

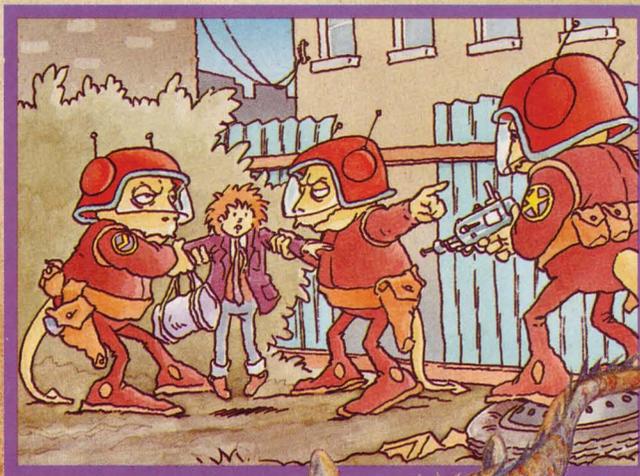
®

PART 20

STORY Teller

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

2



A Marshall Cavendish Publication

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STORY Teller 2

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THE BOOK

Editor: **Eden Phillips**
Art Editor: **Andrew Sutterby**
Editorial Staff: **Brenda Marshall, Geraldine Jones, Alice Peebles, Marie-Pierre Moine & Lucy Stothert**
Art Staff: **Paul Morgan, Kim Whybrow & Jervis Tuttell**

Illustrators

Arthur Gives Back his Sword: **Peter Dennis**
Butterflies on the Moon: **Val Biro**
Ginger's Secret Weapons: **Peter Wingham**
Alice in Wonderland: **Claire Mumford**
A Great Escape: **Annabel Large**
The Miller and his Donkey: **Ken Stott**
Sheep-Dog: **Rod Sutterby**

THE TAPE

Recorded at The Barge Studios, Little Venice, London:
Produced & Directed by **Jo Reinelt**
Engineered by **John Rowland & Jill Landskroner**

A Creative Radio Production

Readers

Arthur Gives Back his Sword: **Mick Ford**
Butterflies on the Moon: **Geoffrey Matthews**
Ginger's Secret Weapons: **Cass Allen**
Alice in Wonderland: **Patricia Hodge**
A Great Escape: **Cass Allen**
The Miller and his Donkey: **Geoffrey Matthews**
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Arthur Gives Back His Sword

The days of the Knights of the Round Table are over now — the heroic days when brave knights rode out to do battle with giants and tyrants, and when Arthur wore his magic sword, Excalibur. They have all gone: Arthur and the knights and Excalibur. They fell like leaves in winter. But their story still stands, like a tall tree with many branches.

When Arthur set sail for France to fight in the wars, he left England in the care of his nephew, Sir Mordred. Poor, weak, Mordred. He had never tasted such power. He tried on the crown of England, and he sat in Arthur's seat at the Round Table. And he said to himself, "It's good to sit in the place of the King. But how much better it would be if I owned his crown and his chair and his castles!"

He gathered an army made up of all the worthless knights Arthur had banished or imprisoned. And the treacherous Morgan le Fay — half sister to the King — brought her black knights out of the Land of Blood to fight alongside Mordred.

The news reached France, and Arthur sailed home as fast as he could to do battle with Mordred and his sworn enemy, Morgan le Fay.





It was a terrible and terrifying battle.

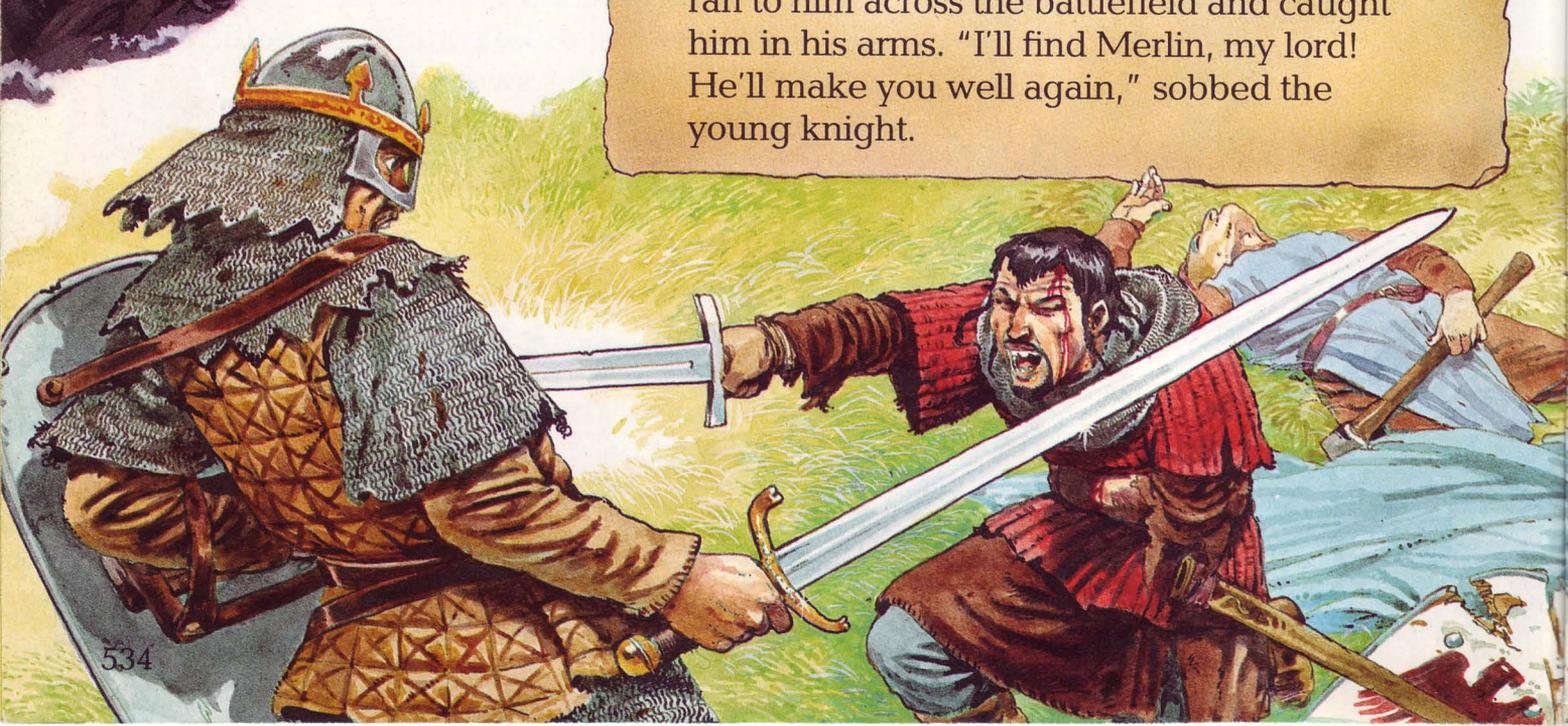
Good knights and bad took each other's lives with sword and lance, mace and axe. Every one of Mordred's men was killed. Morgan the sorceress, seeing that the battle could not be won, fled the field and lived alone in her Realm of Blood, until both she and her magic withered and died.

At last, no-one on the battlefield was left alive but Sir Mordred, Arthur, and one young knight of the Round Table—the bold Sir Bedevere.

Mordred hammered at Arthur with his broadsword. But every blow from the King's magic sword Excalibur sliced open Mordred's shield. Arthur's shout rose above the clatter of weapons, "Die, you traitor! Excalibur is sharper than any sword that was ever drawn in battle!"

Mordred dropped on one knee. "Ah, but where is the magic scabbard to protect you from hurt? Didn't your own sister steal it from you? Isn't it lost for ever in the black ooze of a bog?" And jabbing one last time with his sword, he stabbed Arthur in the heart. As he did so he fell with his face to the ground and died.

Seeing the King stagger, Sir Bedevere ran to him across the battlefield and caught him in his arms. "I'll find Merlin, my lord! He'll make you well again," sobbed the young knight.





"No, boy," said Arthur. "I'm weary. I've done my work. All the bad knights in England are dead, and you are left alive to tell my story. I'm ready to sleep now. But I do have one last command for you. Take me away from this terrible place." He pointed to a narrow path.

It was getting dark. Bedevere gently carried the King along the path. It led to a ruined church overlooking a lake that shone in the moonlight. "This is no place for a wounded King," whispered Sir Bedevere. "You need a clean bed to lie in."

But Arthur asked to sit in the shelter of the ruins, and he unbuckled Excalibur from round his waist. "Take this sword of mine, Bedevere. I've done with it. Take it down to the lake and throw it in."

"Throw Excalibur into the lake?" The young knight was horrified. "The King doesn't know what he's saying," he thought. "He'll regret this when he gets well again." So he took the sword down to the lake, but instead of throwing it into the glittering water, he hid it among the roots of a tree.

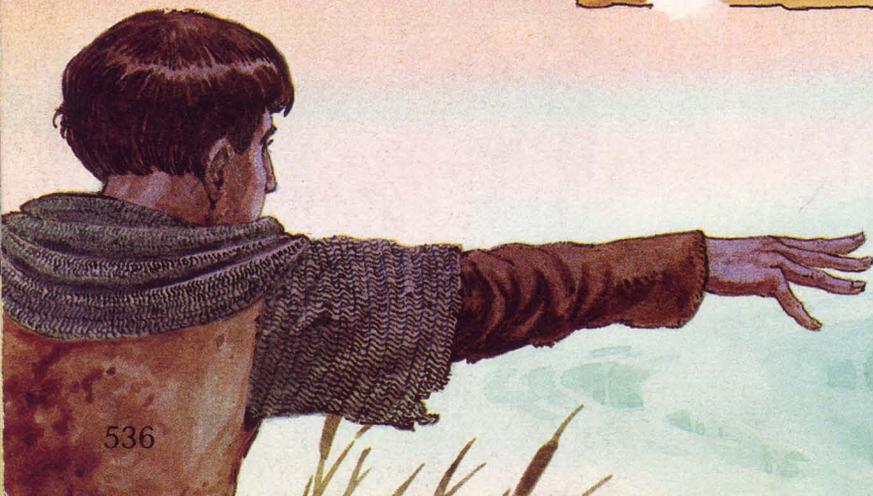
When he returned, the King said, "Well? Did you throw it in?"

"I did, sir."

"And what happened?"

"Happened, sir? Nothing happened. The wind blew through the reeds and a few frogs croaked."





In spite of his wounds, the King shouted, "You disobeyed me! You didn't throw it!" He tried to get to his feet, but he was too weak. "Go back and throw that sword into the lake, boy. Do as I tell you!"

Sir Bedevere ran back to the tree and pulled out Excalibur. It was such a beautiful sword! The hilt was full of jewels, and the moonlight spun off them like sparks. He whirled the sword once round his head — but could not bring himself to let go. So he hid it under a bush and went back.

"Well?" asked the King eagerly. "What happened?"

"I threw it in, sir. It made a great splash, and the nightingales stopped singing."

"Liar! Traitor!" choked Arthur. "Have I only one knight left, and he a liar who refuses to obey me? Must I go myself?"

Sir Bedevere could not speak for bitter remorse. He ran back as fast as his legs would carry him, snatched up Excalibur, and hurled it far out into the lake.

At the very moment its hilt touched the water, a woman's arm clothed in white silk reached up out of the lake and caught it. Three times the hand brandished the sword, then it was drawn below the waves . . . and it was as if it had never been.

Breathless with amazement, Sir Bedevere ran back to King Arthur and told him what he had seen. Arthur smiled and touched the boy's hair.



"You have done well. Excalibur was not mine, you see. It was only lent to me by the Lady of the Lake. Now carry me down to the shore."

Bedevere lifted him one last time, but reaching the lake found it no longer deserted. Moored among the reeds was a shallow barge draped at bow, masthead and stern with black cloth. Three women, veiled and dressed in black, stood on the shore beckoning. "Lay him in the boat, Sir Bedevere. Your task is finished."

Wrapped in rugs, in the bow of the barge, King Arthur seemed to be sleeping. As Bedevere stepped out of the barge, it pulled away from the shore and into the heart of the lake where mists draped it round.

"Where are you taking him?" Bedevere called across the water. And the answer came back, "To Avalon! To Avalon!"

And that was the last any mortal saw of the King — the greatest knight ever to wear armour, the greatest hero ever to draw sword.

People say that Arthur is not dead: that the herbs of Avalon healed him and he is sleeping, worn out after all his battles. They say that if the country is in danger and needs its best warriors, Arthur and his fallen knights may come back some day from the magic vale called Avalon.



BUTTERFLIES On The MOON

High on the topmost turret of the castle, Kropotkin the court astronomer gazed at the moon through his powerful telescope. Suddenly the words of Prince Azov rang in his ears. "Astronomer Kropotkin, you will find for me butterflies on the moon!"

