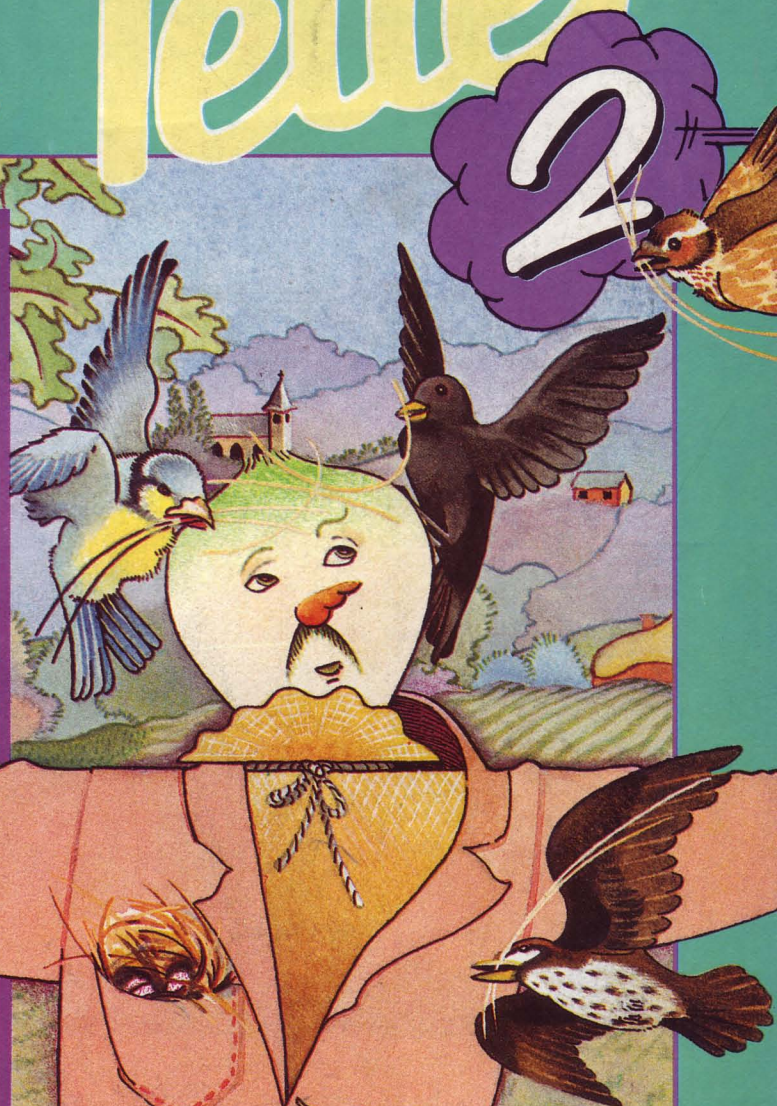


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PART 24

STORY Teller

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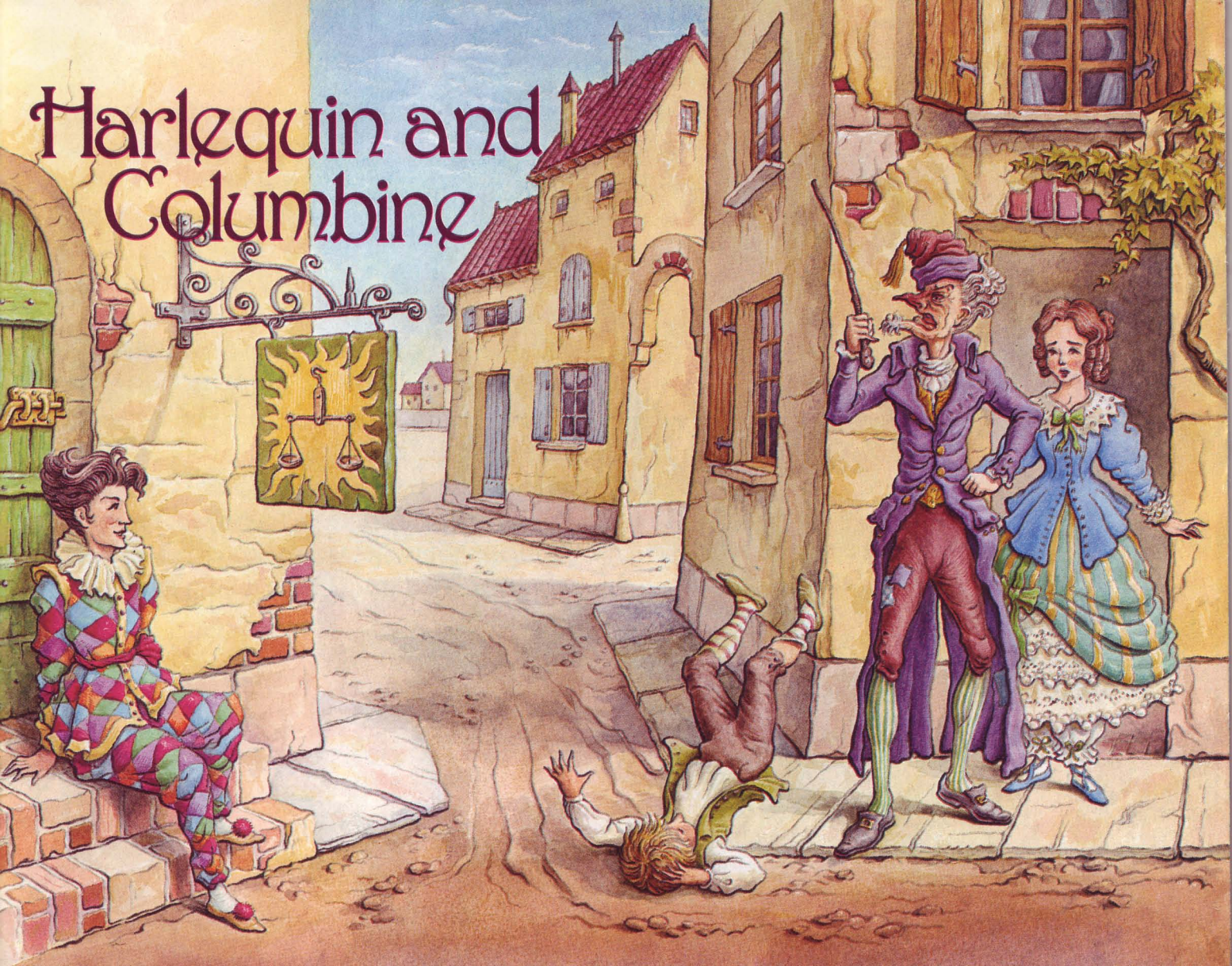
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Harlequin and Columbine



"Money? Money?" shrieked the chemist, boxing Harlequin's ears. "After all my kindness? I let you work for me, I feed you — I even give you the cloth to make that ridiculous suit of yours! And now you dare to ask for money? Ungrateful puppy! Be off with you!"

And that was how poor little Harlequin came to be sitting on the steps of the chemist's shop, without a job or a home. But Harlequin was not moping.

"I'm glad!" he thought. "I'll find myself a better master than him. What? One meal a day and a bundle of rags to make my clothes from? Hah!" He looked down at his patchwork suit and smiled. "One day I'll have a better suit than this!"

The door of a house across the street opened, and a servant boy came tumbling out. "And don't come back!" shouted an old man from the doorway, shaking his fist. It was old Pantalone, the miser.

A girl came to the door. "Papa! That's the 364th servant you've sent packing this year. How will we ever find another one?"

"Pah! Good riddance!" muttered the old man. "Go and cook my dinner, Columbine!"

When Harlequin saw Columbine's lovely face, framed by long tumbling curls, he turned a somersault for sheer joy.

"Ah, that's my next job — working for old Pantalone! He may be the meanest, most miserable man in this town, but he's got the prettiest daughter!"



Despite the grumbling and the beating, Harlequin stayed cheerful — especially when Columbine smiled at him. Before long he was head-over-heels in love with her — though she hardly noticed him.

Harlequin was not the only person in love with Columbine. Brighello, an elegant villain from the smart side of town, called every day with flowers, sweets or poetry. Columbine could not bear him and sent back his presents. She told him she could never love him. But still Brighello came calling.

