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The Swords of King Arthur: Mick Ford
Touching Silver: Patricia Brake
Noggin and the Birds: Oliver Postgate
Goblin Market: Mick Ford



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Once upon a time, there was a very fat King who said to his very thin Cook, "Bake me a cake! The lightest, nicest, most scrumptious cake you've ever made."

So the Cook got a big bowl and two dozen eggs and some butter and five pounds of flour and a pound of yeast.

He mixed the flour and the eggs and the butter in the big bowl, then put in the yeast. Then he lit the gas and when the oven was hot he put the cake in.

Soon there was a lovely smell of baking cake, and the King came running in.



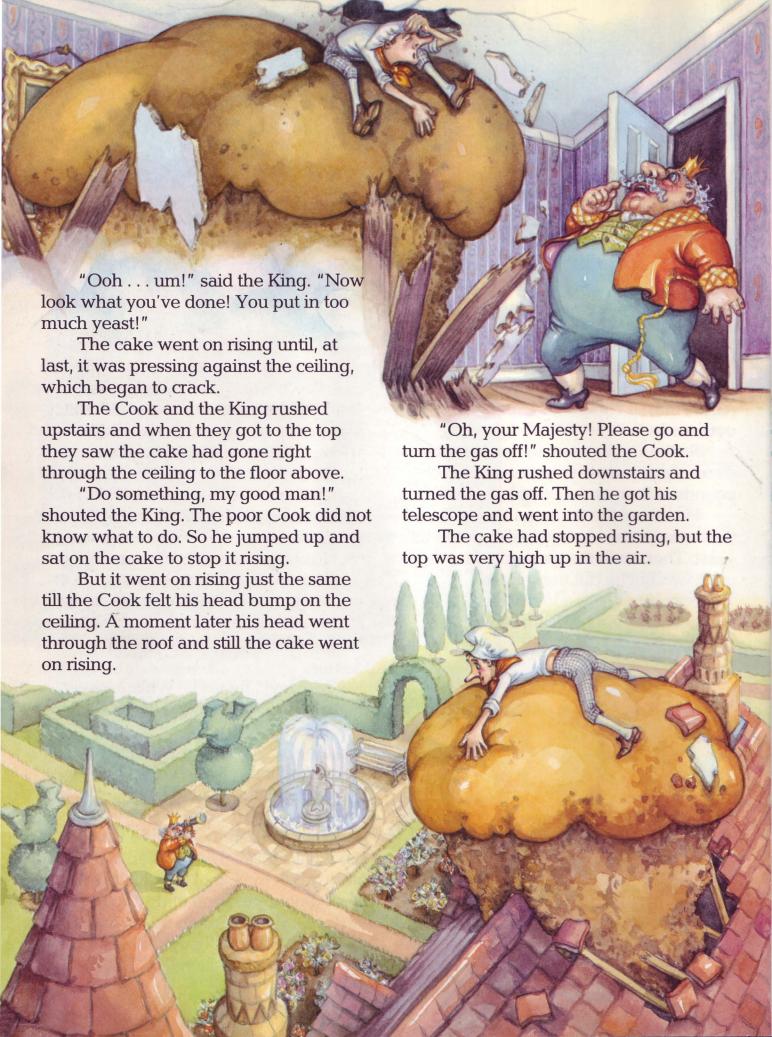
"My, my!" he said. "What a lovely smell. I'm sure it's going to be a delicious cake, Cook."

"Oh yes, your Majesty," said the Cook. "And it's going to be the lightest cake in the world. I put in a whole pound of yeast to make it rise."

"That's the stuff!" said the King.
"But what's this?" They looked round
and saw that the top of the gas stove
was beginning to bend and suddenly
with a bang! it shot up in the air and

the top of the cake appeared, rising slowly.





"Oh, drat the man!" said the King.
"If he doesn't come down soon there
won't be anyone to cook the dinner."
Then he thought, "If the Cook was to
start eating the cake, he would get
lower and lower." So he called out,
"Cook, eat the cake, at once!"

"Delighted, your Majesty," called the Cook, and he took a bite. "Ooh, yum, yum!" he said. "This is a nice cake!"

"Oh, stop talking," said the King, "and eat it up as fast as you can, or I shall have no dinner."



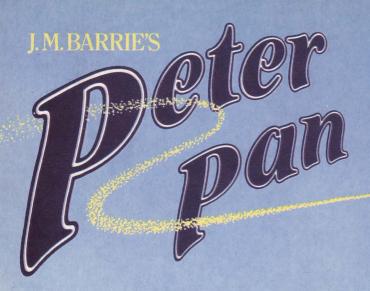
"Very well, your Majesty," said the Cook, and ate as fast as he could. But it was such a big cake that it took him two weeks to eat it all, and it made him very fat. But the poor King, who was waiting for his dinner, got thinner and thinner.

So instead of the King being fat and the Cook being thin, there was a very thin King and a very fat Cook!

"Never mind, your Majesty," called the Cook when he had eaten the cake and reached the ground. "I'll cook you a lovely dinner now!" And he did.







Wendy was kept very busy looking after the boys. She cooked for them and sewed and darned their clothes, and every night she told them a story and tucked them up in the large bed in their underground home. There was just one room which each child could enter and leave only by wriggling up and down his own hollow tree.

Wendy also stopped the boys from eating a particularly rich damp cake — a cake which the pirates had cooked in the hope that the boys would eat it and die. The pirates placed the cake in one cunning spot after another. But Wendy always snatched it from the hands of the boys, so that in time it became stale and as hard as a stone and Captain Hook fell over it in the dark

The children often spent long summer's days on the mermaids' lagoon, swimming and floating and watching the mermaids play with their bubbles. It was usually a sunny, laughing place, but one day the sun went away and

shadows stole across the water. The children were sleeping on Marooners' Rock, in the middle of the lagoon, when little shivers ran over the water and there was the sound of muffled oars.