"But master," Kropotkin protested, his hands trembling, "the moon is cold, and dry, and empty. Nothing lives . . ."

"Enough!" shouted the Prince. "Do I not pay you fifty roubles a year for your services?"

"You do indeed, master," and the old man bowed deeply to Azov. Kropotkin's family was large and hungry, and fifty roubles was treasure indeed.

"Astronomer Kropotkin, you will find for me butterflies on the moon," repeated the Prince, and his sharp words darted into the cold night air like sparks from a

crackling fire. His face twisted into a smile. "Tell me, have you visited the moon?"

"No master, I have not."

"Then if you have not been to the moon," sneered Prince Azov, "how can you say there are no butterflies there? Eh! Fool! Answer me that!" He glared at Kropotkin. "In one month's time, my lady and I are holding a banquet in the hall below. There will be many honoured guests. All eager to see the butterflies on the moon. So you have one month to find them."





That evening Kropotkin's wife, Anna, looked at her husband with some concern. "You have been in the house one hour and you have eaten nothing. Your soup is cold, should I heat it on the stove?"

"No."

"Are you sickening for something, husband? These cold nights star-gazing on the castle wall . . ."

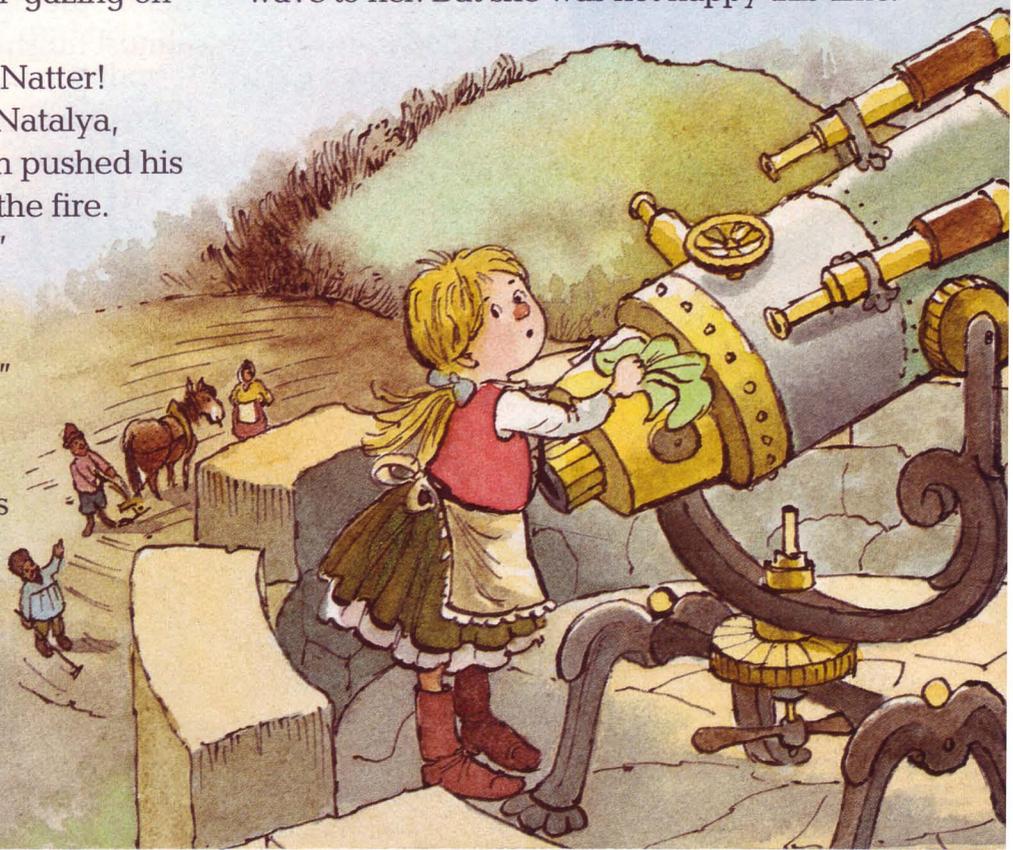
"Leave me alone, woman. Natter! Natter!" Ignoring his children, Natalya, Gregory and Innessa, Kropotkin pushed his chair aside and sat staring into the fire.

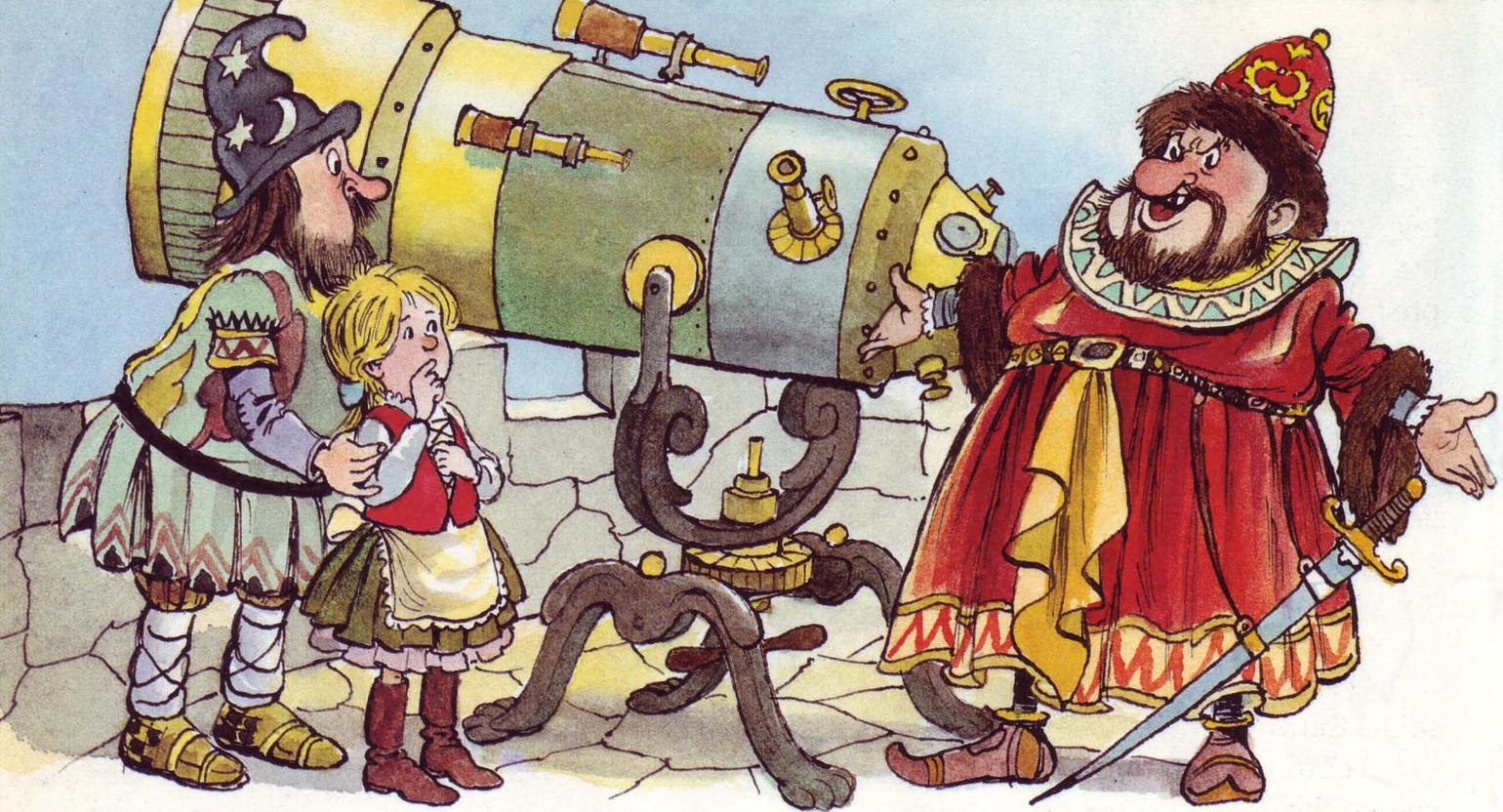
"Gregory, Innessa, eat up," whispered Anna. "Your father is not well."

"I know what it is, mother," Natalya announced. "I heard it from Vushtov, the footman's son. Father must find butterflies on the moon or he will lose his job."

Every week Natalya helped her father to clean and polish the great telescope.

Usually she loved the work. High above the world with the wind blowing in her hair, her singing would tumble over the battlements, skipping far away into the valley. Down below in the fields, peasants would see the golden-haired Natalya. "There she goes again, like a songbird," they would say and wave to her. But she was not happy this time.





Silently the telescope was taken to pieces. Silently the lenses, as large as table-tops, were cleaned until their surfaces sparkled like glittering crystal. Suddenly came the sound of Prince Azov's footsteps. "Astronomer Kropotkin, I have got news for you! My honoured guests are thrilled at the thought of butterflies on the moon."

"But there are no butterflies there!" Natalya interrupted, her heart hammering.

"Enough, girl!" stormed Azov. "Do not address your Prince in such a manner. Kropotkin, keep this vixen quiet!" The old man held his daughter's arm. Azov continued, "This butterfly hunting of yours is becoming famous, and to mark so grand an occasion the court orchestra will play."

The astronomer was wide eyed at the Prince's plans. "B-but, master . . ." he stammered.

"Kropotkin, not only will there be butterflies seen through the great telescope, but when the music plays they will dance to it. And as a special treat, your wife and children will also be invited to look through the telescope."

Natalya could not sleep. She tossed and turned. How could she help her father? Suddenly she sat up and smiled to herself. She crept out of bed and tip-toed downstairs. An hour later she was back in bed. The same thing happened the next night. And the next. For three whole weeks she toiled at her work. Then came the night before the banquet. Natalya's task was almost finished.



The castle steps were freezing cold as Natalya climbed upwards to the great telescope, which was clothed in silver from the light of the full moon. She clutched her precious bundle.

By special proclamation, Prince Azov declared a day's holiday. Beneath the castle walls, a gaily dressed crowd spread from the moat to the distant hills, eager to hear the latest news of the butterflies on the moon.

"I bet they will bite Kropotkin's nose," laughed one.

"Nest in his beard," said another.

"He'll lose his head as well as his job," said a third, "if he doesn't find them."

There was a deathly hush as Kropotkin swung the telescope towards the moon. With trembling fingers he focused the huge lenses. In his wildest dreams he had never seen such a sight! His heart drummed like a hundred galloping horses. His mouth felt dry as he handed the great telescope over to the Prince. His head shook in amazement. Could it really be?

Azov laughed with joy. "Kropotkin you old wizard, you've done it! Butterflies on the moon. Now make them dance," and he signalled to the orchestra. And dance they did. Fluttering in the breeze, Swallow Tails, Red Admirals, Tortoiseshells — all gorgeous oranges, blacks and blues.





Natalya held her breath, only she knew the secret.

The Prince's honoured guests were thrilled by the sight. Azov waved his hand to Anna and the children. "Come and

have a look. Your husband is indeed a miracle worker."

Anna, Gregory and Innessa crowded round. Then — disaster. Little Innessa pushed a button and the lens at the far end went spinning over the battlements — taking with it Natalya's paper butterflies, which she had taken three weeks to paint and cut out. The lens shattered into a thousand pieces and the paper butterflies were caught by the wind. The Prince's face turned black with

fury, but the crowd roared with delight.

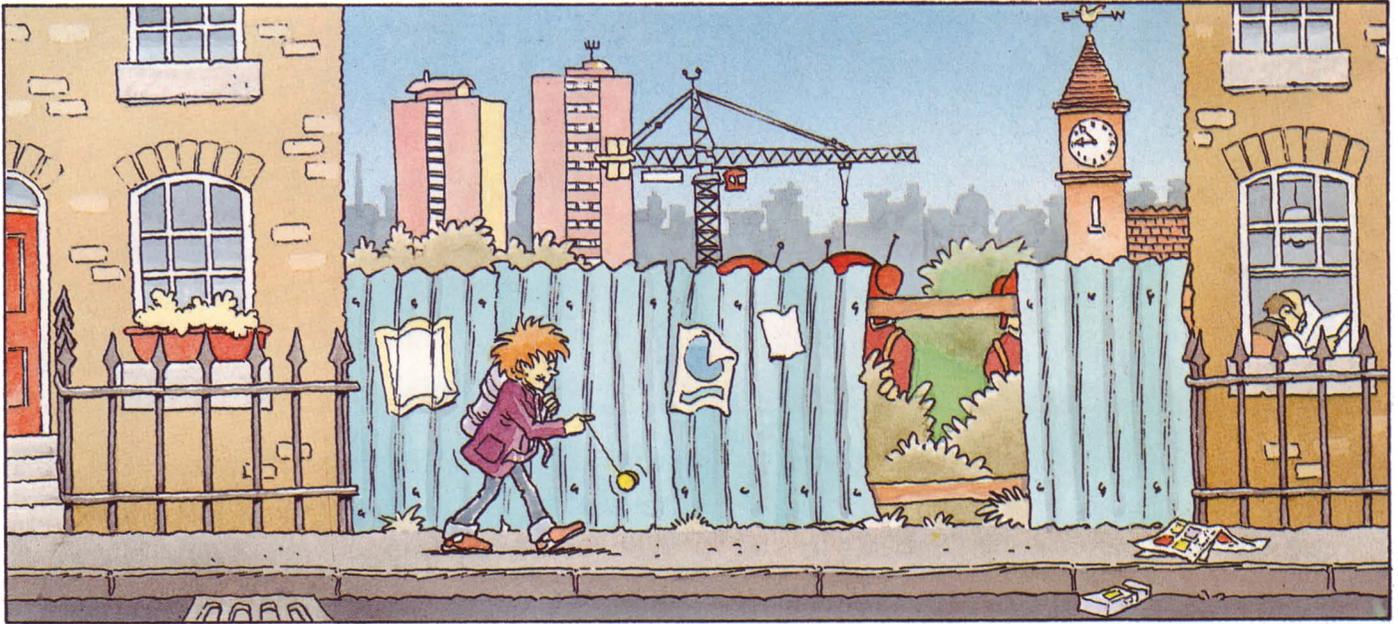
"See! See! The butterflies! They're going back to the moon!" And indeed the wind was lifting them higher and higher into the air. The orchestra played on. Prince Azov leaned grimly over the battlements. But at last he burst out laughing.