One day Harlequin found Columbine sitting on the staircase crying as if her heart would break. "Brighello is telling everyone

So Harlequin went to work for Pantalone, and cleaned and cooked and ran errands all day long, while Pantalone grumbled. "I don't know. Servants are so lazy these days. And look at that suit. Hah! Did you ever see such a ridiculous suit? Look at all this sunshine. It's not good for me. I'm a sick man. The light's too bright — pull the curtains. This gravy's too hot. Your face is too cheerful — stop smiling. Can't you see I'm ill?"

But Pantalone beat Harlequin so hard and so often that Harlequin knew the old man was really as fit as a fiddle.



he's going to marry me. What am I to do?"

Harlequin declared, "I'll send him packing! I'll challenge him to a duel!"

Columbine's tears dried at once, and she started giggling. "Oh, Harlequin, you little silly. You couldn't fight a duck with one wing!"

Her laughter brought old Pantalone to the top of the stairs. "Does a sick man have to listen to all this *laughing*? I suppose you think it's funny that I suffer day and night . . . too feeble to get out of bed . . . too weak to . . . Harlequin? Sitting down? I don't pay you to sit chattering to my daughter! Take that . . . and *that*!"

Harlequin took to his heels and ran — out of the house and down the street until he had to stop for breath. He found himself standing outside a barber's shop. And hanging on a hook by the door was a customer's cloak, bag and hat. The customer was the famous physician, Doctor Balanzone.

The barber gave a last flourish with the razor and handed the Doctor the mirror.

"*Splendidissimus*," said the Doctor. "You may fetch me my cloak."

But when the barber went to the hook by the door, the Doctor's cloak and bag and hat had all gone. "Thieves! Call out the police! I've been robbed!" shouted the Doctor.



On the steps of Pantalone's house, Harlequin wrapped the cloak round himself, pulled the hat over his ears and knocked on the door. Columbine opened it.

"Greetings, most elegant and esteemed lady! I am the famous Doctor Balanzone — world renowned physician, surgeon, optician and vet. I met that young fellow Harlequin in the street. He was dreadfully worried about his dear master — one . . . er . . . Pantalony?"

"Pantalone, sir?"

"Ah yes, that's the man. So I have come here to examine the gentleman."

Columbine's eyes were wide. "Come in, come in, sir. My father's in bed."

Knees trembling under his disguise, Harlequin climbed the stairs.

As soon as Columbine had announced him, he leaped on to the bed, took hold of Pantalone's nose and chin and pulled open his mouth. "Hmmm. Ah yes, I see. Hmmm. Say 'Aah'."

"Aaaahh."

"Cough."

"Hem, hem."

"Breathe in! Breathe out! Get up and stand on your head. Good gracious! I do believe . . . yes, it must be . . . the first case for fifty years!"

"What?" panted Pantalone.

"*Fitasafiddlus*, my dear sir. The dreaded *Fitasafiddlus*!"

Pantalone plumped down on the bed in dismay. "Oh, is that serious?"

"Serious? My dear sir, it's awful!"





Awf-awf-awfullissimus! Thank goodness young Harlequin sent for me when he did."

"You mean there's still hope, Doctor?"

"Ah, I fear the medicine is very expensive. You may not be able to afford it."

Pantalone leaped off the bed. He tossed the mattress up against the wall and pulled out a woollen sock stuffed with coins. "Will this be enough, Doctor?"

Harlequin counted the money. "Just enough. How fortunate. Here's your medicine." And he gave Pantalone the nastiest-looking, worst-smelling potion out of the doctor's bag. "Rub it into your head twice a day, and you will certainly live."

Harlequin got up to go. But at the door, he stopped and caught Columbine by the hand. "Ah, my dear young lady. I can't help noticing a certain sparkle in your eyes. Are you, too, ill?"

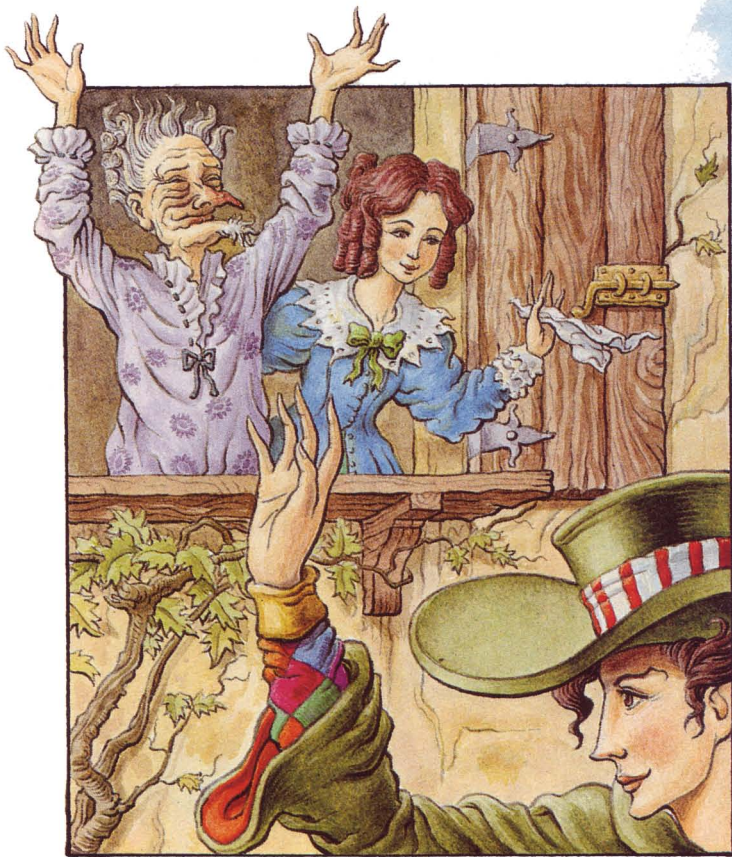
"No, sir!" squeaked Columbine.

"Forgive me, but I thought . . . you aren't troubled, then, by ugly young men making a nuisance of themselves at your door?"

Columbine gasped. "Oh sir! You're so clever!"

"I am Doctor Balanzone — surgeon, vet and dentist to the King! I am never wrong. Take this stick. And when any young man tries to hold your hand or kiss you or read poetry to you, beat him smartly over the head with it. I think you will be cured within the week."





Out into the street went Harlequin, whistling with joy. Pantalone was leaning out of his bedroom window, grinning from ear to ear and singing, "I'm cured! I'm cured! What a wonderful doctor! Hah, hah!"

With Pantalone's money, Harlequin bought a brand new suit. It was in the same colours as the last one, but spangled with gold dust, so that it glittered in the sunlight.

On his way home, he passed Brighello, clutching his head. "Good-day, Signor Brighello. What's wrong?"

"It's little Columbine!" he wailed. "I sang a serenade under her window — and she *hit* me! With a stick! I'm never going there again — no, not on your life!"

Harlequin watched him go. What a splendid day it had been — a new suit and Brighello sent packing.

Columbine was standing on her balcony looking as pretty as a picture. "Today's my lucky day," thought Harlequin. "I'll ask her to marry me!" And he broke into song:



*"O Columbine, why can't you see?
Sweet Columbine, you're meant for me."*

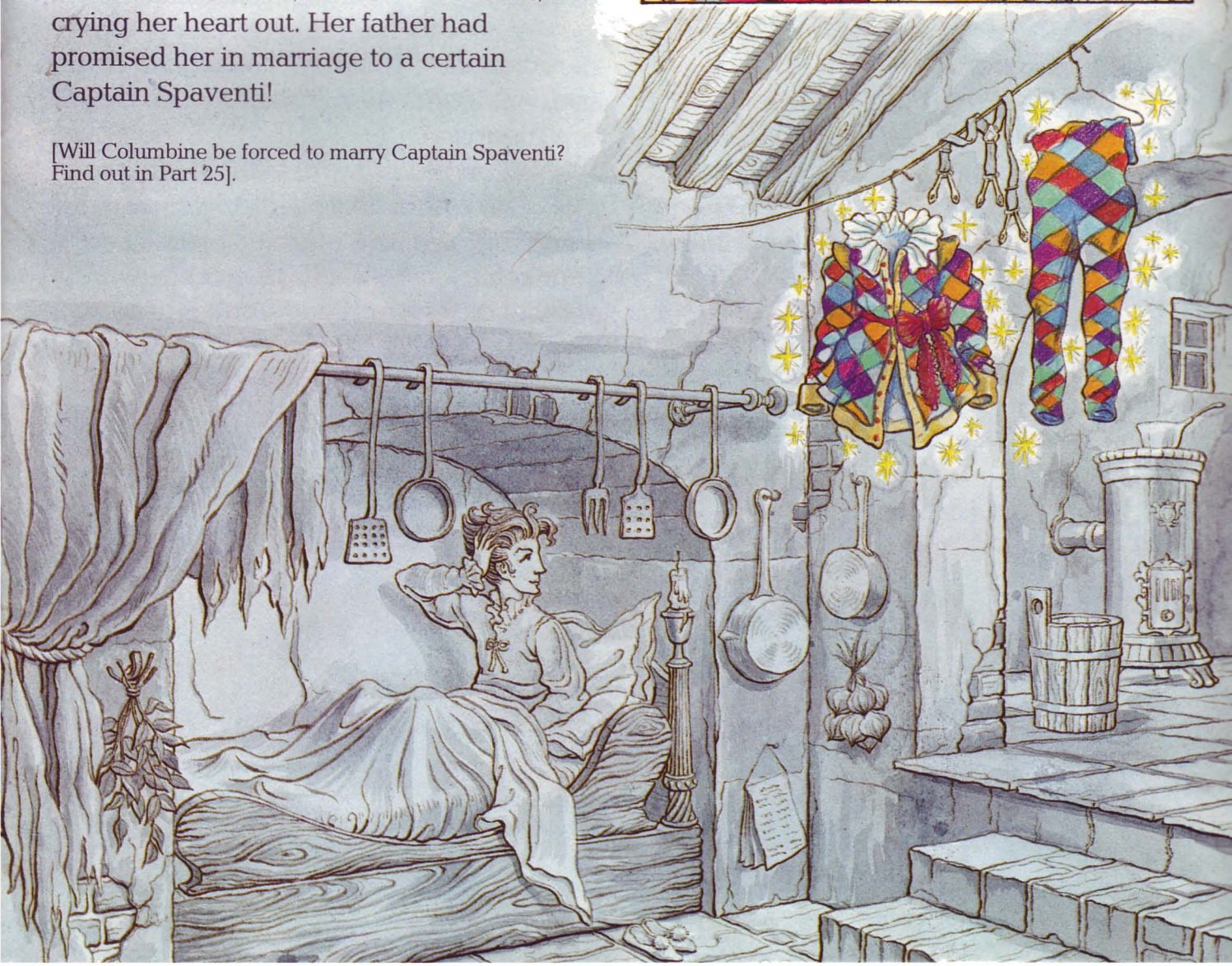
Columbine picked up the stick the 'Doctor' had given her, leaned down, and whacked him. "Go away. Doctor Balanzone taught me the cure for troublesome young men. Doctor Balanzone is wonderful. So clever! Leave me alone to dream about the dear, dear Doctor!"

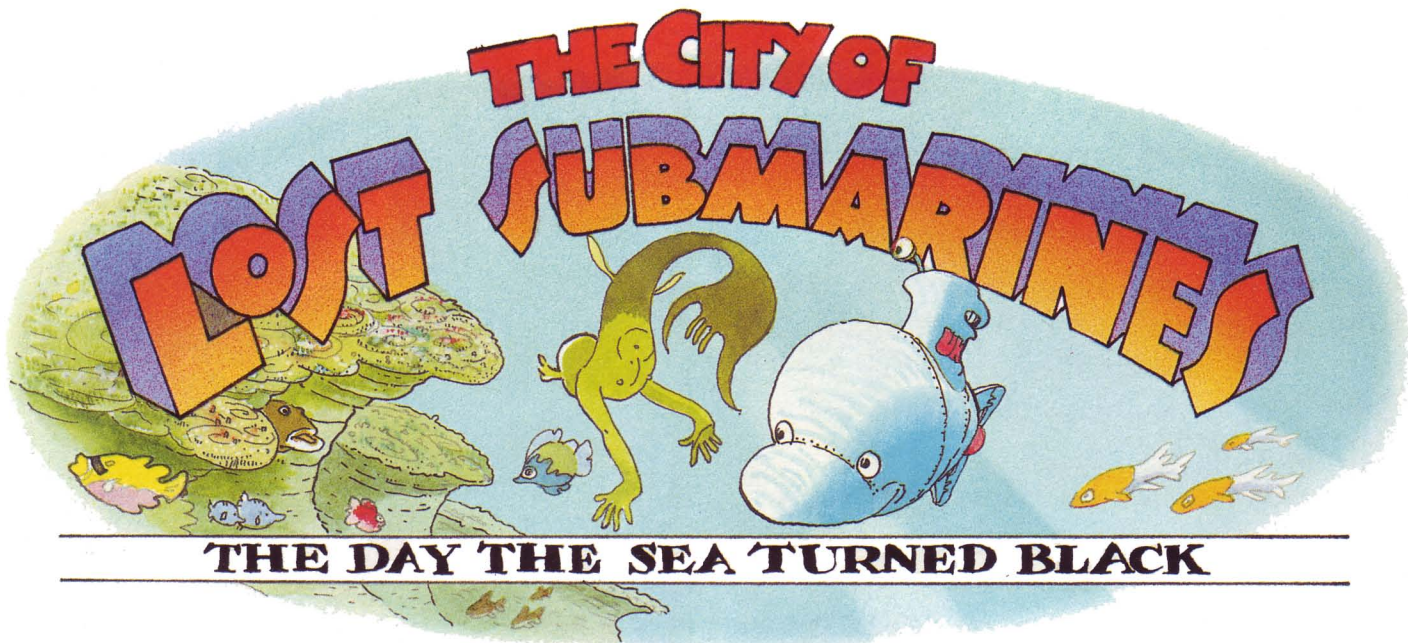
So Harlequin went to his bed in the kitchen, and curled up among the pots and pans. He sighed and rubbed his battered head. But he was happy when he saw his glittering suit hanging up in the moonlight.

A week later, Pantalone was grumbling as much as ever about servants, daughters and the weather.

But Columbine, locked in her room, was crying her heart out. Her father had promised her in marriage to a certain Captain Spaventi!

[Will Columbine be forced to marry Captain Spaventi?
Find out in Part 25].





THE DAY THE SEA TURNED BLACK

UK Submarine and his friend, Devo the merman, lived in the City of Lost Submarines, deep down under the sea. One fine afternoon, Devo took his friend to see the big coral reef. It was an hour's sailing from the city.

"What beautiful fish," said UK. "I've never seen so many different creatures!"

"This coral reef is one of my favourite places," Devo told him. "Come and look over here, UK, there's a huge

starfish. Look, it's bright orange!"

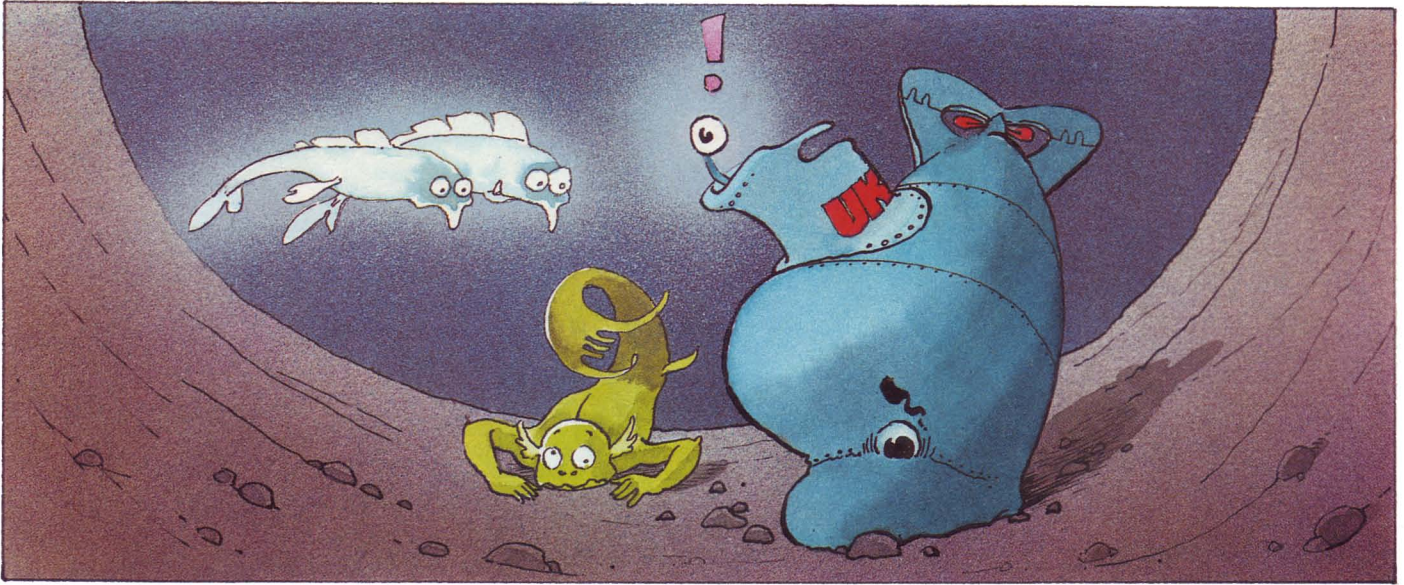
Crash!