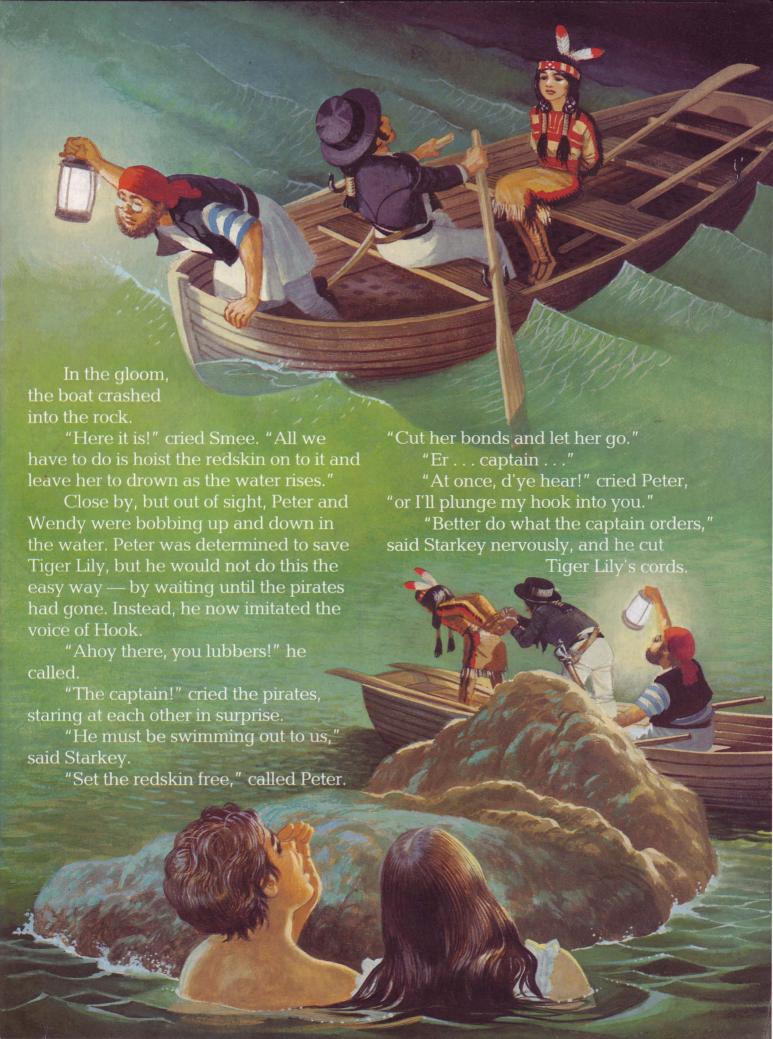
At once, Peter sprang to his feet and cried, "Pirates! Dive!"

There was a gleam of legs and instantly the rock was deserted. The children watched as the pirate dinghy drew near. The pirates Smee and Starkey were at the oars, and between

them was Tiger Lily, the redskin princess. Her hands and ankles were tied, for they had

caught her boarding the pirate ship and she was now their prisoner.







By now they were on the rock and Hook suddenly remembered Tiger Lily. "Where's the redskin?" he demanded.

"Oh, that's all right, captain," replied Smee. "We let her go, just as you ordered."

"Let her go?" cried Hook. "Brimstone and gall, I gave no such order."

His face was black with rage, but he soon realised that the pirates really thought it was his voice they had heard.

"You must have heard a spirit," he said. Then he stood up and cried, "Spirit, do you hear me?"

Peter could keep quiet no longer.
"I am James Hook," he answered,
"captain of the *Jolly Roger*."

She slid into the water just as the words "Boat ahoy!" rang over the lagoon.

It was Hook's voice, but this time it was not Peter who had spoken. This time it was Hook himself.

The captain had swum across the lagoon and now, in the light of the pirates' lantern, Wendy saw his hook grip the boat's side. She would have dearly liked to swim away, but Peter signalled to her to keep still and listen.

"The game's up," cried Hook.

"Those boys have found a mother."

"Captain," said Smee, "why don't we kidnap her and make her our own mother?"

"It's a princely scheme!" cried Hook. "We will seize the children and carry them to the boat. We will make the boys walk the plank and Wendy shall be our mother."



"You are not, you are not!" cried Hook hoarsely. "Tell me, do you have another name?"

"Aye, aye," replied Peter in his own voice. "It is Peter Pan."

"Pan!" shouted Hook. "After him, lads! Take him dead or alive!"

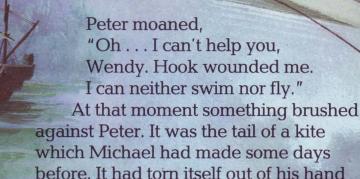
"Are you ready, boys?" cried Peter.
"Then lay into the pirates."

The fight was short and sharp. The boys surrounded Smee and Starkey and tore their swords from their grasp. As the two pirates fled, they dived after them into the water.

But there was only one who dared to approach Hook — and that was Peter Pan. As they met on the slippery rock, Peter snatched a knife from Hook's belt and at the same moment Hook fell. Peter wanted a fair fight, so he gave the pirate a hand to help him up.







with a cry of excitement, Peter seized the tail and pulled the kite towards him. It was not big enough to lift both of them, but he was sure it could carry Wendy to safety. Before she could refuse to go without him, he had tied the

It was then that Hook bit him.