"Astronomer Kropotkin you have done me proud this night. Not only have you found me butterflies on the moon, you have brought them down to earth!" he roared. And all the honoured guests cheered.

At Kropotkin's feet a small piece of coloured paper spun in the breeze. He picked up the paper butterfly and put it gently into Natalya's hand. "Thank you, daughter." And he kissed her. Then Kropotkin, Anna, Natalya, and the whole family danced and danced the night away.

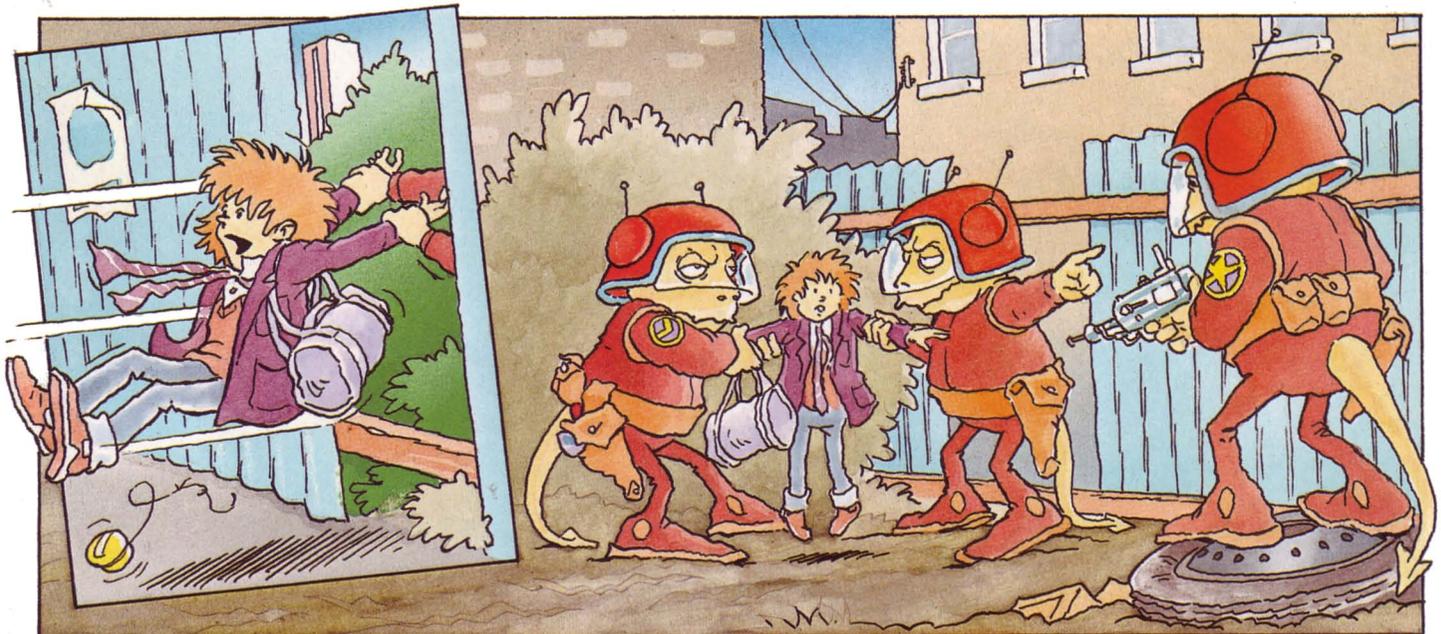


GINGER'S SECRET WEAPONS



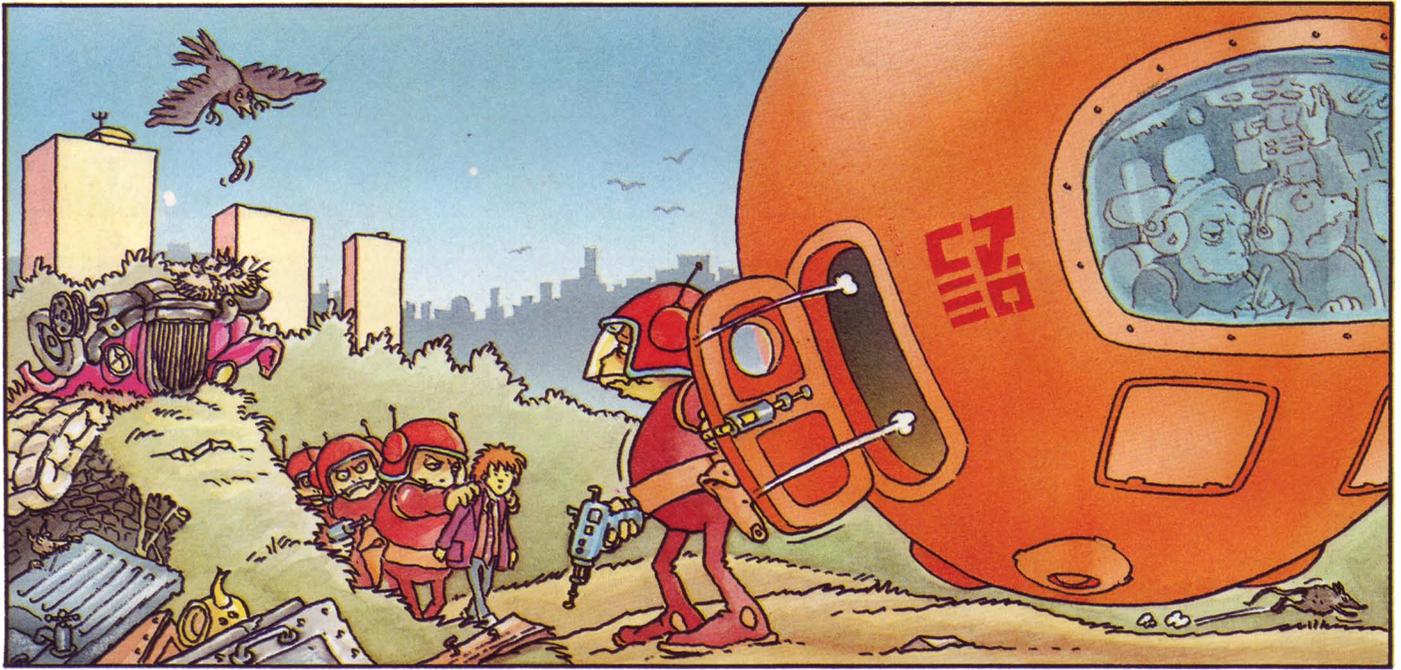
Ginger Jones was always late for school, but today was going to be different. He had made a big effort to get up early.

"I can't wait to see teacher's face when I show up on time," chuckled Ginger as he hurried along.



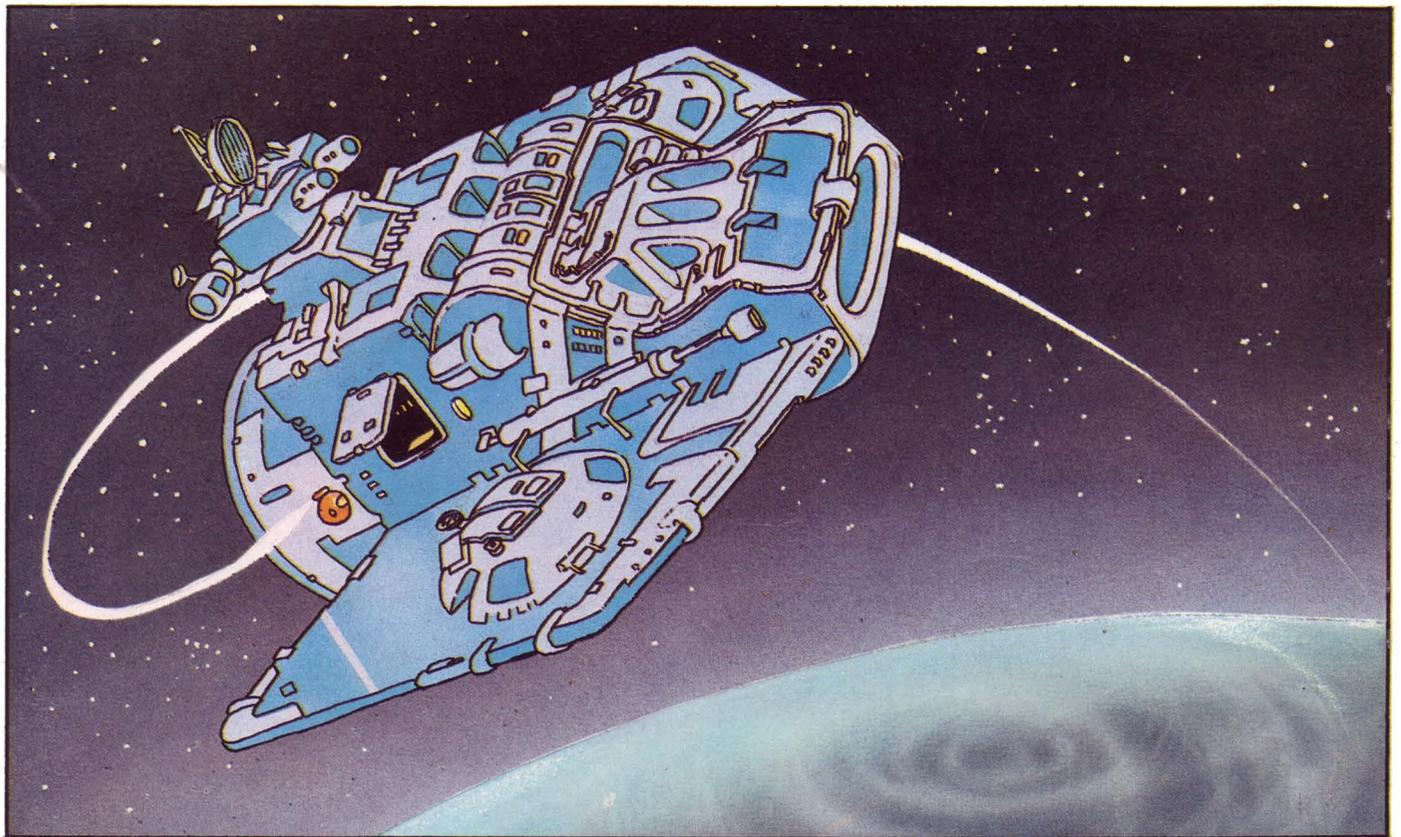
Suddenly he was grabbed by both wrists and whisked through a gap in the fence. Ginger could not believe his eyes.

Three strange creatures were shouting at him, in a sort of computer language he did not understand. It sounded very weird.



