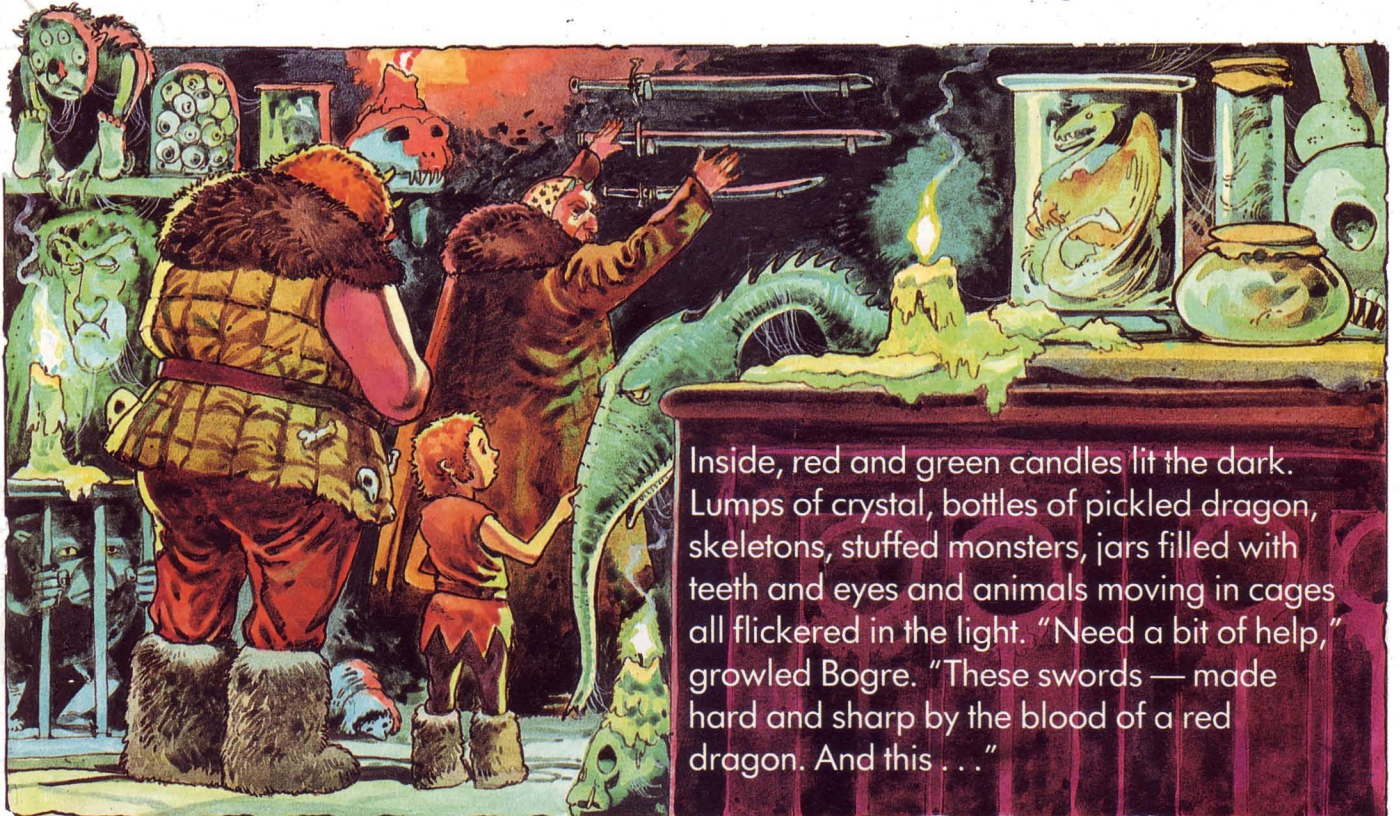


GROGRE THE GOLDEN OGRE

"How can I get to the city of the Black Ogres?" asked Grogre. "After the purple mountains nobody knows the way," growled Bogre. "Well I'll come with you," said his father. "We'll find the way somehow."