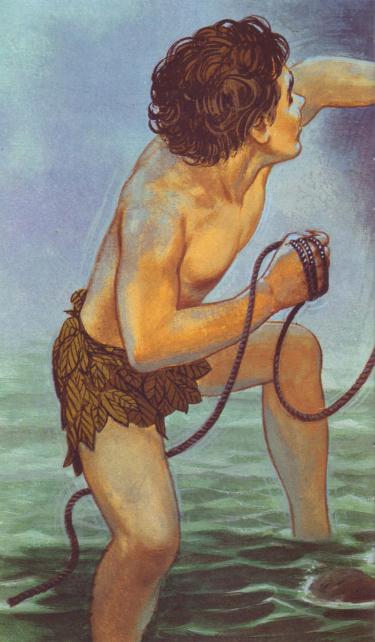
Peter was so horrified by the
unfairness of this that he could only stare
as Hook's iron hand clawed him twice.

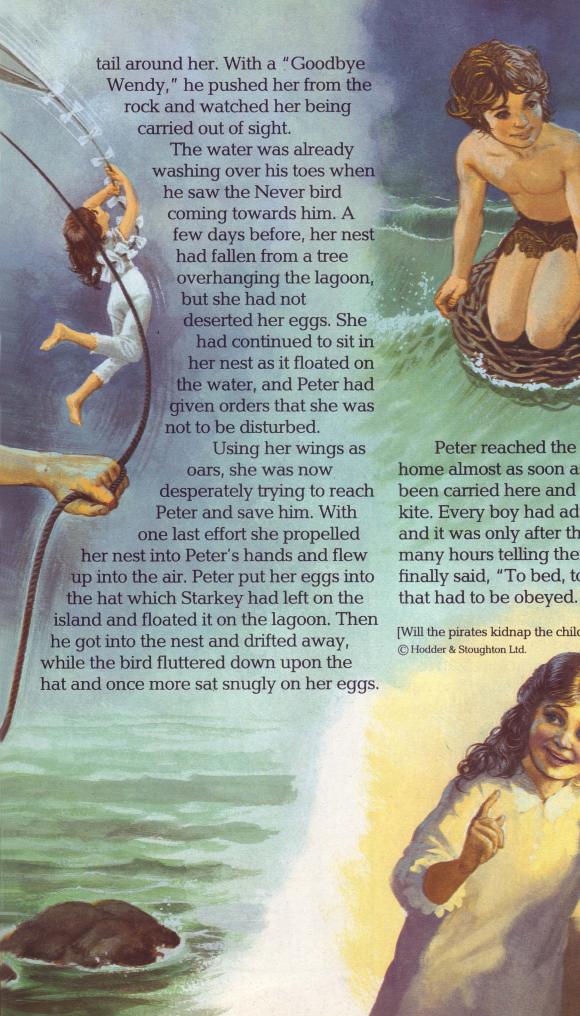
He would have been killed there and
then if they had not heard the tick, tick
of the clock inside the crocodile. Hook,
his face white with fear, dived into the
water and swum wildly for the Jolly Roger.

Meanwhile, the boys had found the dinghy. They clambered aboard and began to search for Peter and Wendy, calling them by name. When no answer came they assumed that they must be flying back home. They did not see Peter, with one last effort, pulling Wendy up on to the rock.

"The water's rising, Wendy," he said, "and soon it will be over the rock. Do you think you could swim or fly back home without my help?"

"Oh, Peter, I-I think I'm too tired."