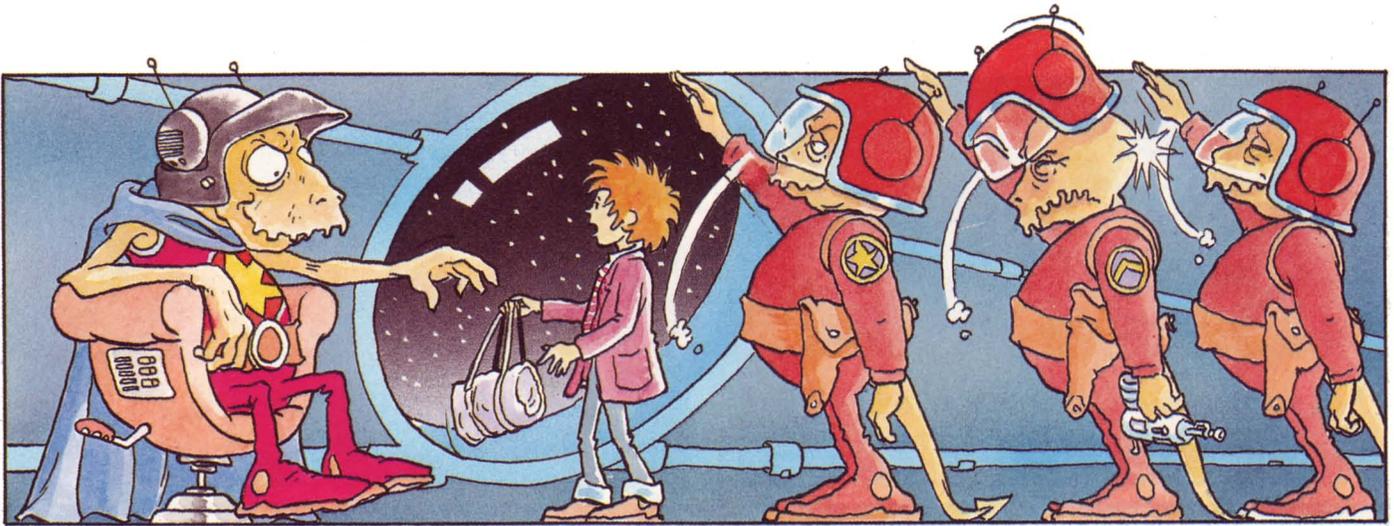
"Hey, let me go!" cried Ginger. But it was useless. They just went on shouting, and marched him through the deserted site to

where a huge, shiny metal bubble was hovering a few inches above the ground. Within seconds, Ginger was bundled inside.



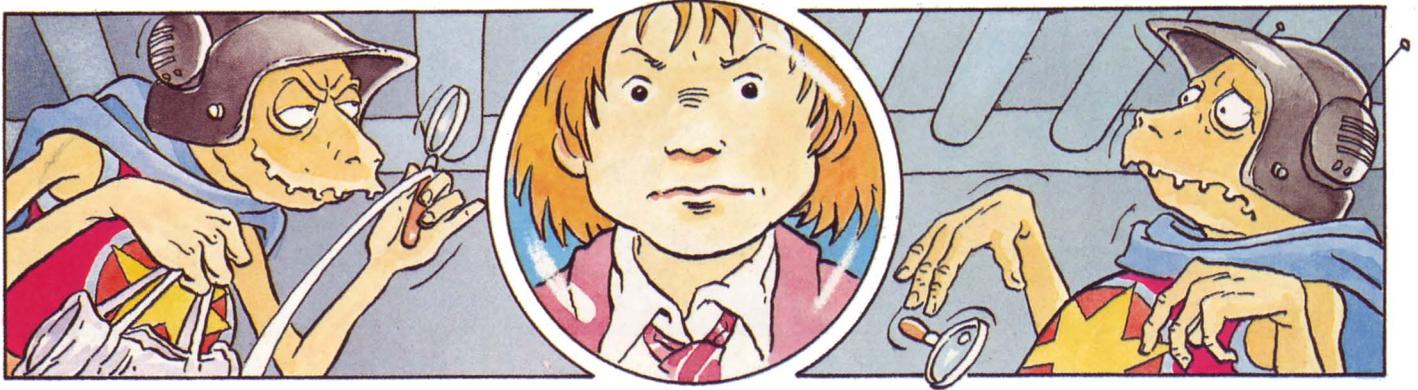
The strange device began to hum very loudly. Then it lurched into the air and rocketed out into space. Floating among the stars was a

spaceship the size of a city. They were heading for it. Ginger had been kidnapped by aliens! He let out a gasp of horror.



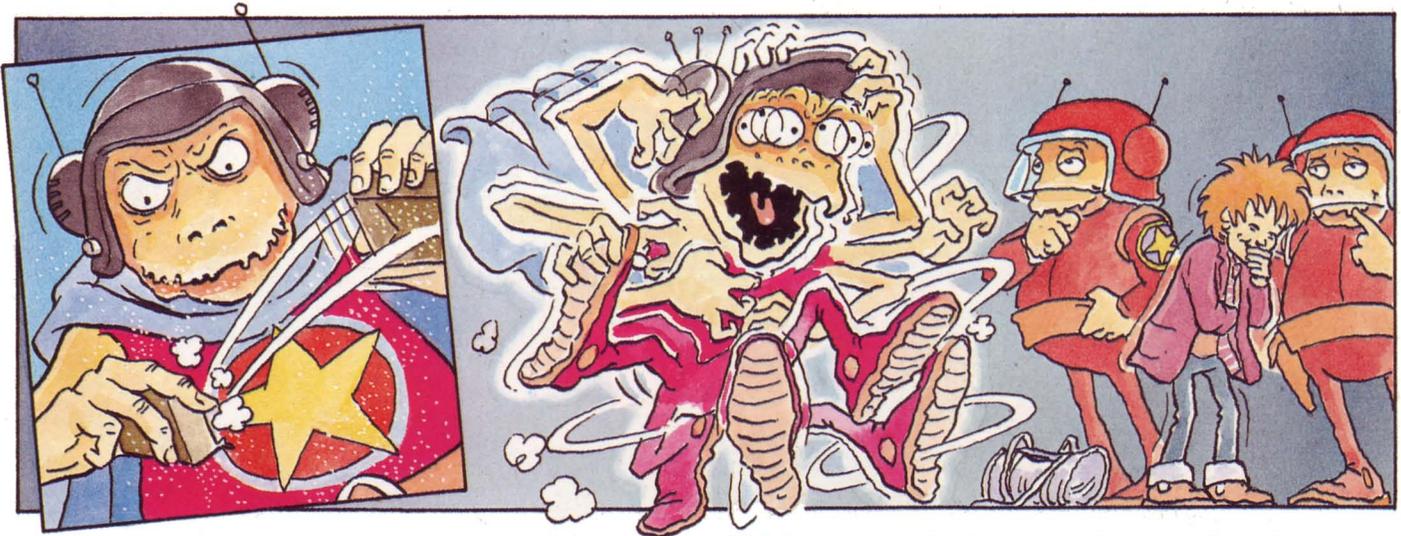
The ship's captain twiddled a knob on his helmet and spoke in perfect English. "Show me your weapons, Earthling. We want to

study the Earth's defences before we invade." Ginger was petrified. "I don't have any weapons — only a schoolbag!"



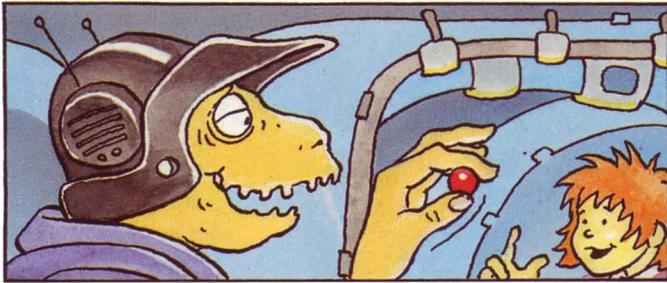
"No weapons? What's this then?" The captain took the bag and peered through Ginger's magnifying glass. What a shock

he had! It looked as if Ginger had become a giant. "Oh, great Galaxies! An enlarger for Earthlings!" he exclaimed.

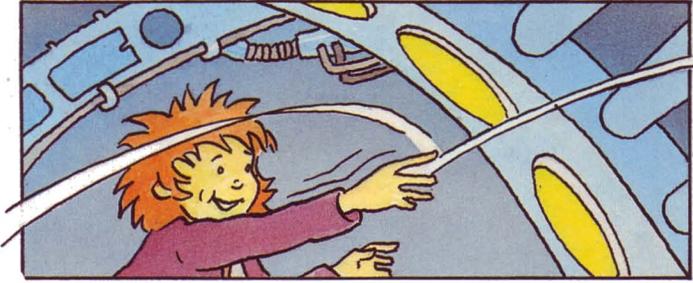


"And what have we here?" enquired the captain suspiciously. It was a very small tin. Impatiently he tore it open.

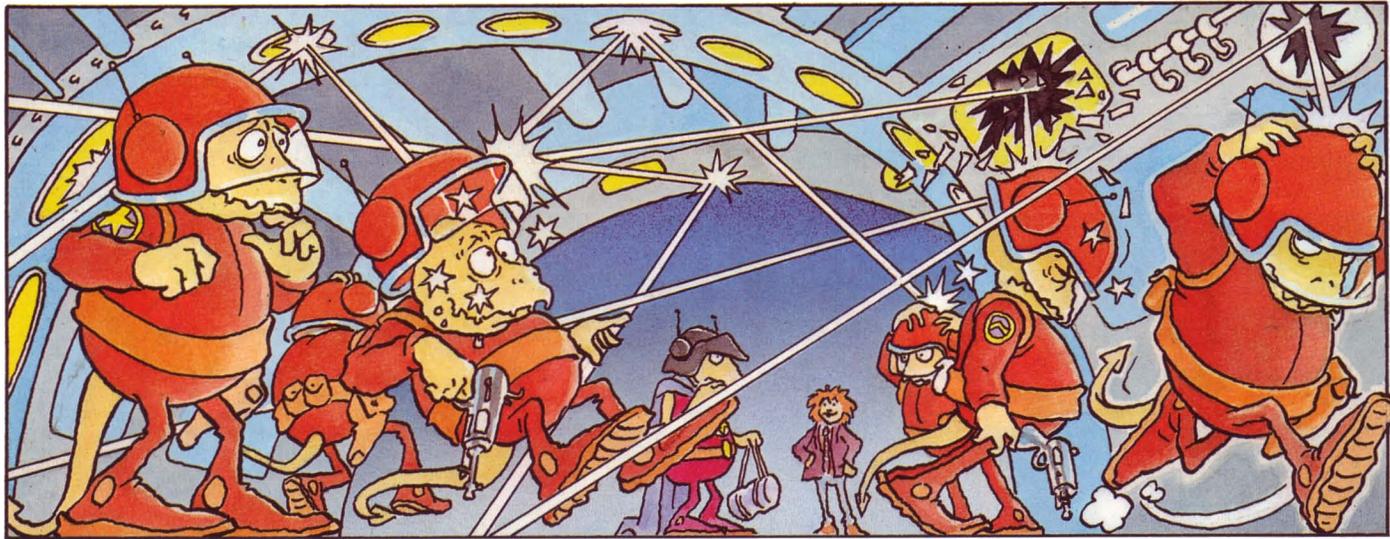
Within seconds the captain was dancing around the cabin, yelling and scratching. He was covered in itching powder!



When he recovered, the captain took a small red ball out of the bag.

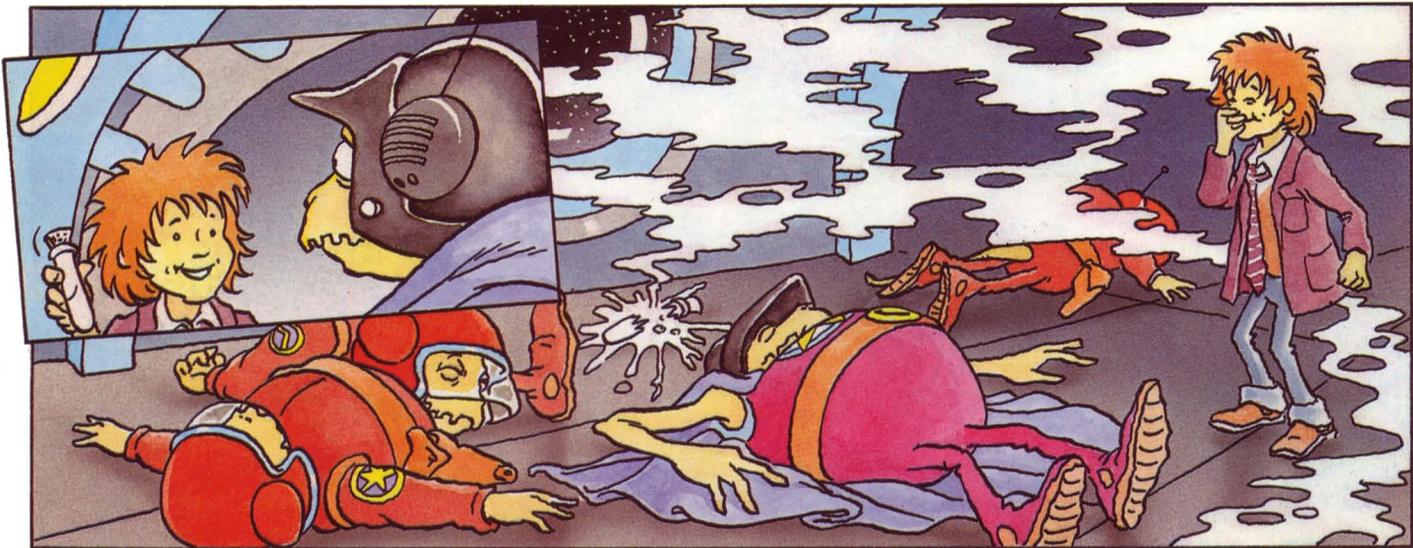


"That's my superball!" cried Ginger. He flung the little ball into the air.