"What was that?" cried UK. Then there was a loud rumbling noise.

"Look out, the reef is falling down," shouted Devo. Big pieces of broken coral crashed down into the sea towards the two friends.

"Dive, dive!" yelled UK. "Hold on to me!" Devo held on to UK's tower and down they went. A gigantic piece of coral knocked them into a dark hole. Down and down they tumbled until they came to rest in the deep. They were so far from the surface that there was very little light to see by. The sea was dark and the





fish were luminous. UK switched on his lights. Two glowing fish swam up to him.

"What do you think it is, Mumin?" asked the smaller of the two fish.

"I'm not sure, Lumin," answered the other. "It looks like metal. I'd say it was a sardine can, and that little thing must be a sardine."

"I'm a merman, not a sardine," said Devo crossly, "and this is my friend UK, a submarine."

"Well, whatever you are, watch out for the Gobbler while you're here," said Lumin. He sounded frightened.

"What's the Gobbler?" asked UK.

"An enormous fish that swims

around eating everything in its way," explained Mumin. Suddenly there was a strange noise. "Gobble, gobble, gobble." The noise was getting closer.

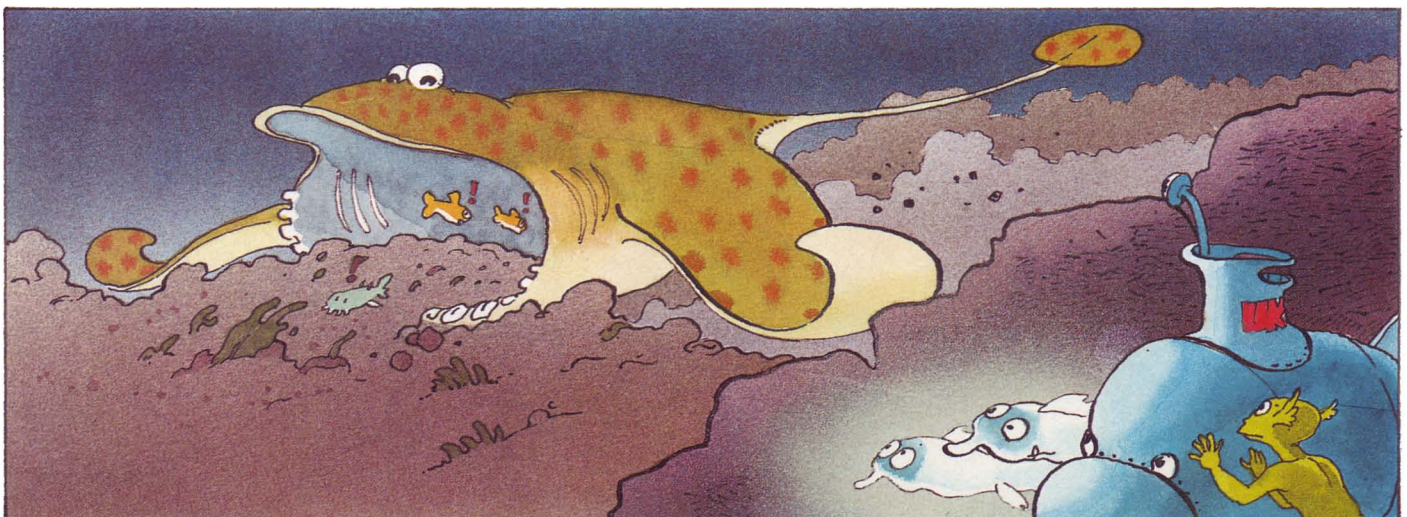
"What's that?" asked Devo.

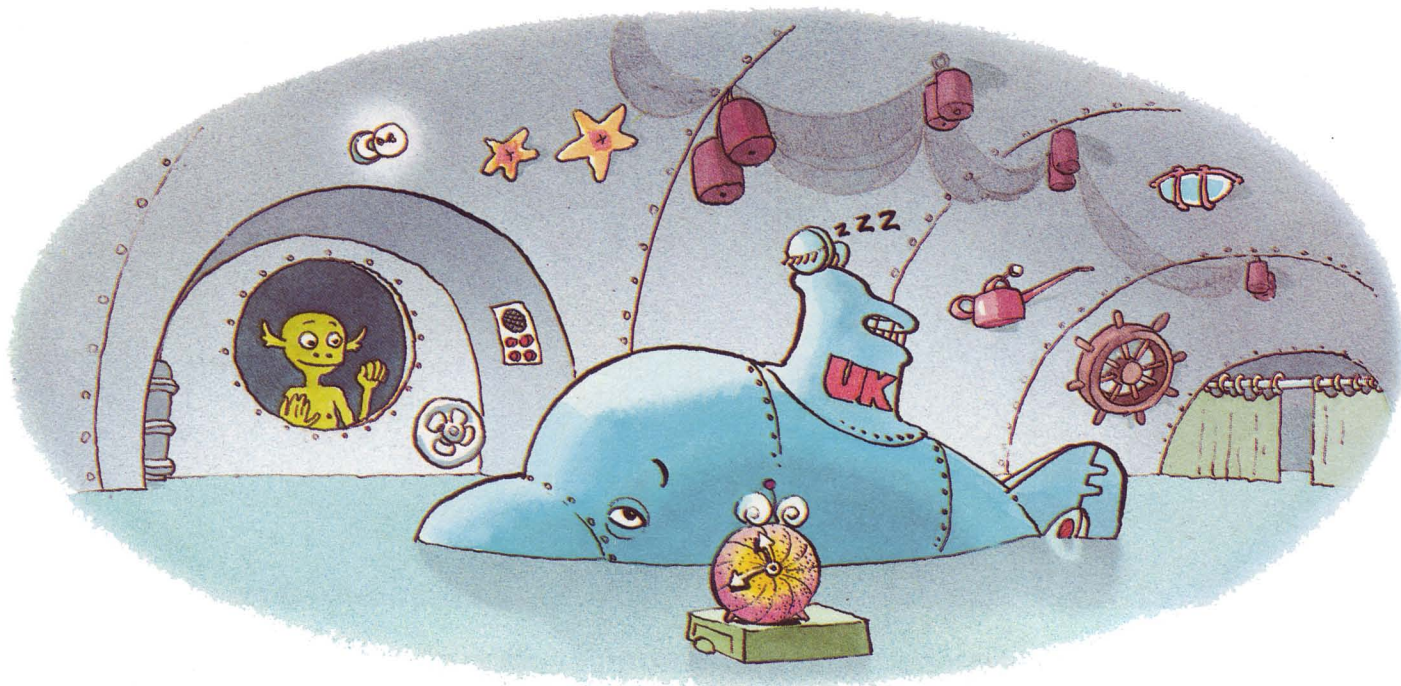
"Look out! The Gobbler!" Lumin and Mumin shot behind a rock. A gigantic fish swam past, stuffing sand, seaweed and rocks into its mouth.

"I think it's time to get back to the City of Lost Submarines," said UK.

"Hold tight Devo, I'm going up." He started his engine.

UK took Devo home and went back to the City. He was very tired and went straight to sleep.





UK was dreaming about a big glowing fish when his alarm clock rang!

"Is it time to get up?" he yawned. "It can't be, it's still dark. My clock must be broken. I'll go back to sleep."

But UK did not have a chance to doze off. Bang, bang, bang! There was a loud knock on the door.

"Oh, now someone's at my door. This is too much," grumbled UK. "Who is it?"

"It's me, Devo."

"But what are you doing here in the middle of the night?"

"It's not the middle of the night, UK, it's daytime."