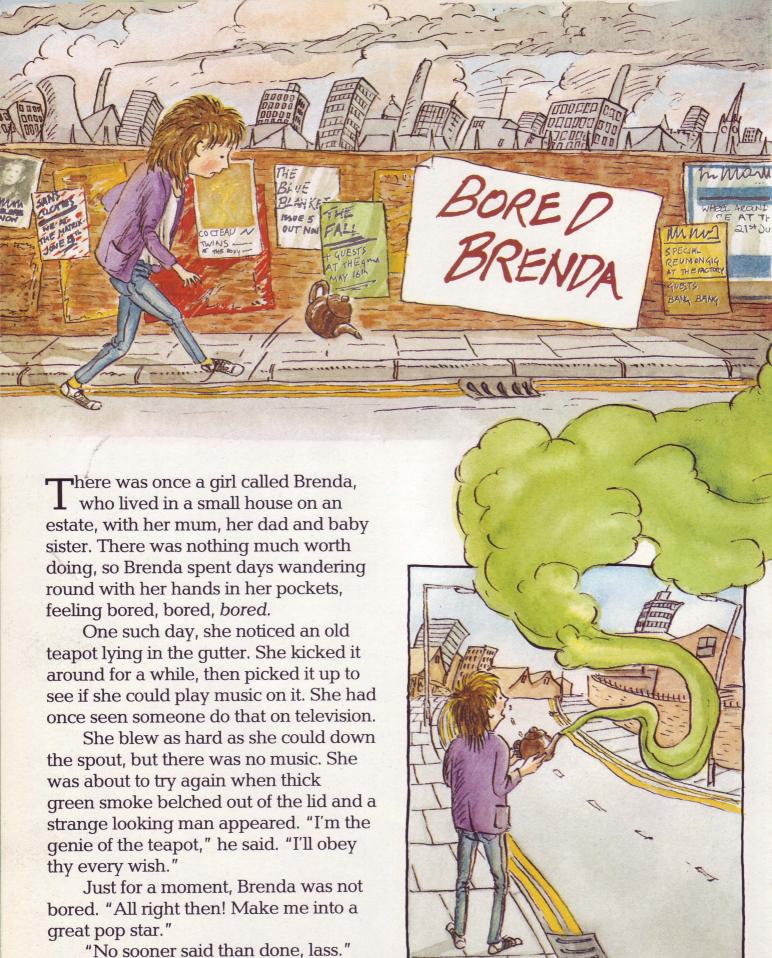




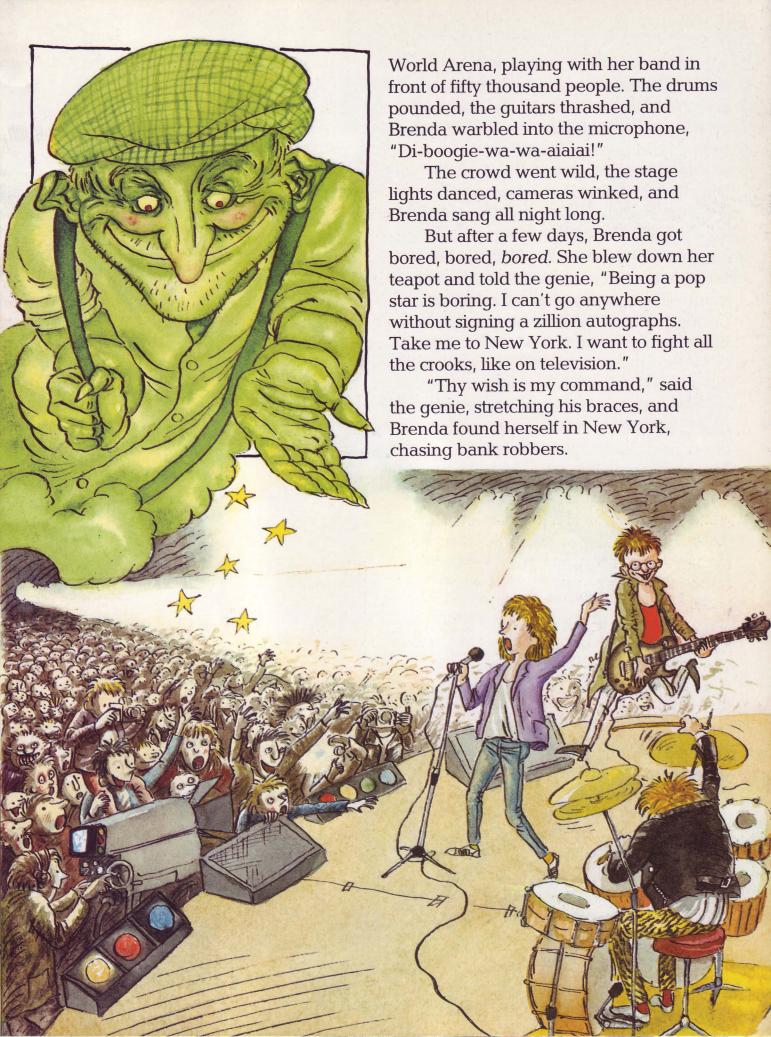
Peter reached the underground home almost as soon as Wendy, who had been carried here and there by Michael's kite. Every boy had adventures to tell, and it was only after they had spent many hours telling them that Wendy finally said, "To bed, to bed," in a voice

[Will the pirates kidnap the children? Find out in Part 17]





There stood Brenda, on stage at the



Bullets whizzed through the air, cars skidded and crashed in an epic chase and the bad guys were finally cornered on the roof of the Empire State Building. Brenda climbed up the side of the skyscraper and captured them.

Passers-by thrilled to her bravery.

But was Brenda thrilled? Well only for a few minutes. But then she was bored, bored, bored. She blew down the spout of her teapot and told the genie, "Being a crimebuster is boring . . . besides, I could get hurt! Now I want to be the first astronaut on Mars."

"Righto, lass," sighed the genie.

In an instant, Brenda found herself on board a spaceship. Earth was a tiny disc in the distance. The planet Mars got closer and closer. "Stand by for landing!" The ship came down through an alien sky. She landed with a jolt!

But oh! how boring, boring, boring!
There was nothing to see, and nothing to
do. Brenda connected her air hose to the
teapot and blew.

"Owdo," said the genie.

"This is *really* boring. Look at all this rock and desert! Take me back to Earth and make me captain of a pirate ship."

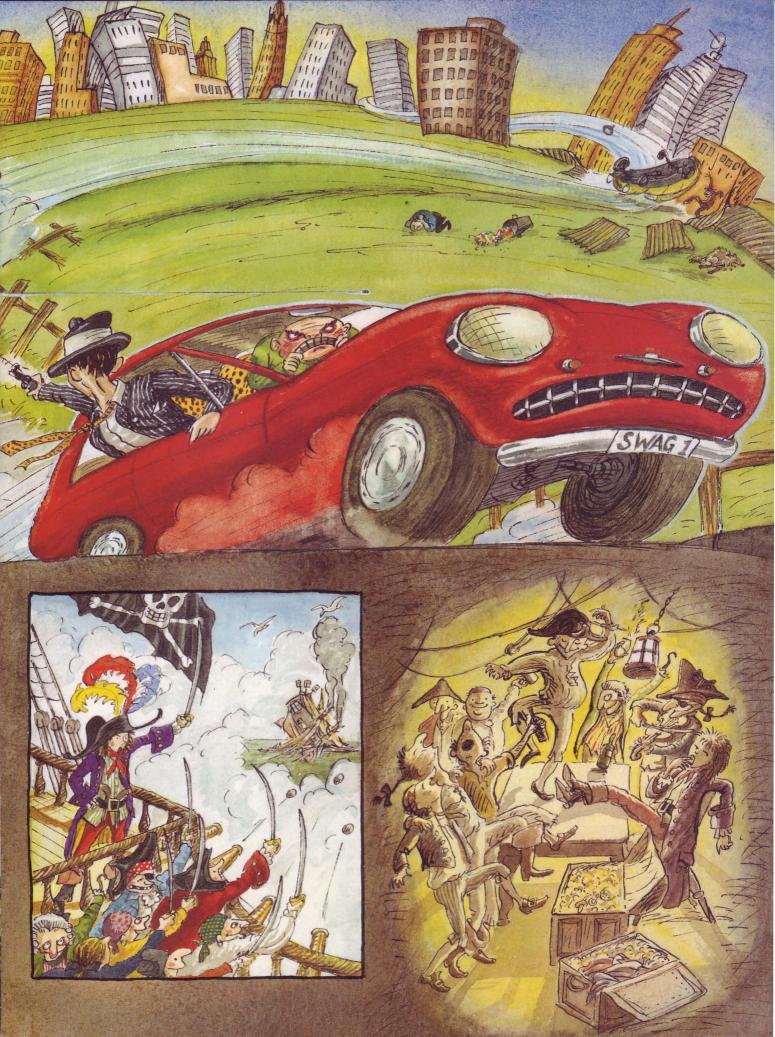
"Oh, 'eck!" said the genie crossly.