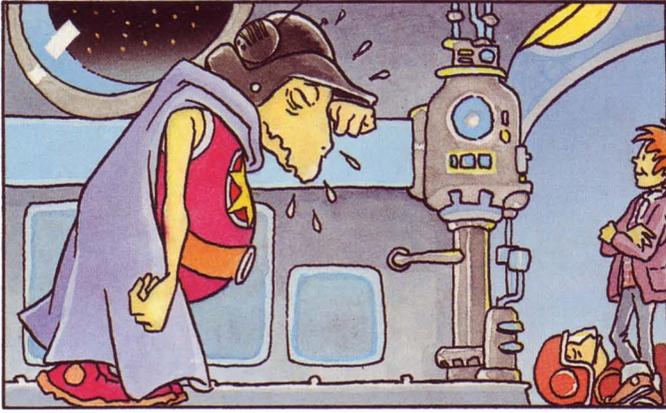
It went bouncing around the ship, smashing all sorts of delicate controls and knocking out two of the aliens.

The captain surveyed the damage with unbelieving eyes. He cleared his throat. "Aha-ha . . . that is truly a dangerous weapon!"

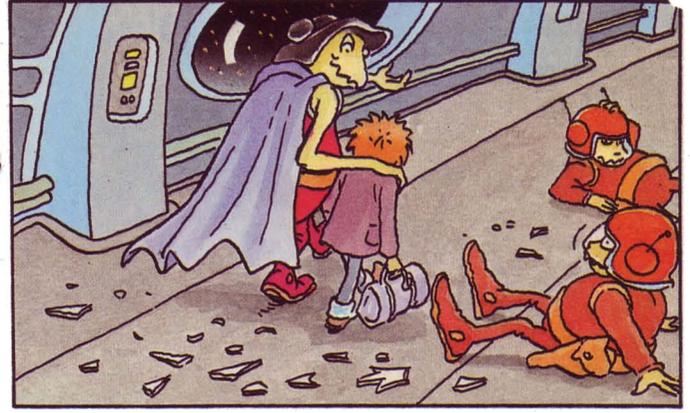


Ginger was beginning to enjoy himself. "And now for my very best weapon!" he shouted. Holding his nose he whipped a stink bomb out

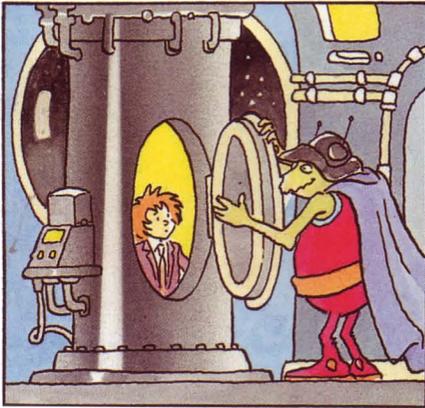
of his pocket and dropped it on to the floor. The smell was awful! "Gas!" cried the crew in panic, coughing and spluttering.



"You're too powerful for us," groaned the captain. "There will be no invasion. But is there anything we can do for you, Earthling?"



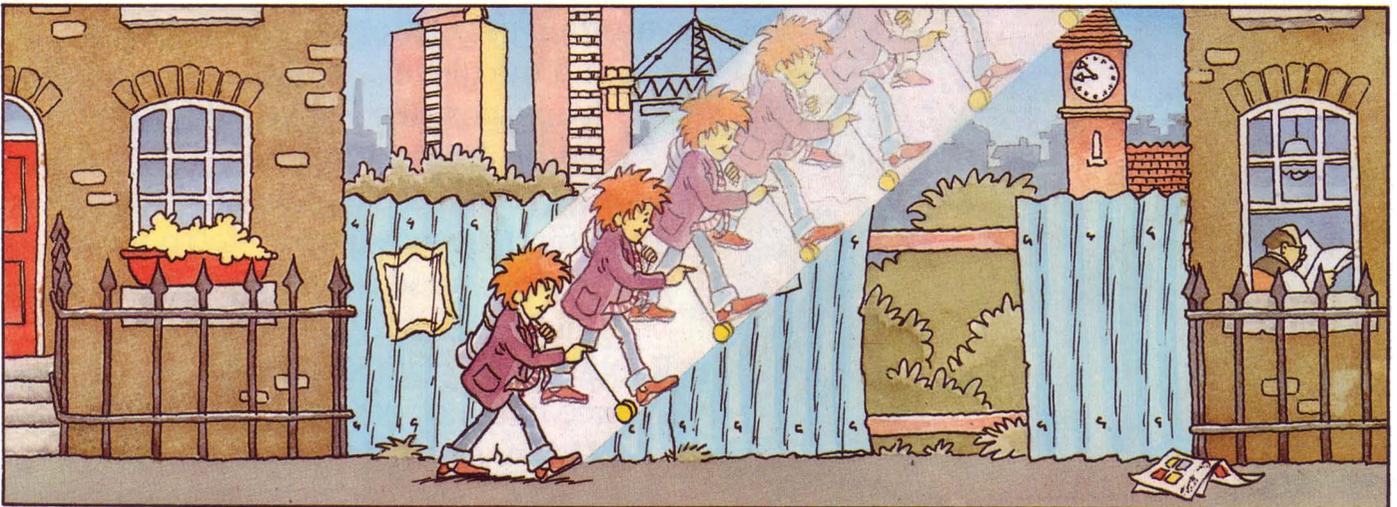
"Well, I'm late for school now," said Ginger. "It starts at nine, you see."
"Just follow me," said the captain.



"Get into this time tube," he said to Ginger. "I'll set the dials for ten to nine Earth time. Farewell, Earthling."



There was a loud click and Ginger began to spin round and round at an alarming speed. He closed his eyes and crossed his fingers.



Suddenly his feet touched the ground. He was back just where he had started, hurrying past the gap in the fence on his way to school.

It was ten to nine. Ginger chuckled to himself. "This morning, for once, I'm on time for school! I can't wait to see teacher's face!"

ALICE'S ADVENTURES IN WONDERLAND

Poor Alice felt very lonely. She would have burst into tears if she had not seen the White Rabbit trotting slowly towards her, anxiously studying the ground on either side.

"The Duchess. The Duchess," he muttered. "Oh my dear paws. Oh my fur and whiskers. She'll have me executed as sure as ferrets are ferrets. Where can I have dropped them, I wonder?"

Alice guessed immediately that he was looking for his fan and white gloves, and she began to hunt around for them.



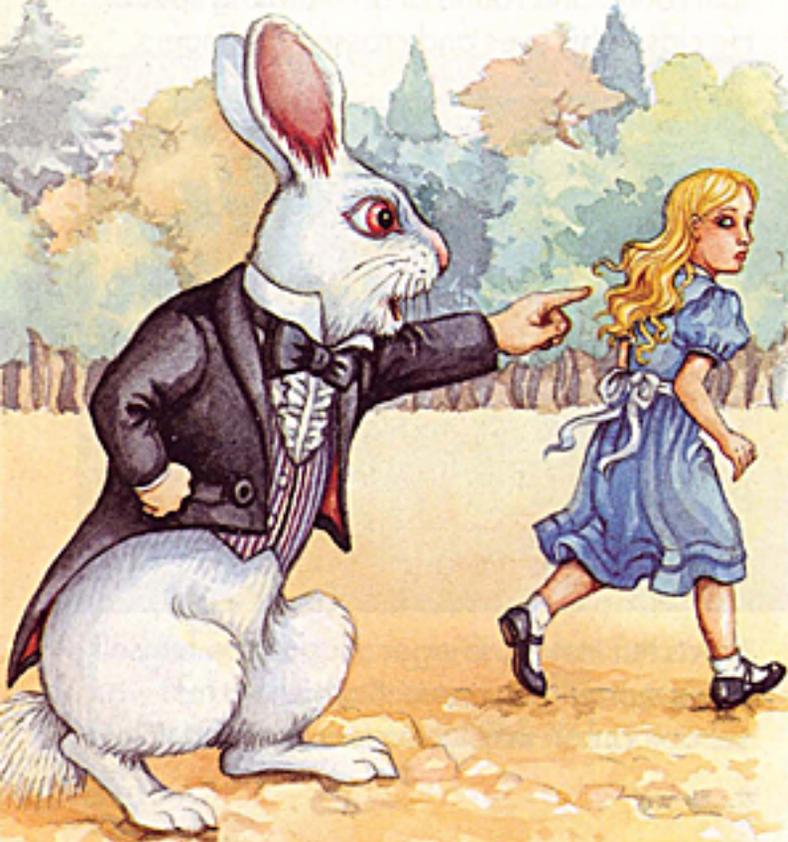
But everything had changed since her swim in the pool. The hall with its glass table and little door had vanished completely — and so had the fan and the gloves.

Very soon, the Rabbit noticed her. "Why, Mary Ann," he called out angrily. "What are you doing out here? Run home this minute and fetch me a pair of gloves and a fan. Quick now."

Alice was so frightened at the Rabbit's tone of voice that she ran off at once in the direction he pointed to.

"Mary Ann? He thought I was his housemaid," she said to herself as she ran.

Soon she reached a little house, with the name 'W. Rabbit' engraved on a brass plate on the door. She went in





without knocking and hurried upstairs to a room where she noticed a little bottle standing on a table.

"I know something interesting is sure to happen whenever I eat or drink anything," she said, "so I'll just see what this bottle does. I do hope it'll make me grow large again."

She quickly drank half the bottle, and the next thing she knew her head was pressing against the ceiling.

"Oh dear, I do wish I hadn't drunk quite so much."

But it was too late. She went on growing, and growing, and very soon she had to lie down with one arm out of the

window and one foot up the chimney.

Luckily for Alice, she grew no larger. But she was very uncomfortable. She was beginning to wonder how she would ever get out again when she heard the White Rabbit calling. "Mary Ann! Mary Ann! Fetch me my gloves this minute."

Alice quite forgot that she was now a thousand times larger than the Rabbit, and she trembled as she heard him trying to open the door. It would not open because her foot was jammed hard against it.



"I'll just have to climb in through the window," said the Rabbit.

"Oh no you won't," thought Alice. She waited until she heard the Rabbit just under the window and spread out her hand to snatch him up. But all she snatched was air, and the next moment there was a shriek and the crash of broken glass as the Rabbit fell back through the cucumber frame.

"Help! Help! Somebody come and help me," he called furiously.

Alice heard the pattering of many footsteps as a crowd of little animals and birds came running from all directions.

"There's an arm in that window," said the Rabbit, "and it shouldn't be there. Go and take it away at once."

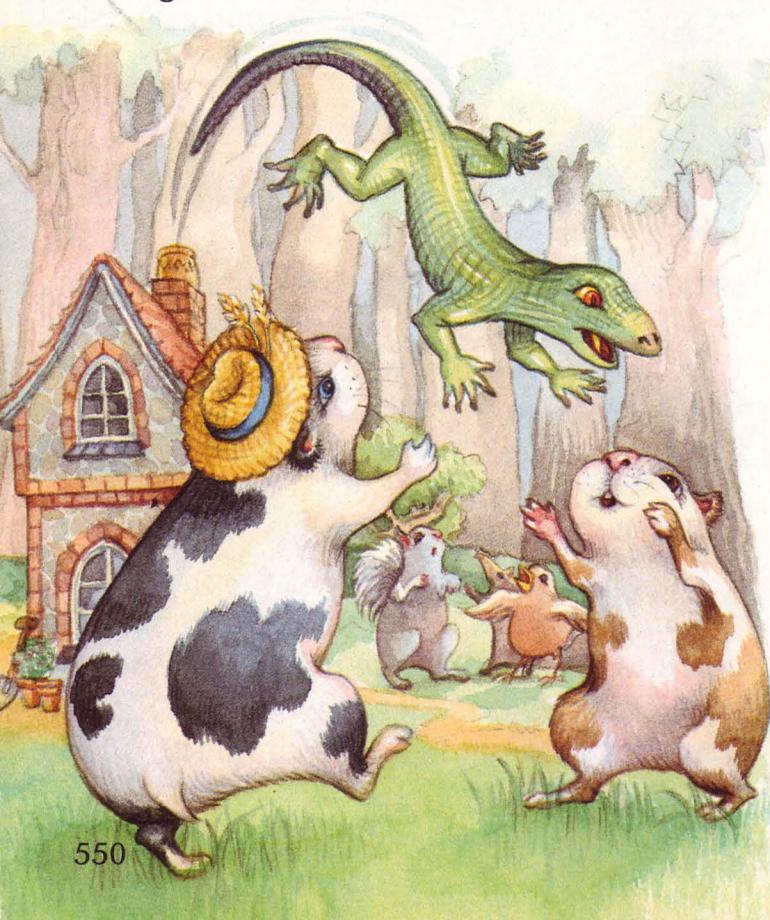
There was a long silence after this. But at last Alice heard the rumbling of little cart wheels and the sound of many voices talking together.