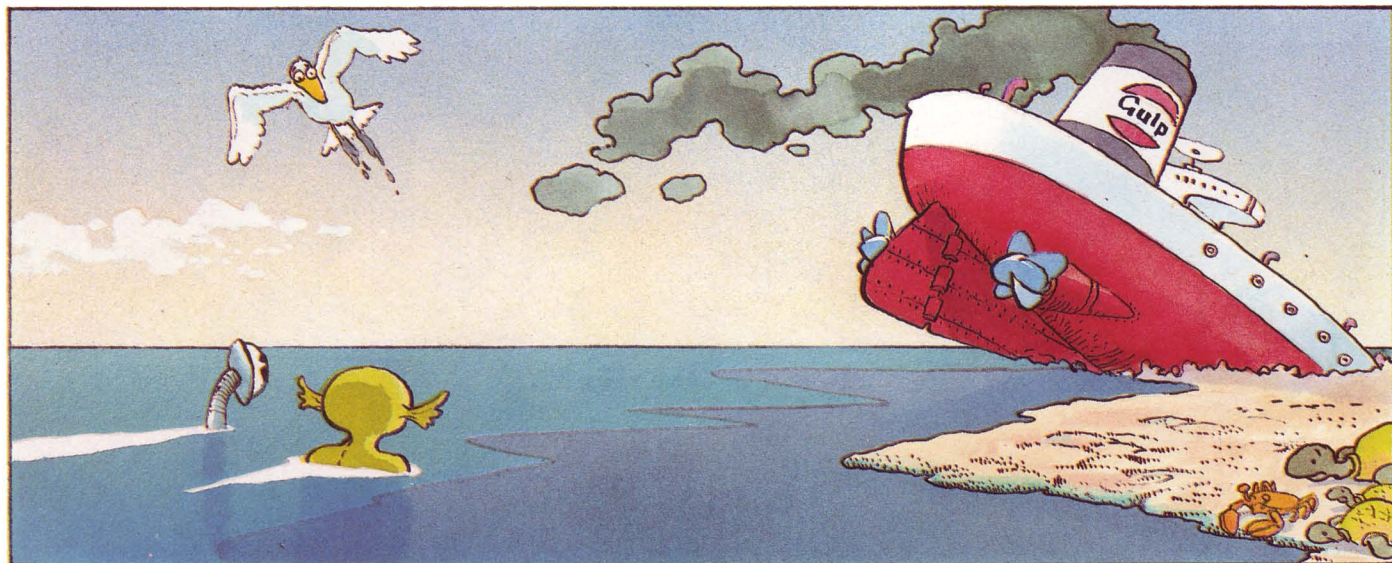
"But it's dark!"

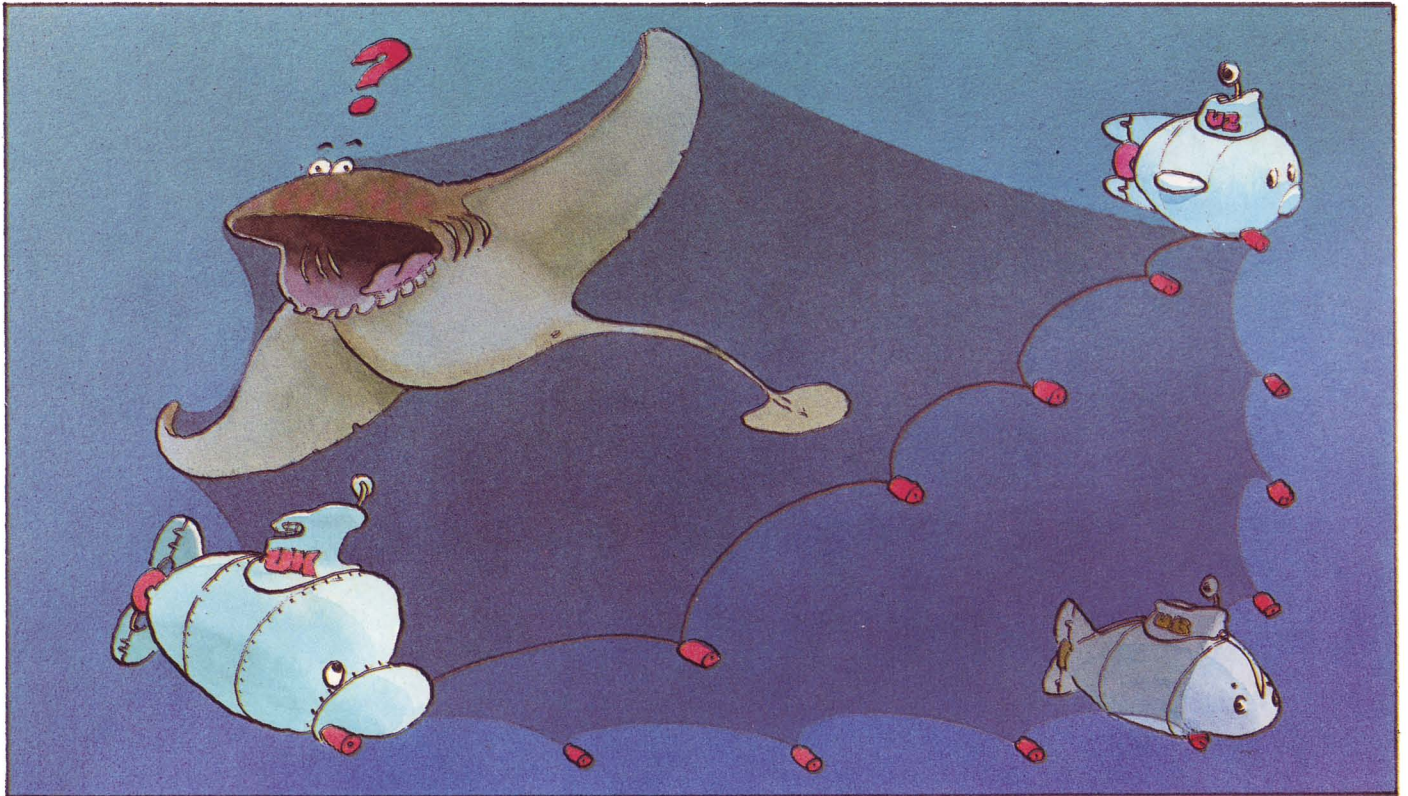
"Yeah, something's wrong. I think it's got something to do with the crash at the reef yesterday," said Devo. "Let's go and have a look."

When they reached the coral reef, UK raised his periscope. A big tanker had struck the reef, spilling its oil.

"The sea is covered in oil," said UK, "that's why it's dark."

"Mm. How can we get rid of it?" Devo





wondered. "There's an awful lot of it!"

"I think the Gobbler can help us," said UK. "Here is my plan . . ."

UK, Devo and two submarine friends, UB 40 and U2, swam down to the deep with a very large net. "Gobble, gobble, gobble."

"There he is," said UK, "quick, lower the net!"

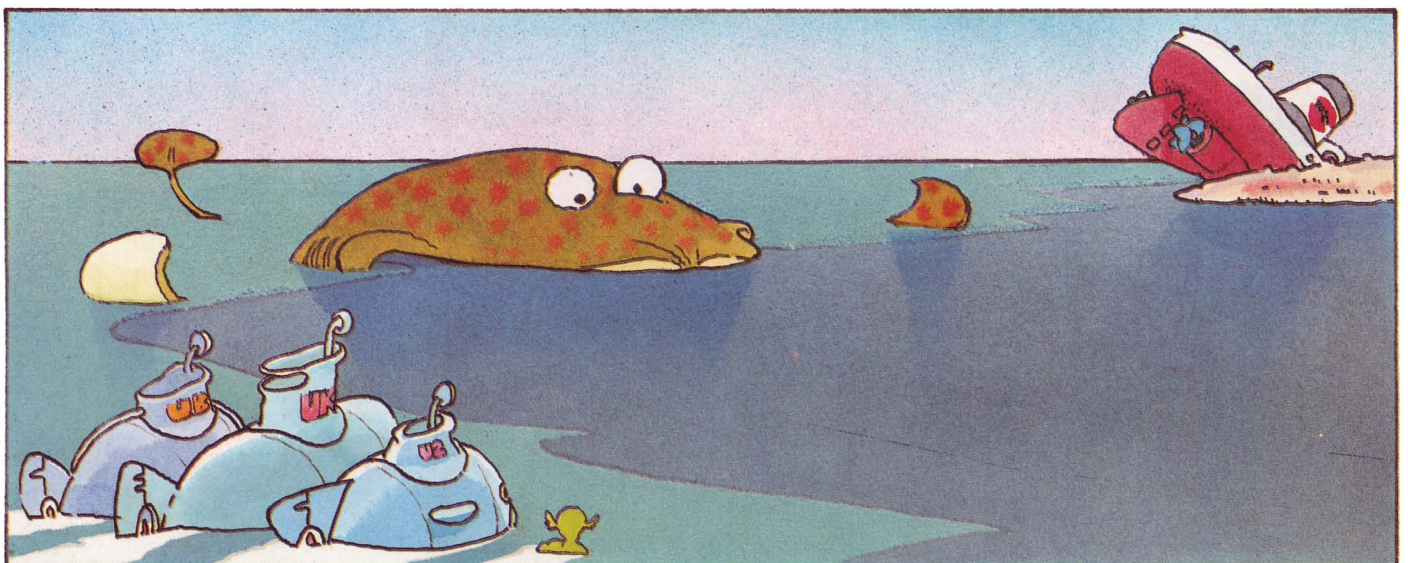
"Gobble, gobble, gobbb . . . Hello,

what's happening? Let me go! I'm starving!" The Gobbler was furious.