But in the wink of an eye, there she was, with a crew of deadly cut-throats, aboard the square-rigger *Black Parrot*.

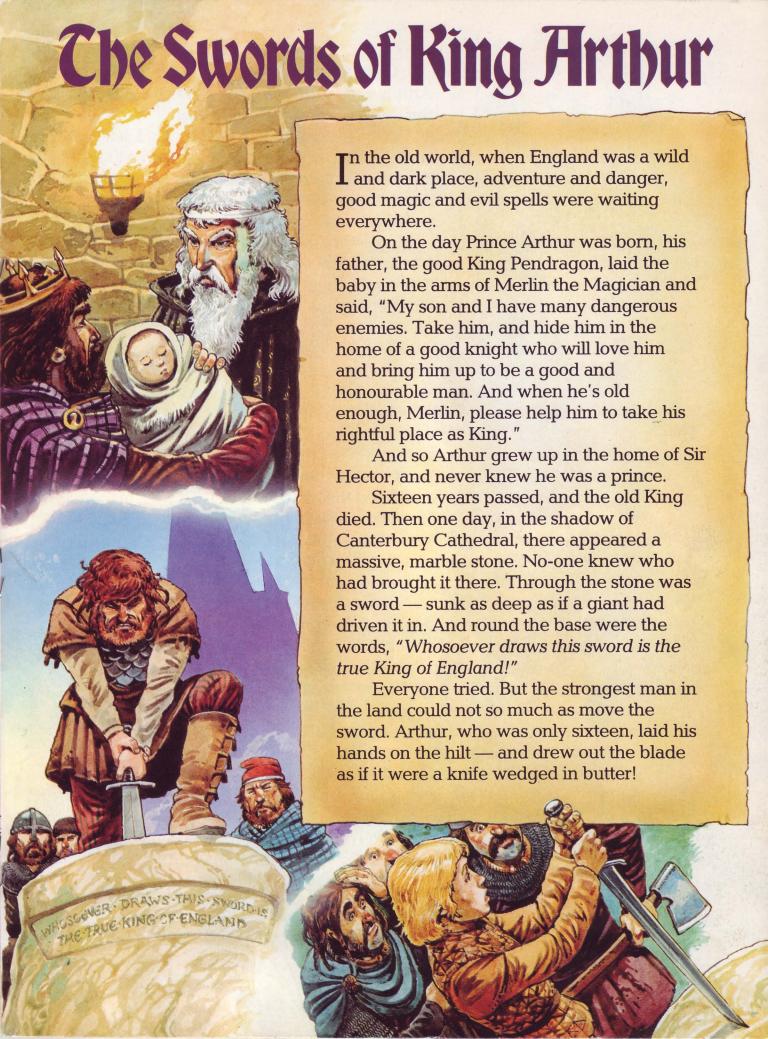
Flying the Jolly Roger from the masthead, Brenda and the pirates plundered every ship they met. There was not a sailor alive who did not fear the name of Saucy Brenda!

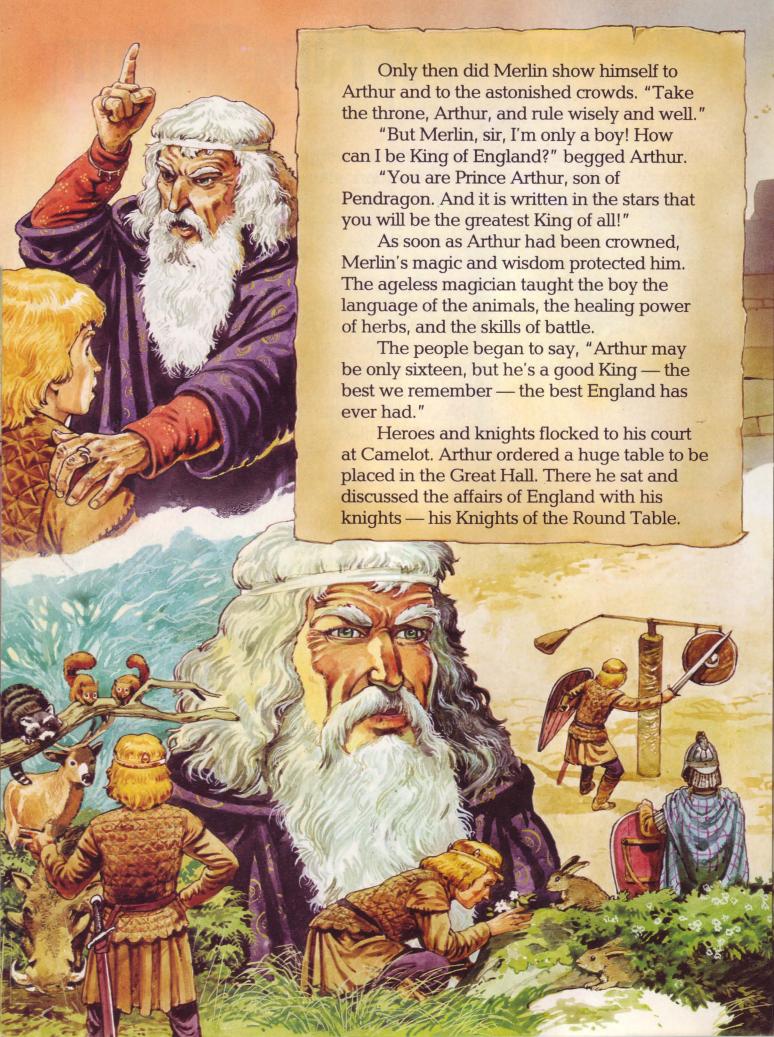
At the end of each day, Brenda's cut-throats sailed home to their den with their booty, and drank the night away singing, "Yo-ho-ho and a bottle of pop!" They loved every minute.