"Bill, bring the ladder here," said one. "Put it here, at the corner of the house. Now, Bill, the master says you're to go down the chimney."

Bill the lizard climbed up on to the roof and Alice put her foot down the chimney as far as it would go. Then she waited until she heard Bill scratching and scrambling in the chimney just above her, and gave one sharp kick.

"There goes Bill!" cried the crowd of animals and birds as the little lizard sailed through the air.

Two guinea pigs caught him as he fell to the ground.



"What happened Bill?" they asked.

"Well, I hardly know," he squeaked. "Something like a Jack-in-the-box came at me, and I went up like a sky-rocket."

"We must attack that Jack-in-the-box," said the Rabbit. "Bring up a barrowful of pebbles at once."

Alice did not have to wait long to see what would happen next. A shower of pebbles rattled in through the window, hitting her in the face.

"You'd better not do that again," she shouted angrily.

There was silence. And then Alice noticed that the pebbles were turning into little cakes.

"If I eat one of them," she thought, "it's sure to make some change in my size. And as it can't possibly make me larger, it must make me smaller."

So she swallowed one of the cakes, and immediately shrank until she was small enough to get through the door.



She ran out of the house, and the crowd of little animals and birds rushed towards her. Then she ran as fast as she could, and soon lost them in a thick wood.





"The first thing I've got to do," she thought when she stopped to rest, "is to grow to my right size again. I suppose I ought to eat or drink something or other, but the great question is, what?"

Alice looked all around her. There was a large mushroom nearby, about the same height as herself. She looked under it and behind it, and she stretched herself up on tip-toe to see what was on top of it. Her eyes met those of a large blue Caterpillar that was sitting with his arms folded, quietly smoking a long hookah, and taking not the smallest notice of her, or anything else.

He slowly took the hookah out of his mouth. "Who are you?" he asked sleepily.

"I . . . I hardly know, sir. You see, since I got up this morning I haven't kept the same size for ten minutes. And being so many different sizes in a day is really very confusing."

"No, it isn't," said the Caterpillar.

"Well, perhaps you haven't found it so yet," said Alice. "But when you have to turn into a chrysalis — you will some day, you know — and then after that into a butterfly, I should think you'll feel it a little queer, won't you?"

"Not a bit."

"Well," said Alice, "all I know is, it would feel very queer to me."

The Caterpillar was silent for a while. Then he said, "What size do you want to be?"

"Oh, I'm not particular. But I would like to be a little larger than three inches. It is such a wretched height."

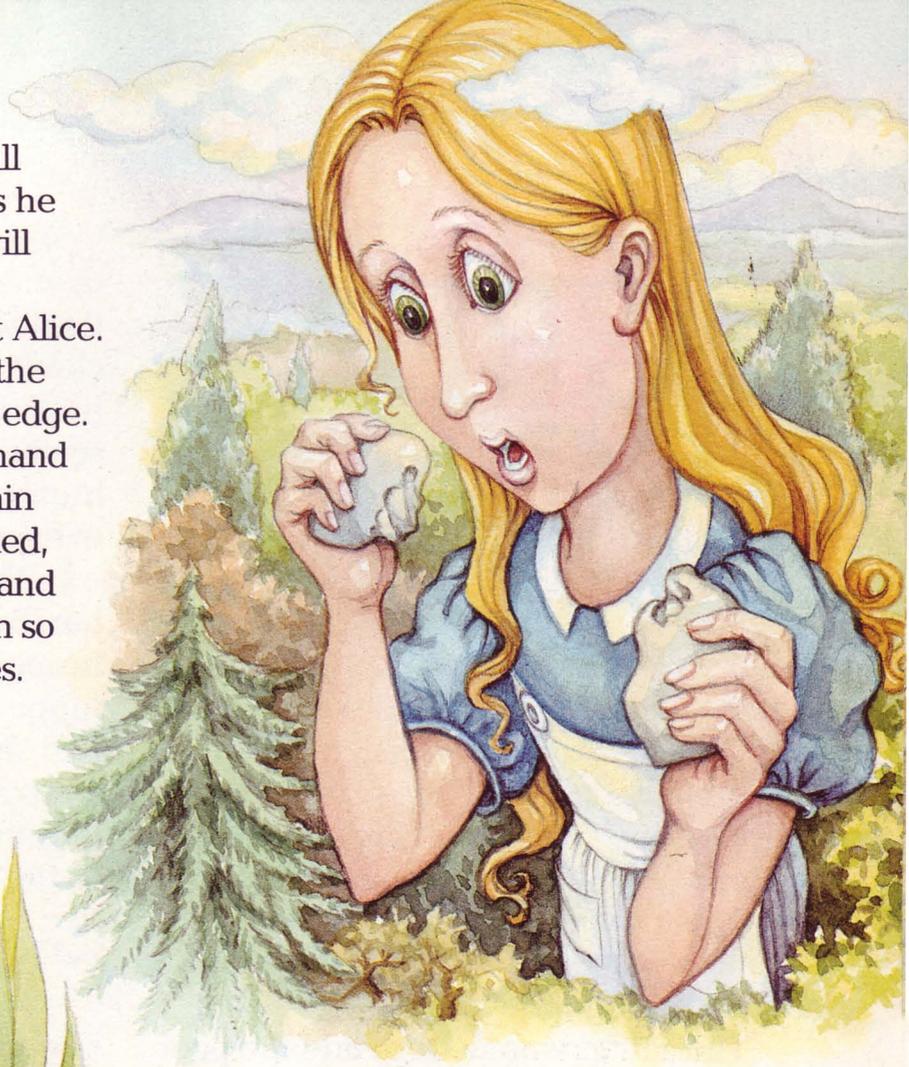
"It is a very good height indeed," said the Caterpillar angrily, rearing himself up to his full three inches.

Then he yawned, got down off the mushroom and very slowly crawled away into the grass.

"One side of the mushroom will make you grow taller," he called as he disappeared, "and the other side will make you grow shorter."

"But which is which?" thought Alice. And she stretched her arms round the mushroom and broke off a bit of the edge.

She nibbled a little of the right-hand bit, and shrank so rapidly that her chin struck her foot. Feeling very frightened, she then nibbled a little off the left-hand bit. The next moment she had grown so tall that her head was above the trees.



a little house which stood nearby.

"I wonder who I shall find inside?" thought Alice. And she walked towards the front door.

So she set to work very carefully nibbling one bit of mushroom and then the other, until she was the right size to enter

[What surprises does the little house hold? Find out in Part 21]



A GREAT ESCAPE

Long ago, when the ticking of time had barely begun, the world was wild and dangerous. It was foolish to venture far from home. But one small frog had strayed from the safety of his pool. Like the drip-dripping of water drops, the little frog's heart beat in his chest as he felt the ground softly tremble. Something was coming through the scrub!

The sound was so close and the pool so far away. "Perhaps I should crouch still and pretend to be a stone," thought the little frog.

But as he looked back a huge lizard burst out of the scrub, heading straight for him! In zig-zagging leaps the frog set off for his pool, the scuttling lizard getting closer every moment.

Ahead of him the lizard saw the frog, but he was not thinking of food. Inside his scaly chest, his heart was leaping, for he had heard behind him the running feet of a human being. And looking round he saw the two-legged hunter running, with a stick in her hand. "I could

crouch still and pretend to be a rock," thought the lizard, "but humans are too clever. She'd spot me and kill me and roast me over her camp fire." So he scuttled on, and behind him the shrieking human got closer and closer with every stride.

The little girl saw the lizard ahead of her. But she was not thinking of food. Inside her narrow chest, her heart was rapping like a fist. For behind her she had seen one huge horn slash down the long grass, the hooves gouge holes in the ground, and she heard a bellow of rage as the woolly rhinoceros thundered after her. She ran and ran, but with every step the rhino got closer.

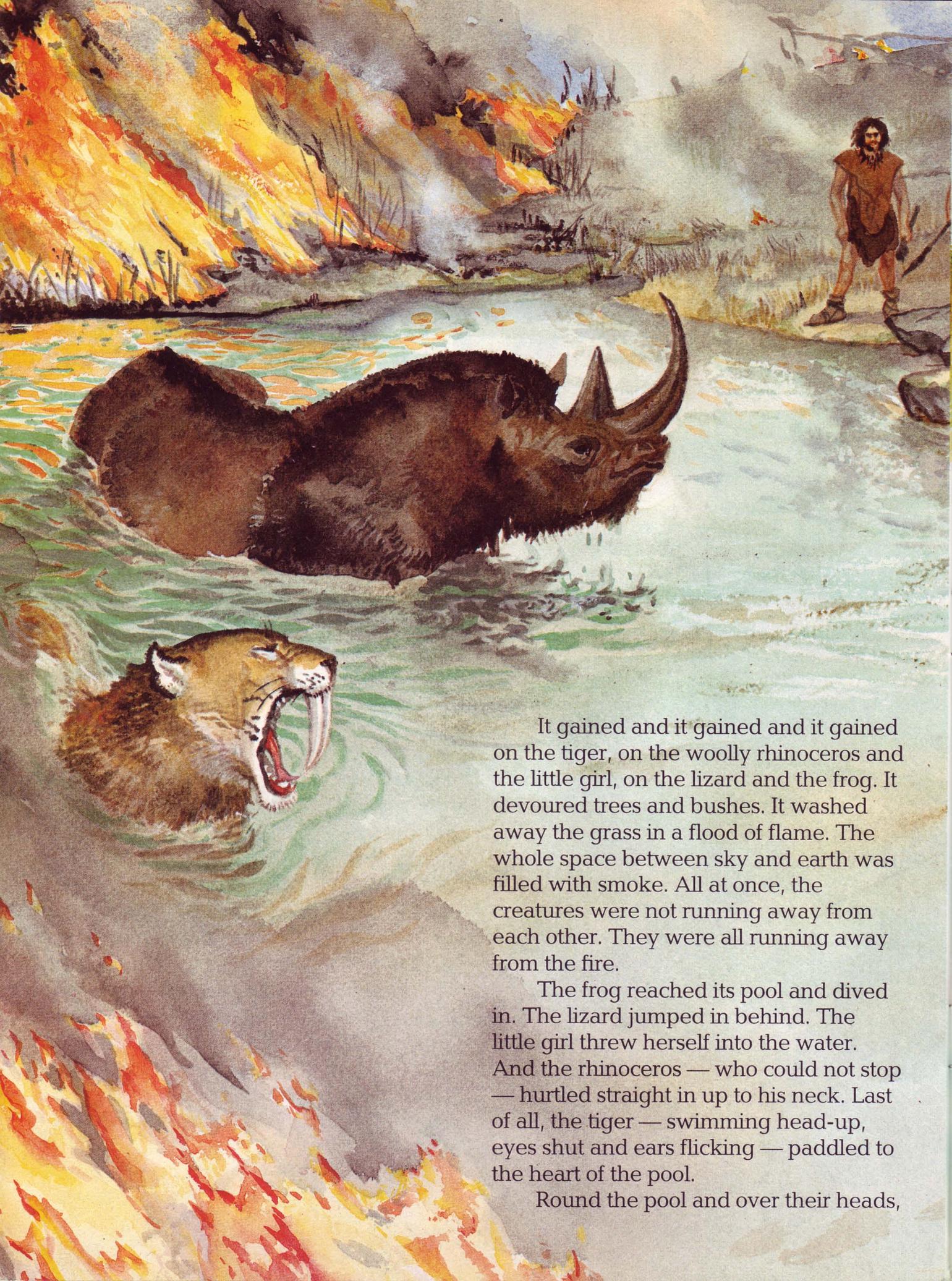
Ahead of him, the woolly rhinoceros saw the little girl. But he was not thinking of trampling her — only of getting away.





Inside his leathery chest, his heart banged like a drum. He had heard the roar, and seen the flash of golden fur among the trees. A tiger was coming after him! And though his hurtling gallop shook the ground like an earthquake, he knew that the tiger was faster, gaining with every bound.

Ahead of him, the sabre-toothed tiger saw the rhinoceros. But he was not thinking of food. Inside his velvet chest his heart pounded like a hammer. For his golden nostrils had smelled the smell behind him, and his swivelling ears heard the crackling in the trees. Behind him came the biggest and fastest enemy of all — fire!



It gained and it gained and it gained on the tiger, on the woolly rhinoceros and the little girl, on the lizard and the frog. It devoured trees and bushes. It washed away the grass in a flood of flame. The whole space between sky and earth was filled with smoke. All at once, the creatures were not running away from each other. They were all running away from the fire.

The frog reached its pool and dived in. The lizard jumped in behind. The little girl threw herself into the water. And the rhinoceros — who could not stop — hurtled straight in up to his neck. Last of all, the tiger — swimming head-up, eyes shut and ears flicking — paddled to the heart of the pool.