The submarines towed the Gobbler up to the surface, then they let him go.

"Gobble, gobble, mmm, this is delicious, mmm, lovely thick black oil, mmm, gobble, gobble . . ."

Thanks to the Gobbler, the sea was soon clean and the sun shone again on the City of Lost Submarines.



THE KIND SCARECROW

Farmer Furrow put up a scarecrow to scare the crows away from his barley. He made the body of sacking stuffed with straw, and dressed it in an old overcoat with brass buttons. Scarecrow's hair, too, was made of golden straw.

When the warm spring breezes blew, the coat flapped wildly, and the crows shrieked and rose up in a great black cloud. Angriily they flew off to the woods. The green barley shoots pushed towards the sun, and Scarecrow felt proud that he had protected them.

But there were other birds nearby whom he did not want to frighten.

High up in the sky, the skylark sang so wonderfully. The mottled thrush chirruped and hopped around Scarecrow's feet in search of worms. And a tiny blue-tit swung

on his shoulder, calling out in a tinkling voice, as she chatted with him.

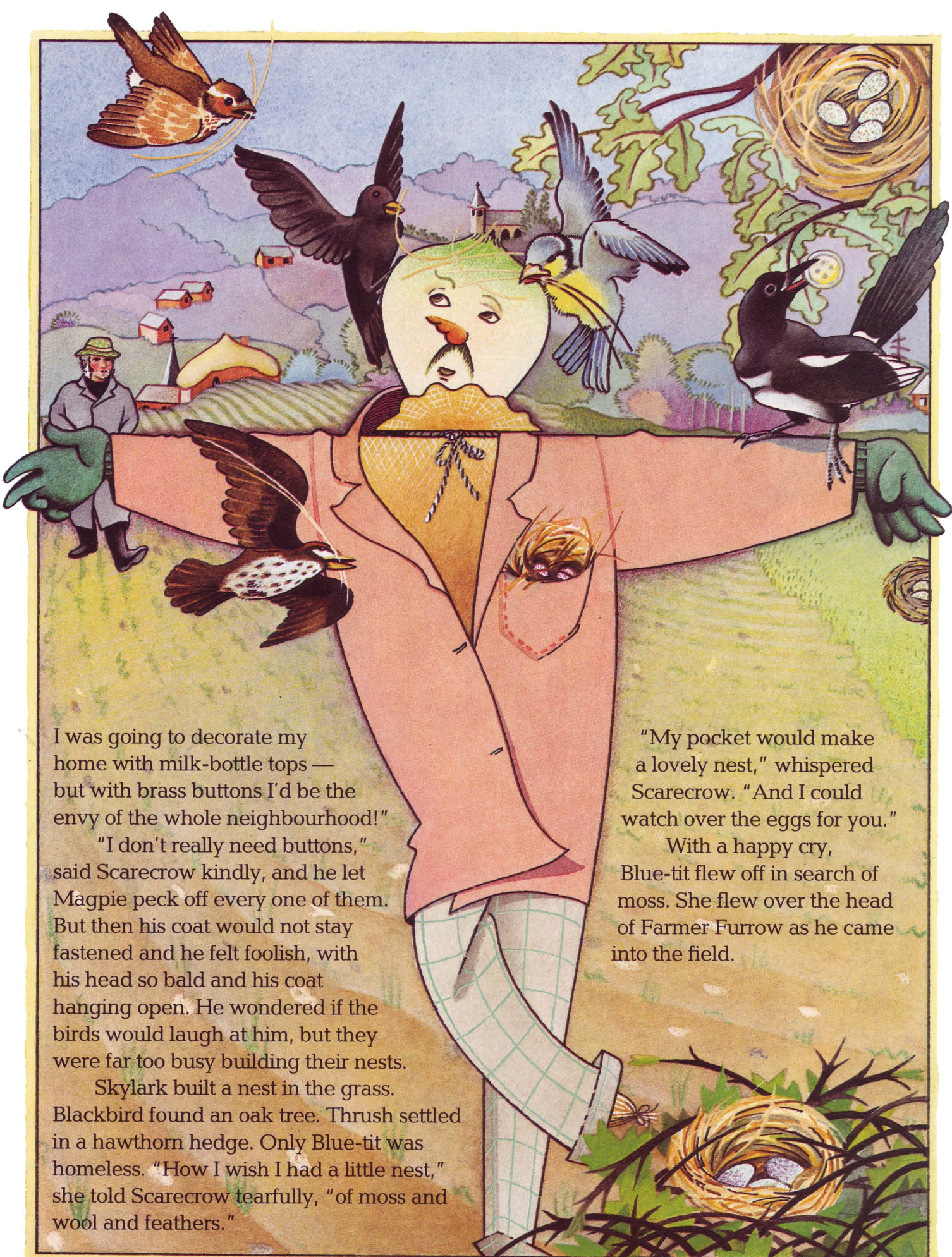
One day Blackbird said, "I'm building a nest, but there's so little straw these days. Could you spare me a little?"

"Of course. Take some of my hair," said the kind Scarecrow.

The other birds were building, too. So Scarecrow gave some straw to Skylark and to Thrush. Soon he was quite bald.

Then Magpie, who was bigger than the others, settled on Scarecrow's arm and flicked his long tail. He stared greedily at the coat buttons. "How they shine!" said Magpie. "I do so love bright, pretty things.





I was going to decorate my home with milk-bottle tops — but with brass buttons I'd be the envy of the whole neighbourhood!"

"I don't really need buttons," said Scarecrow kindly, and he let Magpie peck off every one of them. But then his coat would not stay fastened and he felt foolish, with his head so bald and his coat hanging open. He wondered if the birds would laugh at him, but they were far too busy building their nests.

Skylark built a nest in the grass. Blackbird found an oak tree. Thrush settled in a hawthorn hedge. Only Blue-tit was homeless. "How I wish I had a little nest," she told Scarecrow tearfully, "of moss and wool and feathers."

"My pocket would make a lovely nest," whispered Scarecrow. "And I could watch over the eggs for you."

With a happy cry, Blue-tit flew off in search of moss. She flew over the head of Farmer Furrow as he came into the field.



Farmer Furrow tied Scarecrow's coat with the twine, and put the hat on his head. "All that hat needs now is a feather!"

When the Farmer had gone, the birds gathered round Scarecrow to admire his hat.

"I heard what Farmer Furrow said," sang Skylark. "Here's one of my best white feathers for your hat." She plucked a feather from her breast and tucked it inside the hatband.

Blackbird added a glossy black feather, and Thrush, a feather of mottled brown. They had all felt rather ashamed of taking so much straw. Blue-tit plucked out her best feathers of blue and primrose-yellow.

He stopped and stared at Scarecrow. "We can't have you looking like that, my lad, with your coat undone. And what's happened to the straw I gave you for hair?"

Farmer Furrow went to the farmhouse and found a length of twine and his wife's old hat. It was rather a fine hat, with a red hatband.





Thrush called sharply, "Magpie! Surely you can spare a feather in return for all those shiny brass buttons!" And soon Scarecrow had a shiny, blue-green tail-feather in his hat.

When Farmer Furrow went back to the field, he was amazed to see Scarecrow's hat so gay with feathers. On Scarecrow's shoulder perched a proud Blue-tit, and from the deep pocket of his coat came the "Cheep-cheep" of tiny, newly-hatched birds.

"Bless my soul! I wanted you to scare away the birds — not make friends with them!" said the Farmer. But he was a kind man, and the barley stood tall and thick. So he gave a chuckle and went to tell his wife.

SEADNA *and the* DEVIL

There was once a shoemaker whose name was Seadna. He lived by himself in a little cottage in the very middle of Ireland. He was a great man for

eating and drinking and playing cards. Not a wake or a wedding for five miles around but there you would find Seadna, sitting in the chimney corner with a pipe



in his mouth and a glass in his hand.