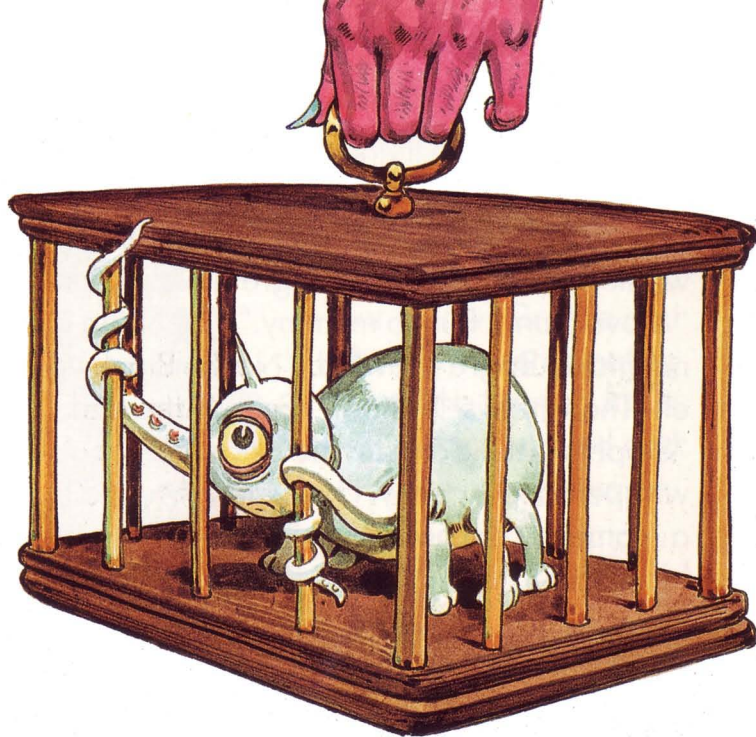


Bogre began talking angrily to himself. "Shall I help them? Shan't I? Shall I? Shan't I? All right, *all right*, ALL RIGHT! I'll tell them. There *is* a way. Come to my house first." Bogre's house looked like a huge horned head.



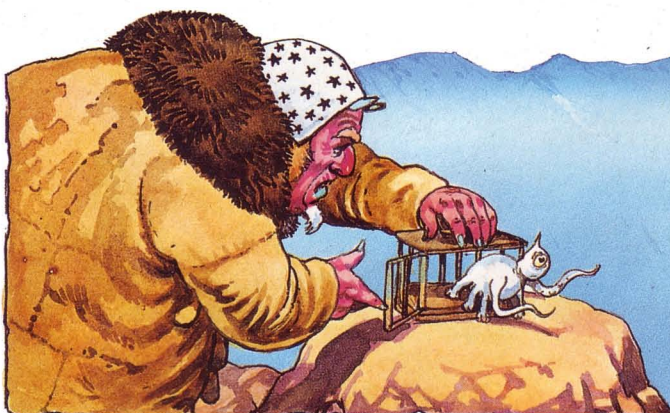
Inside, red and green candles lit the dark. Lumps of crystal, bottles of pickled dragon, skeletons, stuffed monsters, jars filled with teeth and eyes and animals moving in cages all flickered in the light. "Need a bit of help," growled Bogre. "These swords — made hard and sharp by the blood of a red dragon. And this . . ."

Bogre picked up a cage. Inside, a small white thing was whining and scrambling backwards and forwards. It had six feet, but instead of arms, tentacles with suckers on the end, and a head with one eye and a stinging horn. "Eek!" cried Grogre's father. But Grogre felt sorry for the thing in the tiny cage. "Guess what it is," growled Bogre in the gloom. "Er, er, well, er," mumbled Grogre's father. "Is it one of those Slurms you told me about?" asked Grogre. "Yup. Small isn't it? Just a baby. Know how I got it? Stole it from its mother when Slurms attacked. Past the mountains, don't know the way. Slurm knows. It'll run home to its mother."



Bogre made a strange-smelling Red Ogre stew. Little green and red flames danced on the top. "Eat for strength then go," he grunted.

Afterwards, they all set off. It was late afternoon. The storm clouds of the day had all gone by the time they reached the steep and crumbling path that led up and through the purple mountains. Only blue dragons and giant three-headed birds lived there.



After three days they came to the end of the mountains. Beyond, was what seemed to be a flat blue plain. The plain was really a kind of thick blue treacle where strange fishy creatures hid, but there were hidden ways across. "Let the Slurm find the way," said Bogre opening the cage.