Round the pool and over their heads,



the fire raged. Great flapping flags of flame shook in their faces and scorched the eyebrows of the little girl and the wool of the rhinoceros.

And then the fire was gone, into the distance, destroying everything in its path and driving whole herds ahead of it. All round the pool the plants were black, smoking, dead.

The creatures in the pool looked round at one another, and none of them moved. The ripples on the pool died away, and only their eyes watched and their hearts beat. The tiger growled.

Suddenly, through the smoke came a howling and hooting, and a drumbeat like a thumping heart. A dozen tall men raced up to the pool and shook their spears in delight. "Washuma! You're

alive! We thought the fire must have killed you! How clever of you to hide in the water!"

They pulled the little girl out and shook their spears at the animals trapped in the pool. The beasts turned this way and that, but found every escape blocked by a warrior with a spear. "Look, Washuma! Thanks to the fire there'll be roast lizard to eat, and ten new shields of rhino hide, and a rug of golden fur for you to sleep under!"

"No!" said Washuma in a loud voice. "These animals took shelter from the fire just like I did. Listen and you'll hear their hearts beating with fear just like mine."

"Washuma! We are hunters!" cried her father, shaking his spear.

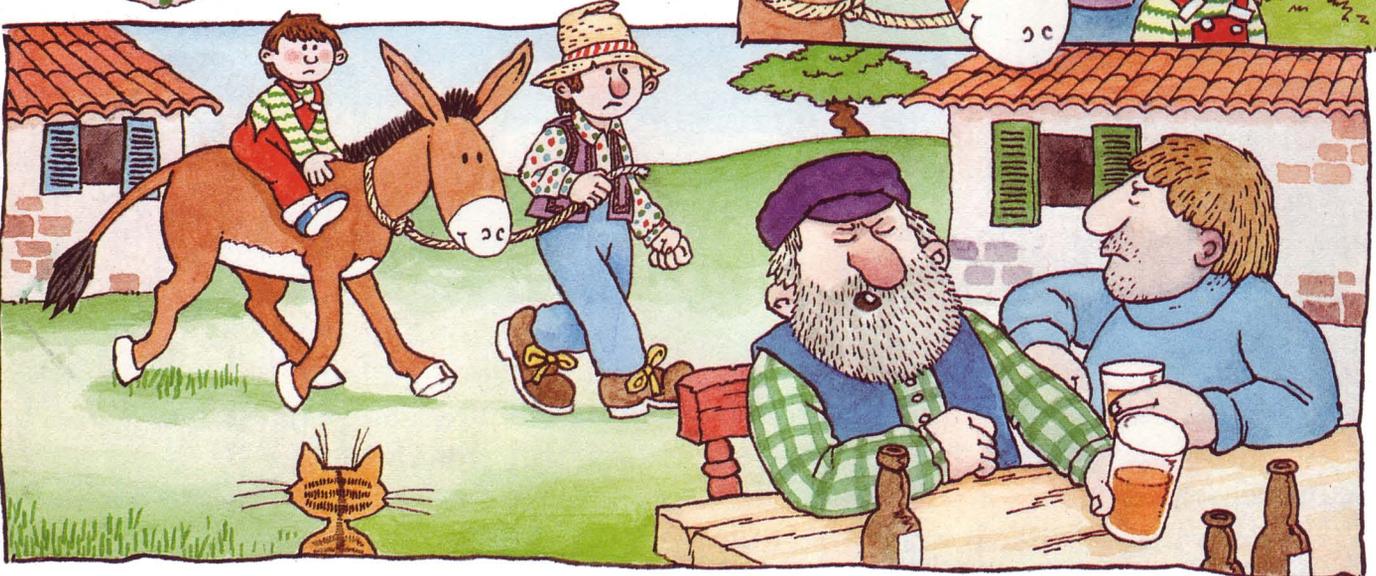
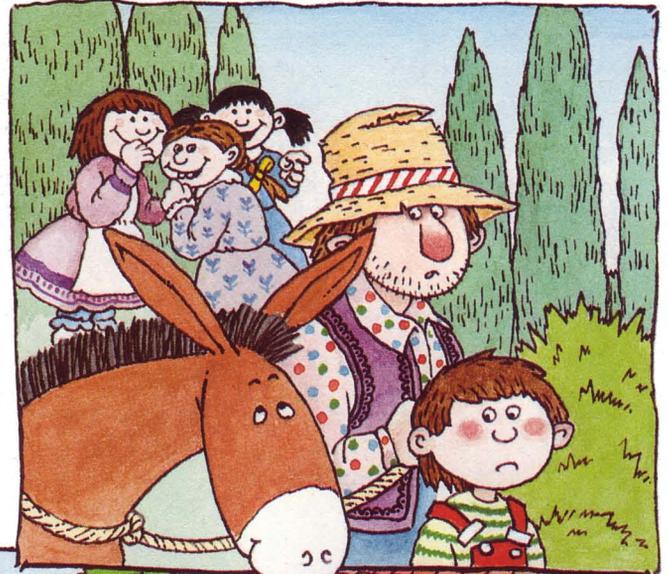
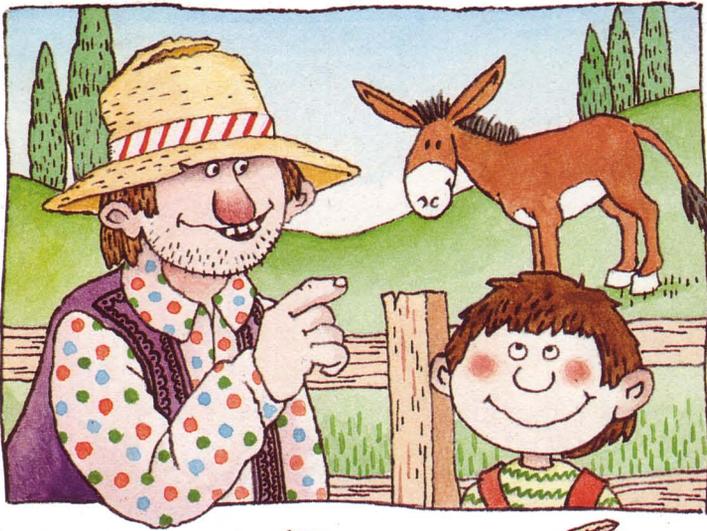
But tears ran down Washuma's face. "Please. Don't kill them. Let them go this time. The fire made them like brothers to me. Please don't kill my brothers!"

So the lizard and the woolly rhinoceros and the sabre-toothed tiger were allowed to go their separate ways across the plain, and Washuma went home to a great feast.

As for the frog, it sat very still on the scorched brink of the pond and pretended to be a stone.



The Miller and his Donkey



One morning, a miller said to his son, "We'll take the donkey to town and sell it. Such a fine-looking animal should fetch a good price." So off they went, the miller and his son, leading their donkey along by a rope.

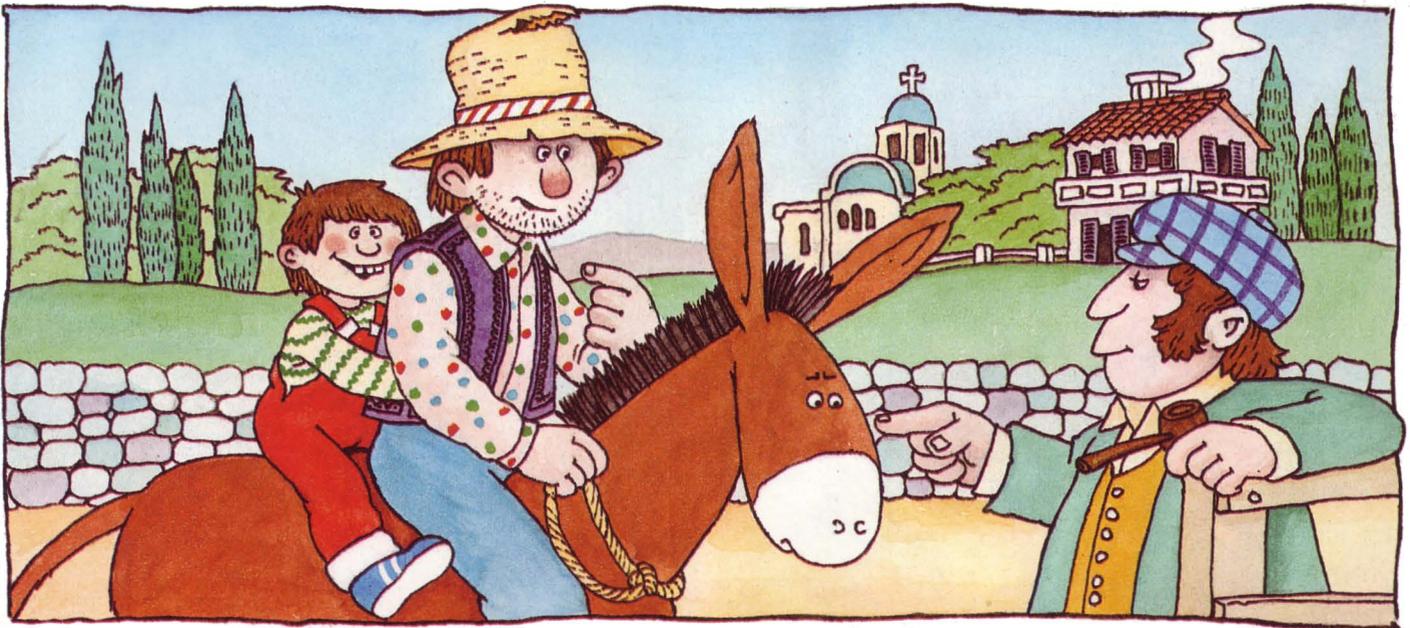
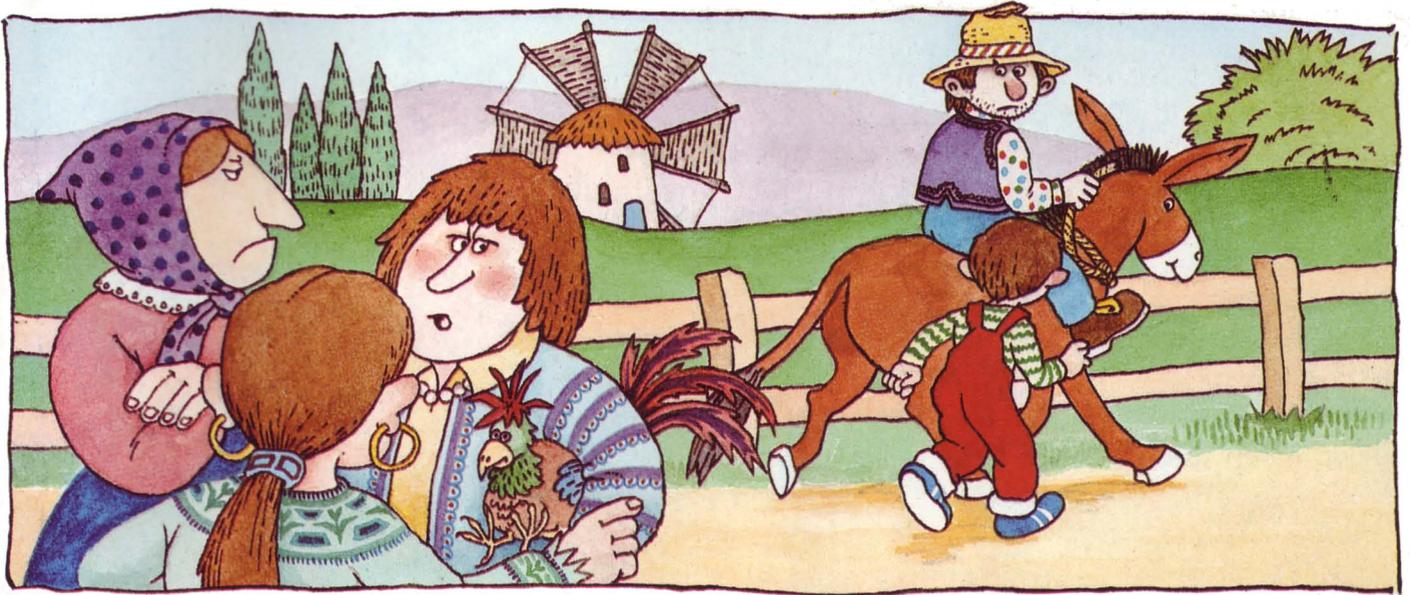
But at the town gate, they passed a crowd of giggling girls. "Why ever don't you ride the donkey?" called one of the girls. "That's what it's for, isn't it?"

"Why didn't I think of that?" thought the miller. He lifted his son on to the donkey, and trudged on alongside them.

On they walked, past a wayside inn where two old men sat outside supping beer. One said loudly to the other, "I never thought I'd live to see the day when some young whippersnapper would ride while his poor old father walked. I don't know what children are coming to these days."