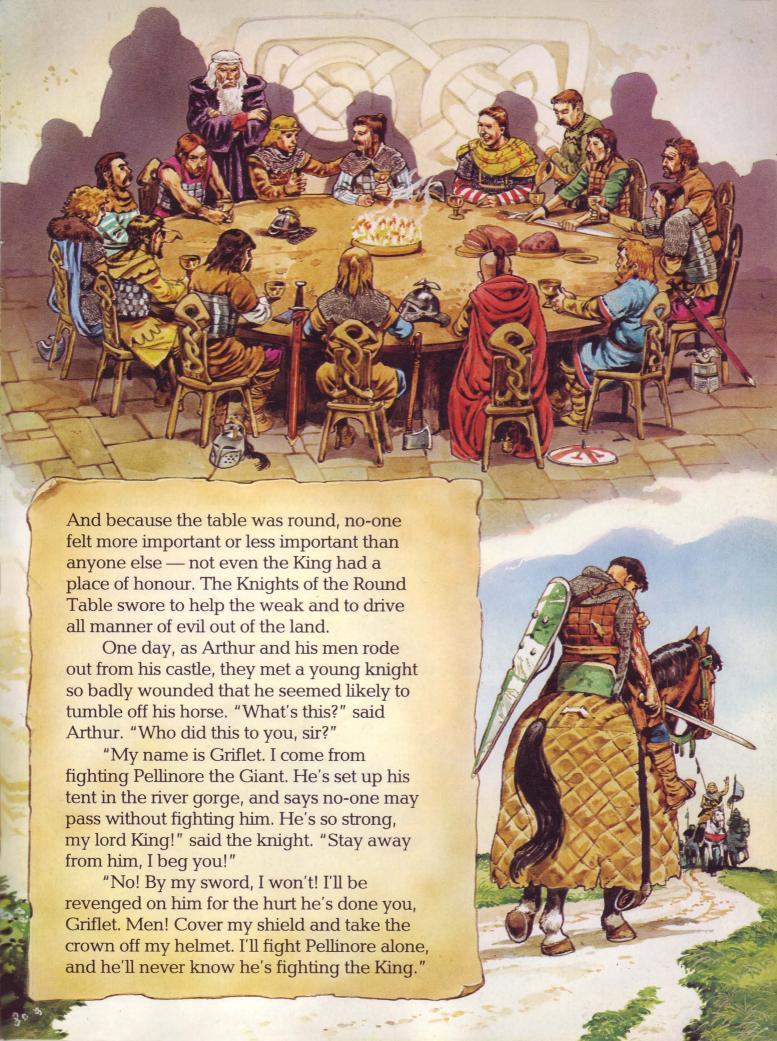






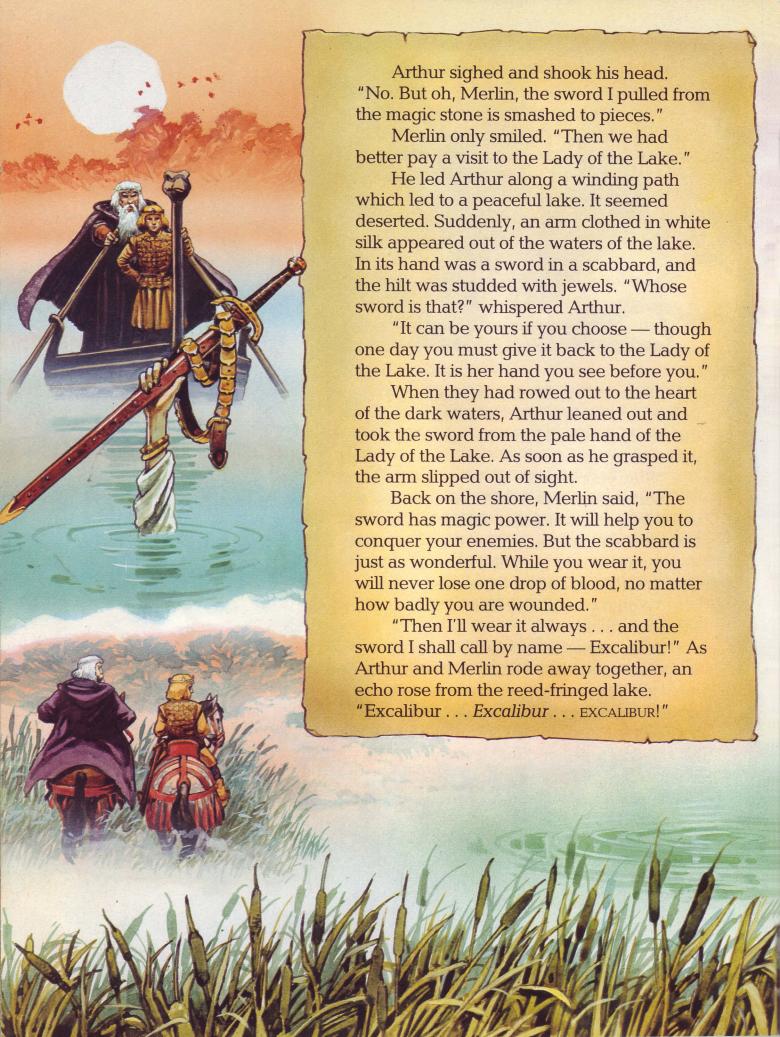














There is a legend that once, long ago, when the world was very young, fish lived on the land and breathed the air as we do. Their fins were hands, and they hunched along the ground like caterpillars. They lived in great halls carved from a mountain of silver in the middle of a desert, and water was the most precious thing they knew.

One hot day a proud, greedy fish called Give-Me was crawling along a road towards the silver mountain, when he met one of the gods who walked the earth in those days. His name was Changer, because more than anything he loved to change one thing into another.

The fish called to the god and said, "Grant me a wish, O great one. Let it be that everything I touch will run to water in my hands, and be mine."

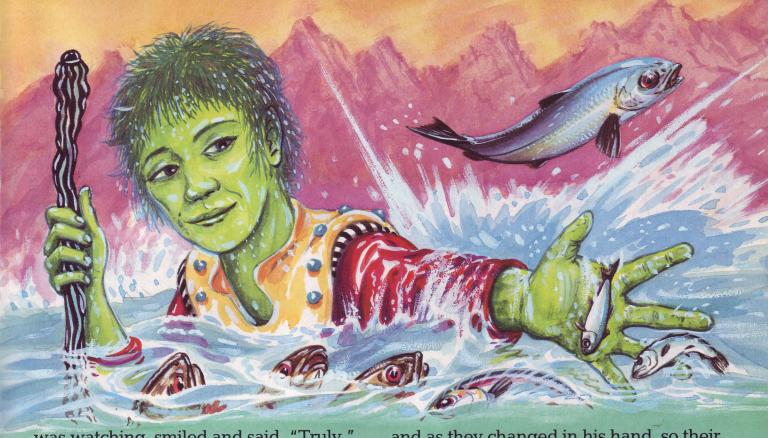
Changer laughed and said, "Truly?"
And the fish whose name was