As he was walking home late one night, a stranger spoke to him.

"You're out late, Seadna," said the stranger.

"And if I am," said Seadna, "what's that to you?"

"I've had my eye on you for a long time," said the stranger. "How would you like to have all the money you wanted for a whole year with never a worry about where it came from?"

"I wouldn't object at all," said Seadna.

"Well," said the stranger, "I'll give you all the money you want for a whole year and three wishes besides, if you'll come along with me at the end of that time. For I am the Devil," said he, "and you're the sort of man I want in my company."

Well, Seadna had no objection to the Devil's plan, for he was a crafty fellow and no spirit was going to get the better of him.

"It's a bargain," he said. "Now let me name my wishes."

"Name them," said the Devil, "and they're yours."

"I have a little stool," said Seadna, "and my first wish is that whoever sits on that stool will stick there till I release him."

"I grant your wish," said the Devil.

"Now here's my second wish," said Seadna. "I have an apple tree, and I wish that whoever plucks an apple from that tree will stick there till I release him."

"I grant your wish," said the Devil.

"And here's my third wish," said Seadna. "I have a leather purse, and I wish that whoever puts his hand in that purse will stick there till I release him."

"I grant your wish," said the Devil.



So the bargain was completed. The Devil shook hands with the shoemaker and walked away into the night.

The next day, Seadna found that his pockets were full of money, and every day for a whole year he never lacked gold or silver. Time passed so quickly that he hardly realised the year was up, until he heard the Devil's voice at the door one morning.



"Hurry up and prepare for the road!"
"Sit down there for a minute till I put
on a collar and tie," said Seadna.

The Devil sat down on the stool.

"I'm ready now," said the shoemaker,
when he had put on his collar and tie. So
the Devil went to leave. But he could not
get up — he was stuck fast to the stool.

"Free me from this stool!"

"If I do, will you give me another
year of our bargain?" said Seadna.



"Oh, I will if I must," hissed the Devil.
"I'll get you in the end anyway!" So
Seadna released the Devil from the stool
and let him get back to where he had
come from.

The second year passed as quickly
as the first, and one morning Seadna
looked up to see the Devil standing in the
doorway. "Ah, come in for a minute,"
said the shoemaker.

"I will not," said the Devil. "I had
enough of that game last year! Come out
now and let's be off!"

So Seadna came out of the cottage and they walked to the gate. As they passed the apple tree in the garden, Seadna raised up his hand and plucked a fistful of apples.

"These'll keep the thirst away while I'm walking," he said.

"Could I pick one too?" said the Devil greedily.

"And why not?" said Seadna. "I have no more use for them anyway."

The Devil raised up his hand to pluck an apple. His hand stuck fast to the tree.

"Free me from this tree!" yelled the Devil.

"If I do, will you give me another year of our bargain?" said Seadna.

"I will if I must," said the Devil. "I'll get you in the end anyway!" So Seadna released the Devil from the apple tree and let him go back to where he had come from.

The third year passed as quickly as

the others, and early one morning Seadna heard the Devil's voice at the door, telling him to prepare for the road.

As soon as he was ready, he set off with the Devil and they walked side by side until they reached a town. There was an inn by the side of the road.

"I've a gold piece left in my pocket that belongs to you," said Seadna. "Would you like to have one drink for the road before we leave the town?"

"Well, yes," said the Devil, "but I don't know about going into an inn. People might laugh at my hooves and tail."

"Not at all. Can't you make yourself any shape you like? Can't you make yourself small enough to jump into my leather purse? Then I'll bring you inside myself and hand the drink to you."

"All right," said the Devil, and jumped into the purse. But he stuck fast there.



"Free me from this purse and I'll give you another year of our bargain," screeched the Devil.

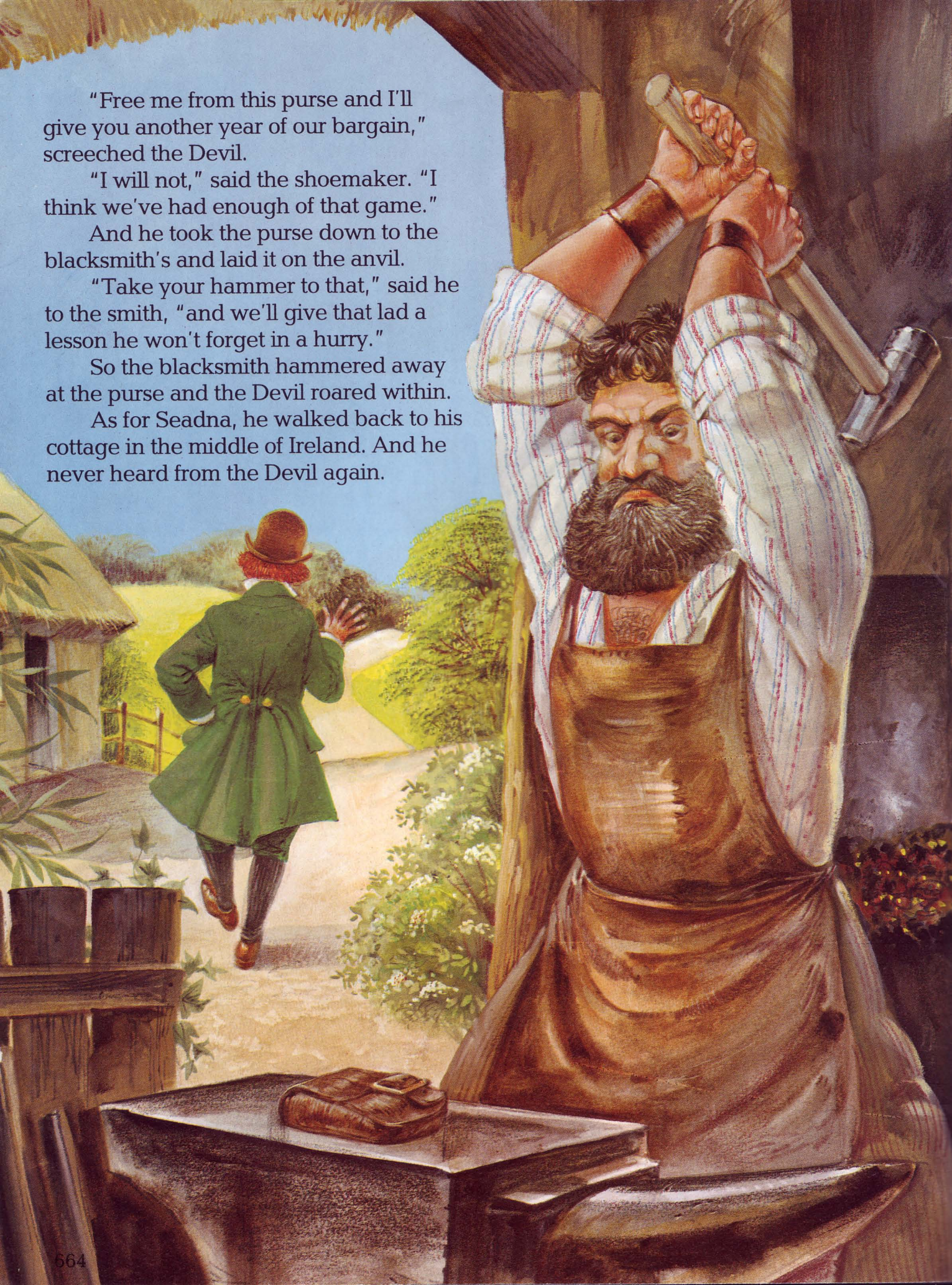
"I will not," said the shoemaker. "I think we've had enough of that game."

And he took the purse down to the blacksmith's and laid it on the anvil.

"Take your hammer to that," said he to the smith, "and we'll give that lad a lesson he won't forget in a hurry."

So the blacksmith hammered away at the purse and the Devil roared within.

As for Seadna, he walked back to his cottage in the middle of Ireland. And he never heard from the Devil again.



The Birthday Candle



It was Sharon's sixth birthday. She had a red scarf and a doll, a pair of roller skates, and a big cake with six candles on it. It was a white cake, with flowers made of blue icing. Sharon's mum lit the candles. "Now, blow them all out," she said.

Sharon blew very hard, and four candles went out. She took another breath and blew again. One more candle went out. There was one left shining by itself. It was a very bright candle. Sharon took a deep breath and blew. The flame wobbled, but it did not go out. Sharon blew and blew, but still the candle would not go out.