The miller felt so embarrassed that he lifted his son off the donkey and climbed up himself. The boy was quite content to trot along behind, on foot.

But when they passed some mothers at the roadside, the women set up a fearful



clucking. "Just look at that mean old man! He rides along like an emperor, and his poor little boy has to walk. Shame on you!"

The miller, who could not bear anyone to think badly of him, at once lifted his son up behind him, and the two of them rode along, singing cheerfully.

But not for long. A farmer leaning on his fence, smoking a leisurely pipe, called out to them, "Where are you heading on that poor wee donkey?"

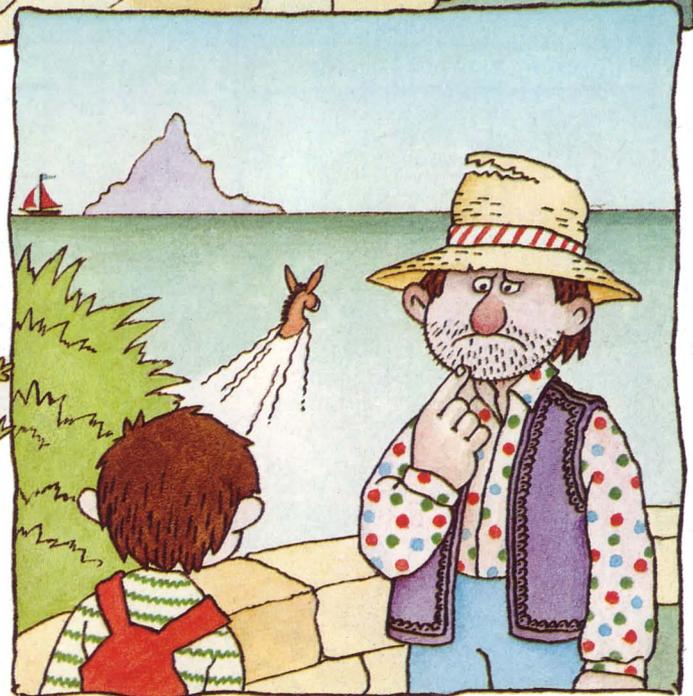
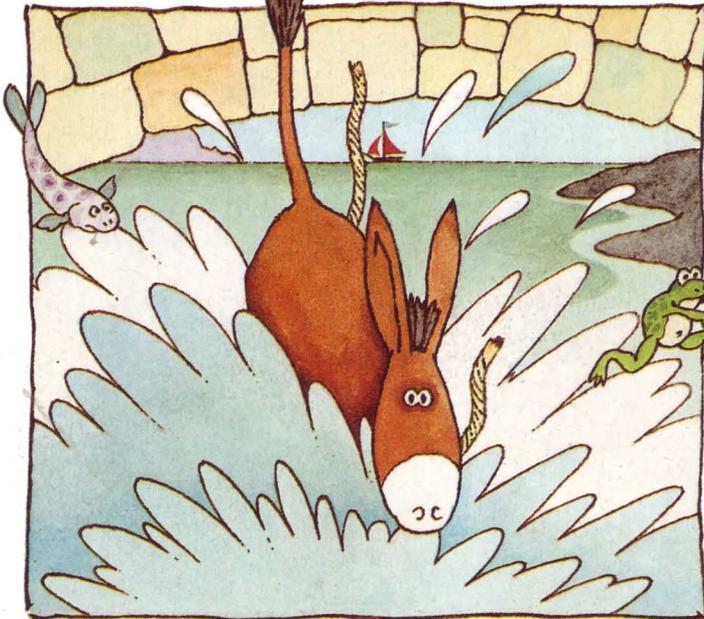
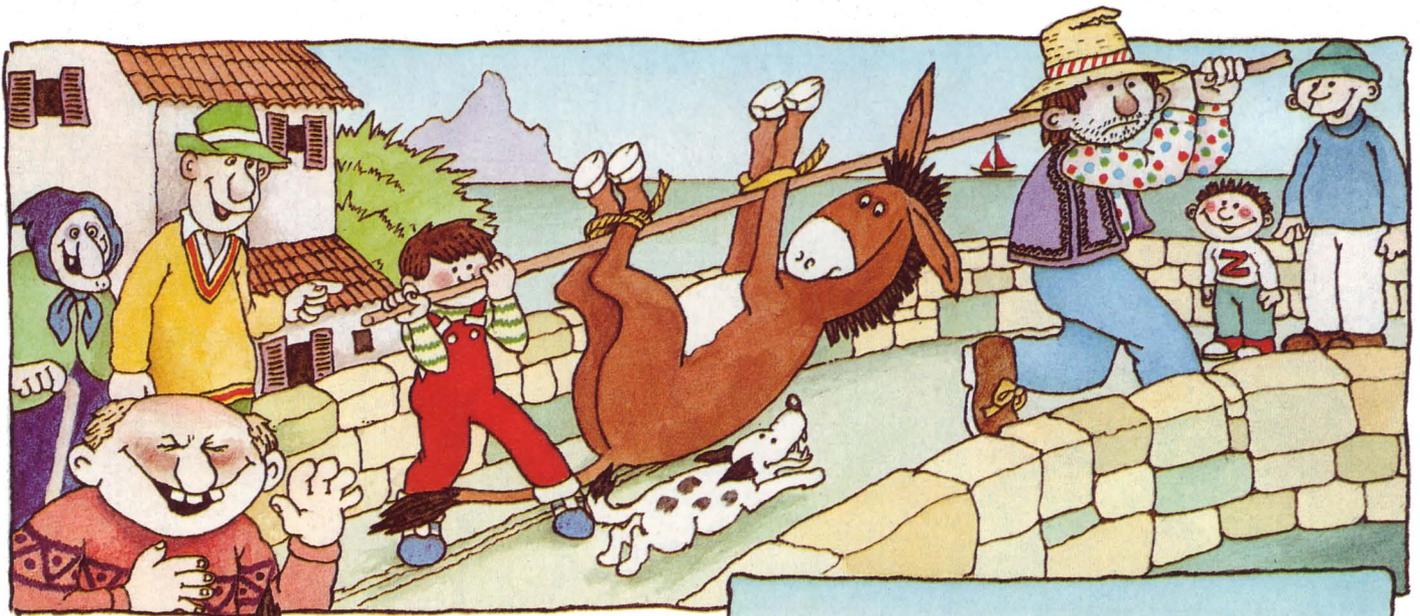
"To market, to sell the donkey."

"Pah! By the time you get to town, the

poor wee beastie will be half dead from carrying the two of you. Nobody will pay you a penny for it."

The miller was so horrified to hear this that he jumped down. "Why didn't I think of that? Get off this instant, son, and find a long pole. If we can give the donkey a rest before it gets to town, perhaps it will be fit to sell."

To the farmer's great amusement, the miller and his son set about lashing the donkey to a pole by its feet. They staggered off with the beast slung between them. It was very slow-going.



At the edge of town, the road crossed over a river by way of a narrow stone bridge. Crowds of people were flocking to market, but they all stopped to stare when they saw the miller and his son crossing the bridge with a donkey slung between them.

"They're carrying their donkey! Come and see! Did you ever see anyone as silly as these two?" Louder and louder, their laughter shook the bridge and echoed under its arches. "Look at the donkey! Look at the miller and his donkey!"

The poor donkey, already confused by

being hung upside-down from a pole, took fright at the noise, and began to struggle and bray. Suddenly the knots tying his feet gave way. The donkey plunged over the bridge, into the river, and was last seen swimming strongly out to sea.

Bewildered, the miller leaned over the parapet and watched the donkey go. He scratched his head. "All day long I've tried to do what people say, and now the whole town is laughing at me. If I'd done as I planned in the first place, I might still have a donkey to sell."

SHEEP DOG

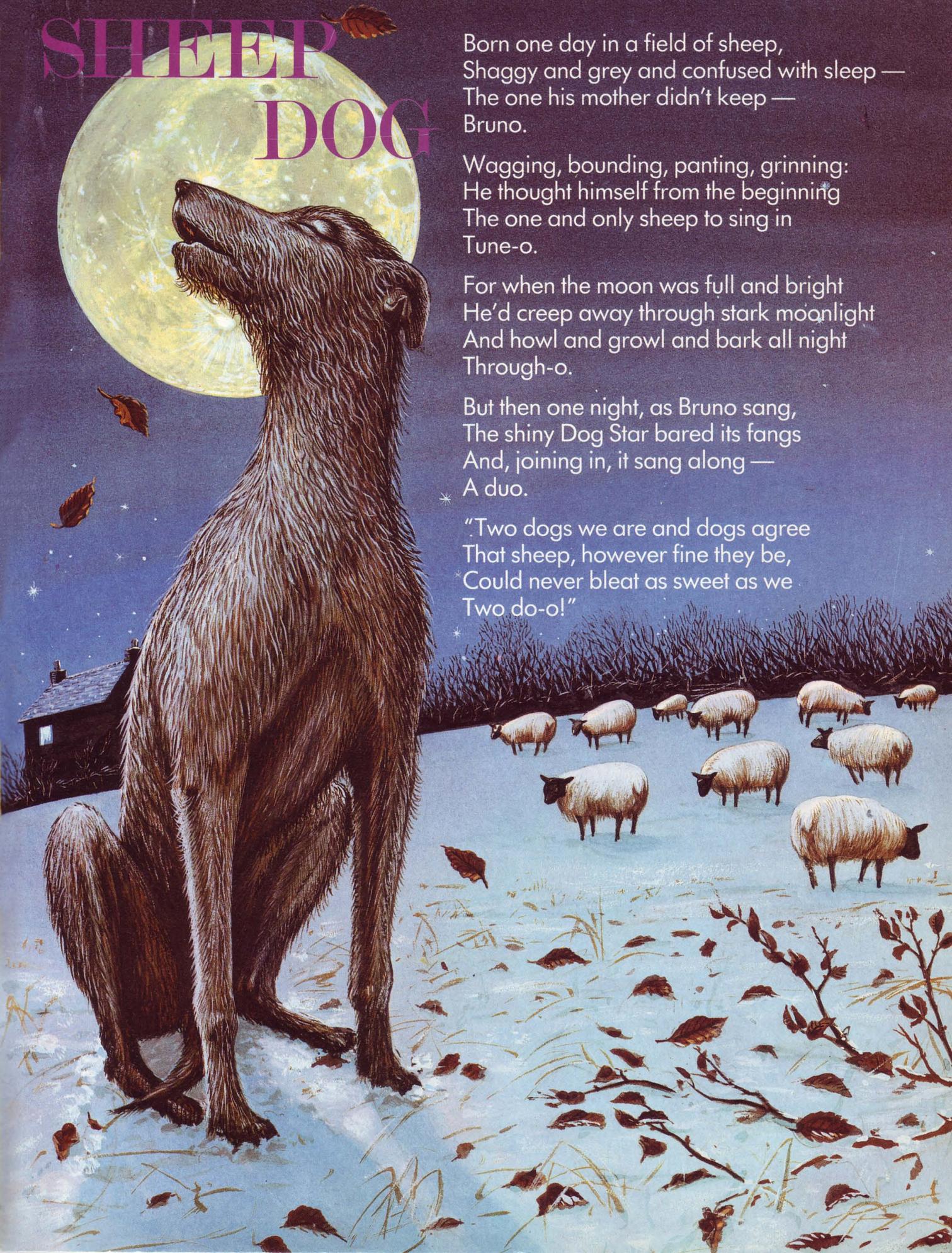
Born one day in a field of sheep,
Shaggy and grey and confused with sleep —
The one his mother didn't keep —
Bruno.

Wagging, bounding, panting, grinning:
He thought himself from the beginning
The one and only sheep to sing in
Tune-o.

For when the moon was full and bright
He'd creep away through stark moonlight
And howl and growl and bark all night
Through-o.

But then one night, as Bruno sang,
The shiny Dog Star bared its fangs
And, joining in, it sang along —
A duo.

* "Two dogs we are and dogs agree
That sheep, however fine they be,
* Could never bleat as sweet as we
Two do-o!"



IN PART 21 OF

STORY Teller

2

NEVER TANGLE WITH A TENGU is the advice that a Japanese boy disregards – with hilarious results

Robots to the rescue again in DIGGERSAURS AND THE DROWNING PLANET. But is there room for Diggersaurs in the escape shuttle?

THE NEAT AND TIDY KITCHEN is the farmer's wife's pride and joy. But she reckons without so many visitors

TOMMY'S SHADOW causes him so much trouble that he has to go far and wide to get rid of it . . .

The animals may quarrel about the best way to wash, but they all agree that there's **NOTHING LIKE A BATH**

PLUS

ALICE'S ADVENTURES IN WONDERLAND
MY MOTHER SAID

Stories read by
PATRICIA HODGE
CHRISTOPHER TIMOTHY
DENISE BRYER
STEVEN PACEY