Give-Me quickly replied, "Truly."
And it was so.

The fish reached out to touch a rock

by the roadside, and the rock changed and ran to water in the fish's hand, and was his. The fish laughed, and said, "Truly, O Changer, this is a great gift. It will make me great so that all fish will know me by my name and look up to me."







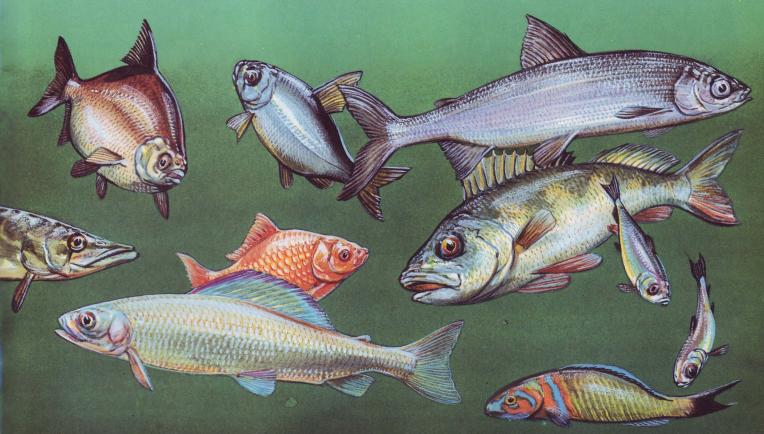
was watching, smiled and said, "Truly."

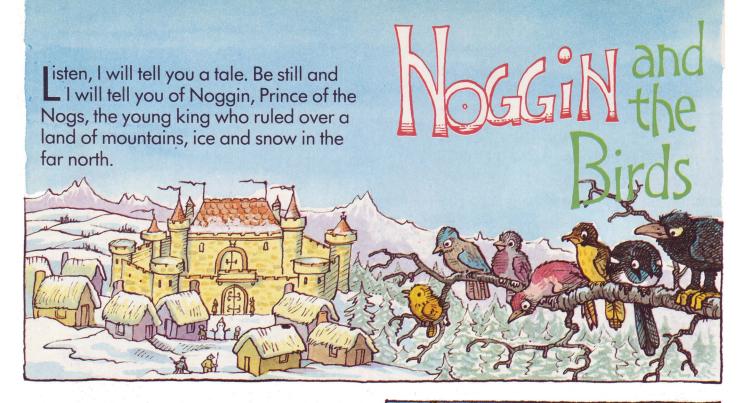
But he felt sorry for them, so he reached out his hand and touched the fish called Give-Me, and said, "As you have changed the mountain and the throne, so you must also be changed you and all your people."

Then Changer touched all the fish,

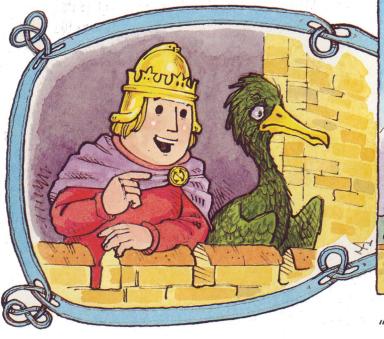
and as they changed in his hand, so their sides and their backs and their bellies turned to silver. Now they could live in the water, without having to breathe air, and follow the water down to the sea.