Grogre had been trying to make friends with the Slurm but had been bitten and stung by it. Yet now, when the cage was opened, it wanted to stay with him. Bogre gave it a kick. "Move Slurm. Run to mummy." The Slurm did not move. Bogre growled. "Not hard enough, eh! Then try this!" "Stop!" Grogre shouted. "Stop!" And picking up the Slurm he whispered to it gently. He put it down and for a moment it did not move, then it ran into the blue plain.



Grogre, Bogre and Grogre's father followed the Slurm along zig-zagging pathways into the thick black mist. Slowly, the blue treacly plain changed to black, shiny rock. On the seventh day of their journey they heard a far-off roaring and bellowing. They looked at each other in fear. The further they went the louder it grew.



Suddenly, they emerged from the mist. Before them a vast cliff plunged deep downwards into a fiery, bubbling river of red where monsters moved, spurting red and yellow foam and flame — roaring and bellowing at each other.

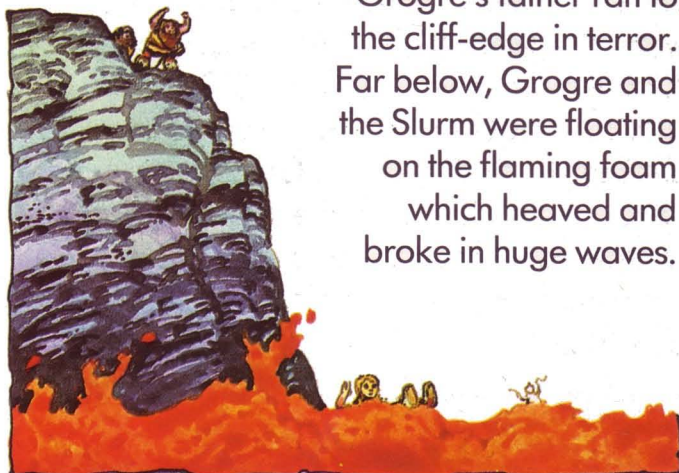


Across the river, on black, sharp shiny rocks, rose a city of night-black towers jammed together — twisted, leaning, bent and joined by hundreds of bridges with, here and there, strange red floating globes. The highest of all were three thick, spiral towers that disappeared upwards into black, stormy clouds.

The ogres were too astonished to speak. There seemed to be no way into the city; no bridges or pathways, only the surging river of flame. Grogre's father finally spoke. "Maybe those Black Ogres only fly in?" "They do, we can't," said Bogre. "Come on, back home." Grogre bent down and stroked the Slurm's sting. It led him by one of its tentacles to the very edge of the cliff, stopped, let go and jumped.



"Whaaa . . . it's killed itself!" shouted Grogre's father. Then Grogre jumped too.



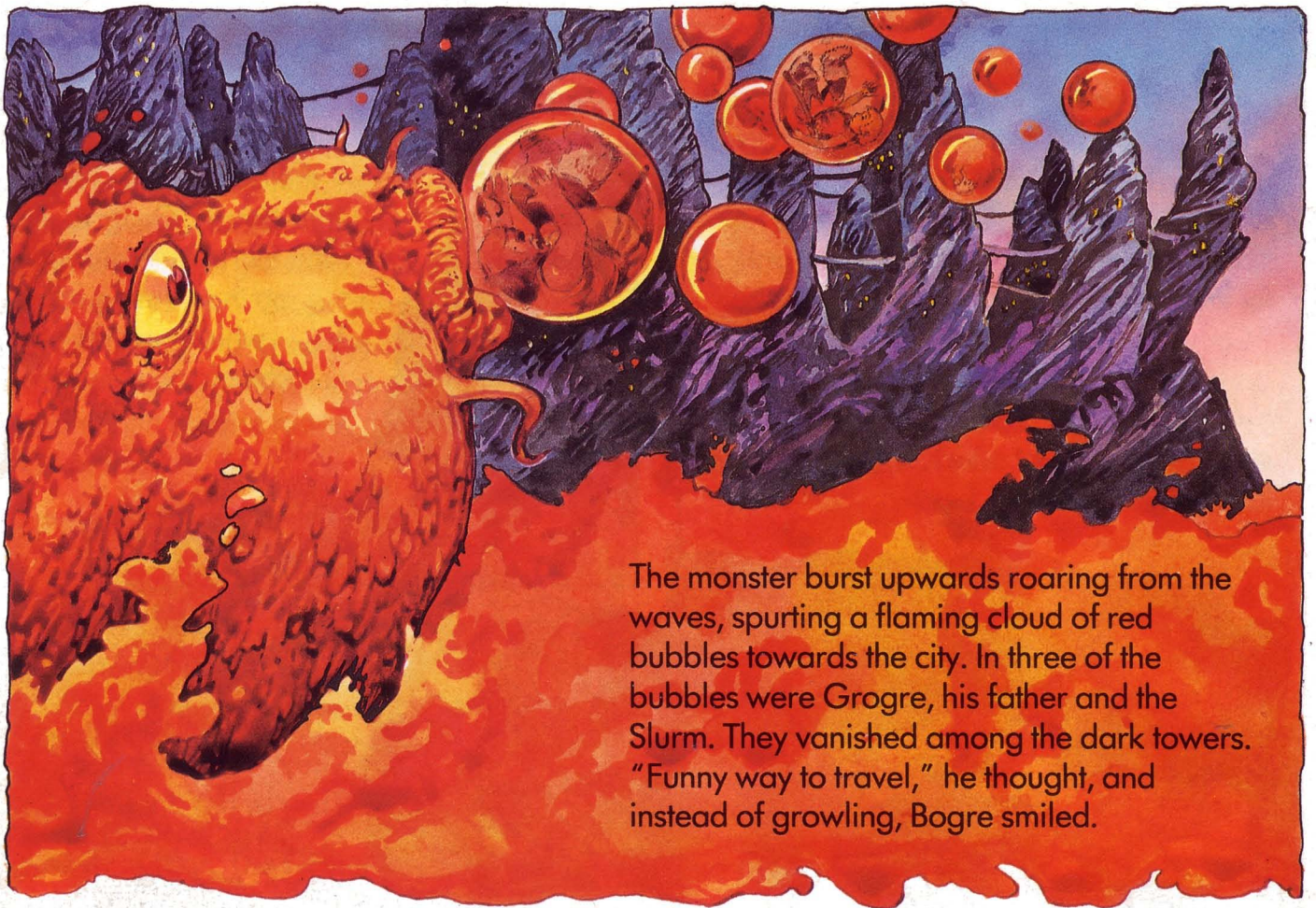
Grogre's father ran to the cliff-edge in terror. Far below, Grogre and the Slurm were floating on the flaming foam which heaved and broke in huge waves.



"They're still alive! They're not burning! They're not drowning!" "Can't be!" growled Bogre. And then Grogre's father jumped too. "Monsters'll get you!" shouted Bogre.

It seemed to be true. A monster with a gigantic, gaping mouth and fat, dripping lips plunged down on all three. "It's swallowed 'em!" cried Bogre. He felt ill, unhappy, terrible.





The monster burst upwards roaring from the waves, spurring a flaming cloud of red bubbles towards the city. In three of the bubbles were Grogre, his father and the Slurm. They vanished among the dark towers. "Funny way to travel," he thought, and instead of growling, Bogre smiled.



"Shall I jump? Shan't I? Shall I? Shan't I? All right, *all right*, ALL RIGHT!" Bogre jumped. Landing in the red flame and foam was like getting into a warm, soft feather bed at night after a long, long day. Then the foaming red rushed like a waterfall down the throat of a bellowing monster.



When the beast was full, it spurted out foam and bubbles. And there was Bogre in a bubble floating towards the city and his three faithful friends.

[Follow the companions into the city of Black Ogres in Part 13]