And so they have been ever since, and so they are now. But it was not always so.





It was a cold winter. The snow had fallen early. The Nogs had gathered their corn and their fruit and wood for their fires, and now, warm in their houses, they were safe for the winter.



Noggin the Nog looked out from his castle. He spoke to Graculus, the great green bird who was his friend.

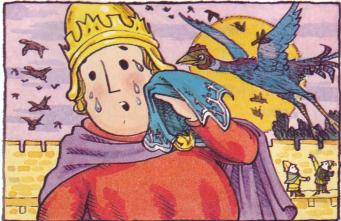
"Graculus," he said, "the birds on that branch are cold and hungry. They should be fed and warmed."



"You speak kind words, Noggin," replied Graculus, "but kind words will not feed birds."

"All right, don't rush me," said Noggin.
"Go forth and tell every bird in my
kingdom that I will feed them today."
Graculus flew away.

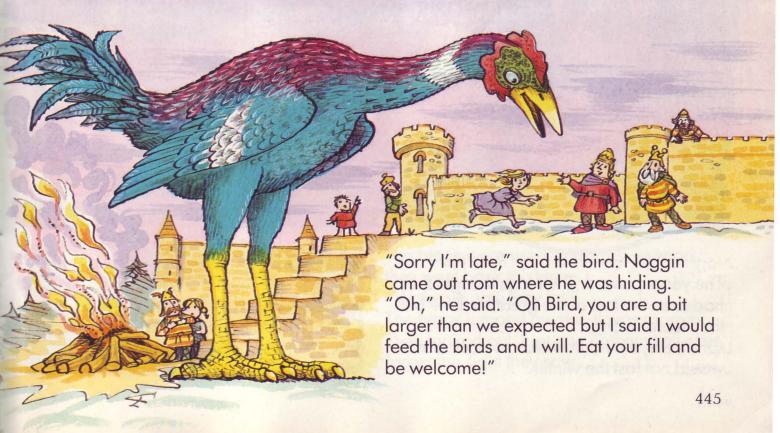
That was the hardest day's work that Noggin and his warriors had ever done. All day the bonfire in the courtyard blazed; all day the Nogs threw corn, and all day the birds came fluttering down like twittering, many-coloured snowflakes, to eat their fill and be warmed.

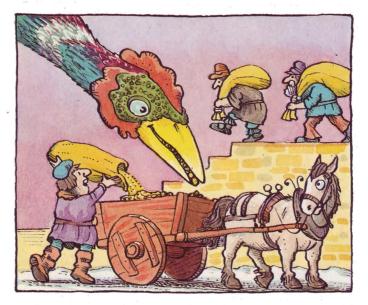




As dusk began to fall it seemed that all were fed and warmed. The last birds were flying to their nests. "That's that, then," said Noggin, mopping his brow. But, even as he spoke, a dark shadow passed across the setting sun. Another bird was landing.

It was a blue, red and white bird with a yellow beak. Its legs were thick as trees. When it stood in the courtyard its head was higher than the highest castle tower. And when it spread its wings it hid the sky.







The bird ate eighteen sacks of corn, seven sacks of seed and a small cartload of dried peas. Then it drank the fountain dry and spoke.

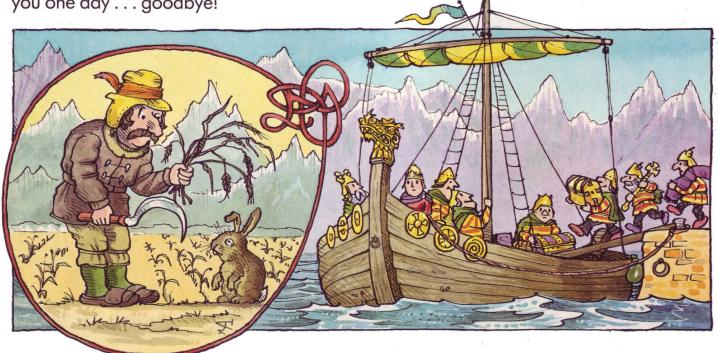
"Thank you, that was good," it said.

"Maybe I'll be able to do the same for you one day . . . goodbye!"

"What sort of bird was that?" asked Noggin as it flew away.

"That was a Lesser Orp," replied Graculus.

"A Lesser Orp!" laughed Noggin. "Let's be thankful the Greater Orp did not come!"



The years passed. The Nogs thought they had seen the last of the great birds — but they were wrong.

One year, the harvest was so poor that it would not last the winter.

Noggin commanded a long ship to be filled with the royal treasure. They would sail it to the Southland and exchange it for corn and potatoes. "We must go now," he said, "before the winter cold freezes the sea."

So they sailed to the Southland and exchanged their treasure. The Southland was rich but its merchants were mean, and all they got for their treasure was half a boatload of corn and potatoes. But even so, the journey back was hard. The boat was heavy to row, no wind came to fill the sail and every day the weather grew colder.



Suddenly the boat lurched and rocked. "Hold tight!" cried Noggin. "A storm!"
It was an odd storm, because although the boat pitched and rolled, and although the wind whistled, there was no sound of waves.





One evening Noggin noticed thin plates of ice forming on the sea. He would have liked to row on but the men were too tired. They rolled into their blankets and slept.



The Nogs were used to storms, so soon they went back to sleep.

"Wake up, you lazy lot!"

The Nogs jumped awake. It was morning. They looked out. Not one of them will ever forget the sight they saw.