An Eskimo Baby

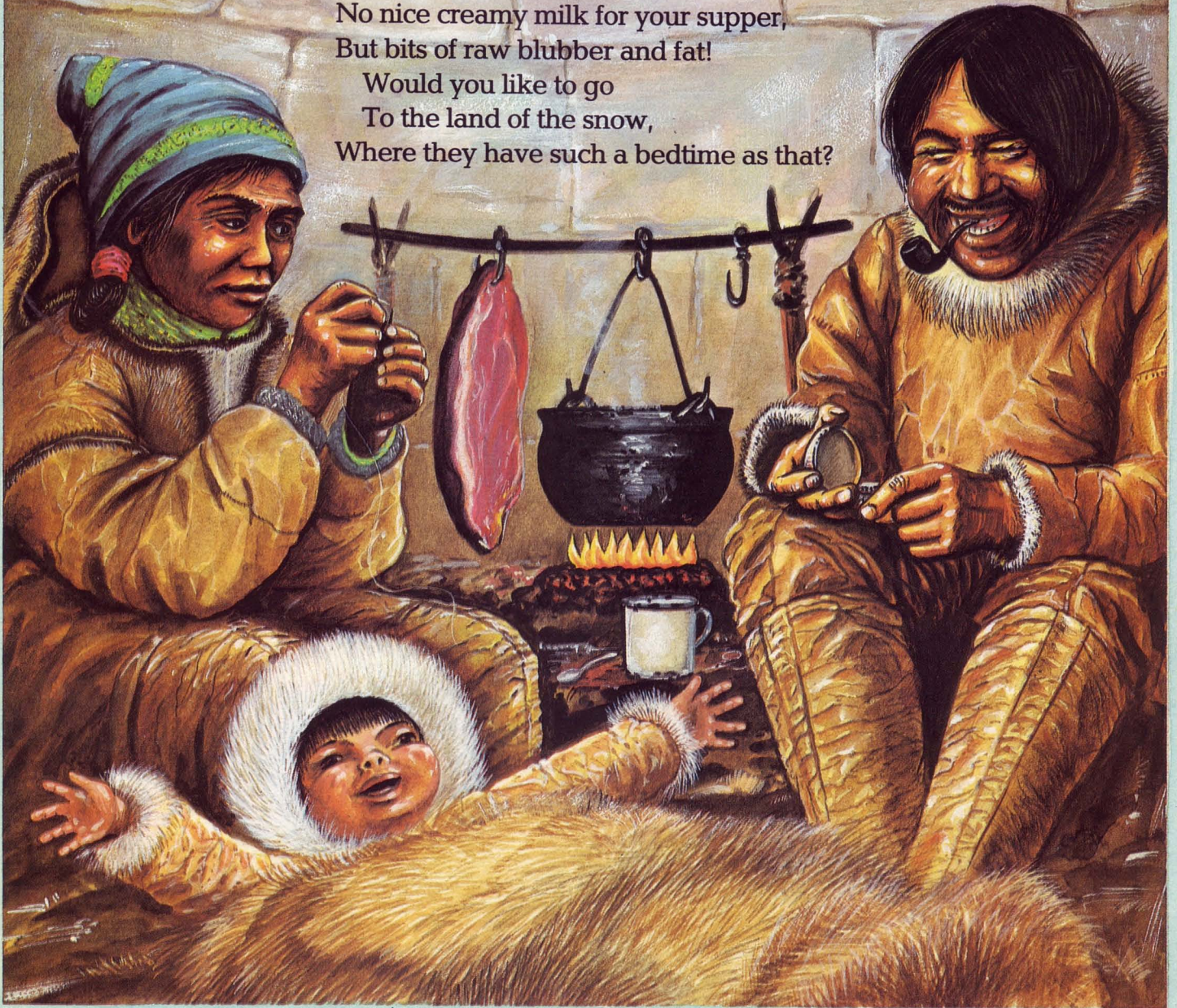
If you were an Eskimo baby
You'd live in a bag all day.
Right up from your toes
To the tip of your nose,
All in thick cosy furs tucked away.

And if you went out for an airing
In mother's warm hood you would go,
Tied close to her back,
Like a soft, furry pack,
You could laugh at the cold and the snow.

But if they brought water at bedtime —
As people at home always do —
You'd cough and you'd sneeze,
And perhaps you would freeze,
You would certainly turn very blue!

An Eskimo mummy would rub you
With oil from your heels to your head.
And then you'd be rolled
(For it's terribly cold)
In warm furs, and put safely to bed.

No nice creamy milk for your supper,
But bits of raw blubber and fat!
Would you like to go
To the land of the snow,
Where they have such a bedtime as that?





Stories read by
RICHARD BRIERS
SUSAN JAMESON
NIGEL LAMBERT
DICK VOSBURGH

IN PART 13 OF **STORY** Teller **2**

There are some unwelcome house guests for **TOAD OF TOAD HALL**

When **BRER RABBIT AND THE TAR-BABY** come to blows, the tricky rabbit almost comes to a sticky end!

THE PRINCESS WHO MET THE NORTH WIND was spoiled and sulky – before she went looking for the stars

Will **GROGRE THE GOLDEN OGRE** survive his trip to the city of Black Ogres?

PLUS GEORDIE'S MERMAID wants to go to the circus and **GATECRASHERS** at the house of the rising sun