Her mother got cross. "I'll do it." But though she blew and blew, the candle went on shining. Sharon took it to Dad.

He blew so hard that the veins stood out on his forehead, but the candle would not go out. He took it into the kitchen and poured water over it. It spluttered hot wax on his fingers, but it did not go out. Now Sharon's dad was cross. He threw the candle out of the window. It bounced on the head of a policeman passing by.

"Hey! Who's throwing candles?" shouted the policeman.

"I'm sorry," said Sharon coming out of the house. "But it won't go out."

"Won't go out? Don't be silly." He put the candle under his big boot and stamped on it. The flame burned a hole in his sole! The policeman was angry, and threw the candle as far as he could.





Sharon ran after it. The candle rolled into a shop and the manager picked it up and blew on it. "It won't go out," said Sharon.

"Don't worry. I'll soon solve that." The manager put the candle in a small tin box and shut it up tight. "Candles need air to burn," he explained. Then he wrapped up the tin, wrote 'To the Fire Brigade' on the label, and posted the parcel in the post box. "There! That'll fix it!" he said.

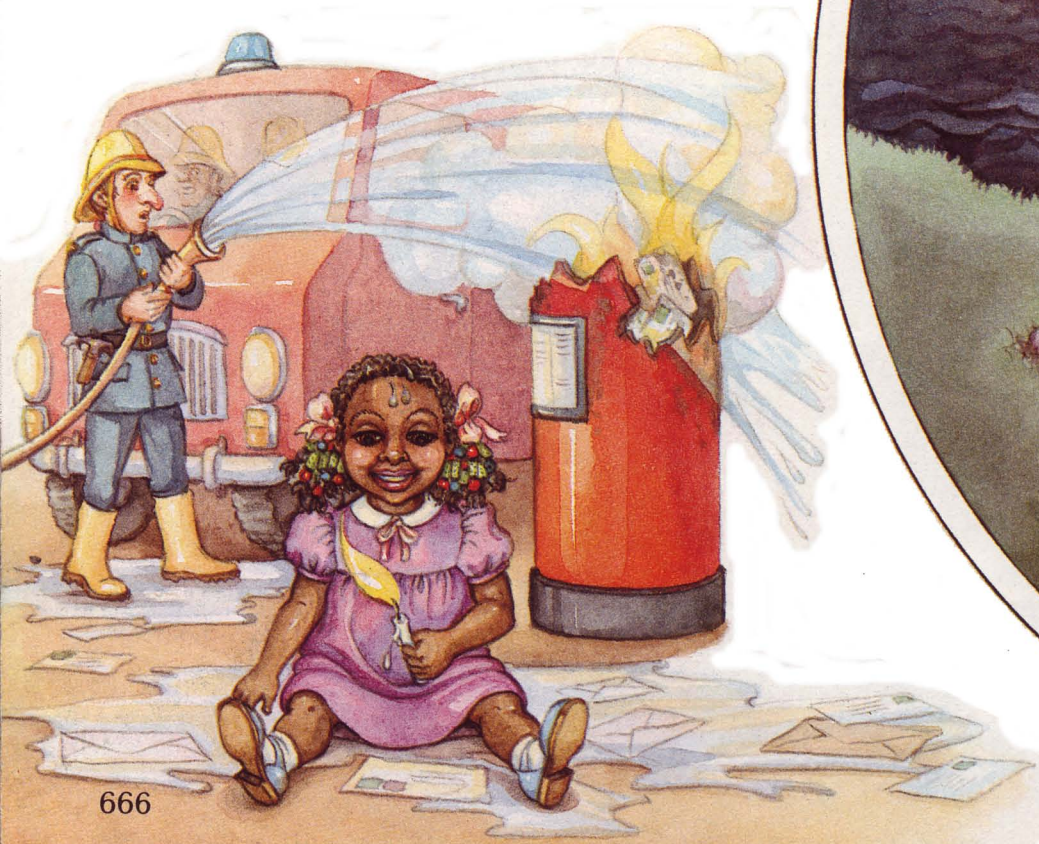
Just then the post box exploded and burst into flames. Letters were scattered around Sharon's feet. In amongst them lay her birthday candle, still shining. She picked

it up, and sat down to think what to do next.

A passing fire-engine squealed to a halt. The firemen turned their hoses on the fire. Sharon was soaked to the skin, but the candle still shone!

"How amazing!" exclaimed the firemen. But Sharon had gone. She was on her way to the sea.

Soon she stood on a cliff-top looking out over the cold, wet sea. She threw her candle over the edge. It fell far away, amongst the foaming waves.



The sea gathered round the little candle and hurled it high in the air. It landed at Sharon's feet, still burning. She smiled. She did not really want her candle to go out now. She decided to take it home.

But as she set off, there was a swirling sound, and a large furry paw rested on her shoulder. Long claws dug into her skin. A huge hound, with purple wings, was standing behind her. "Where have you been?" it demanded. "I've been searching for you everywhere."



"Wh-who are you?" asked Sharon.

"I'm the trusty hound of the Man-in-the-Moon, and I've come for the star. You should have given it to me hours ago! The whole universe is waiting! It's not every day a new star is born, you know."

"Star?" said Sharon. "What star?"

"Why, that star, of course," barked the Moon-hound. "Don't you know a star when you see one? How it got on to your birthday cake I don't know!" He seized the candle and flew up into the sky, higher and higher, until Sharon could not see him any more.

But that night, when all the stars came out, there was an extra one in the sky.

"What happened to that candle that wouldn't go out?" asked Sharon's mum.

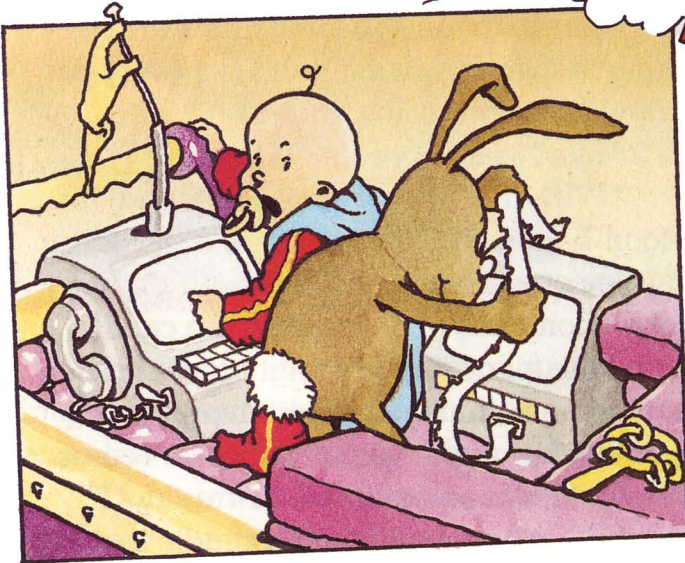
"It's up there," said Sharon, pointing to the bright speck in the sky.

Mum shook her head. "Silly girl," she murmured.

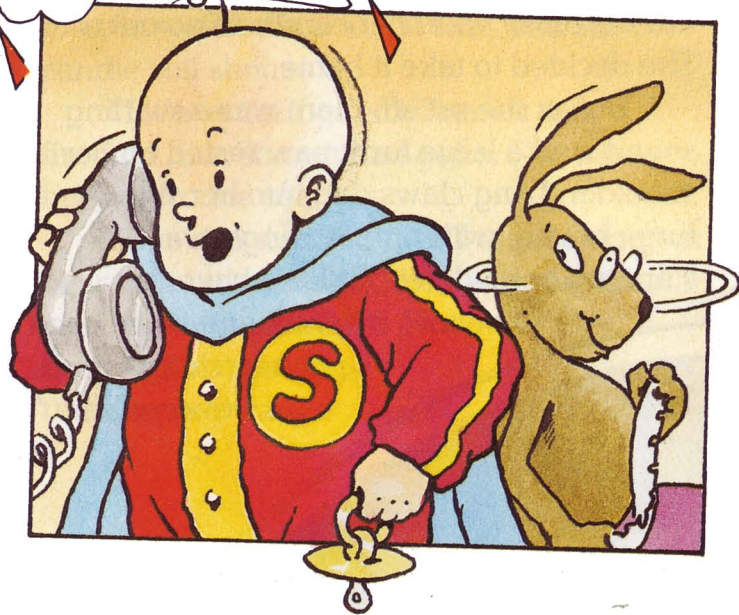
But it was the best birthday present Sharon had ever had. And it is still there now. It just won't go out!



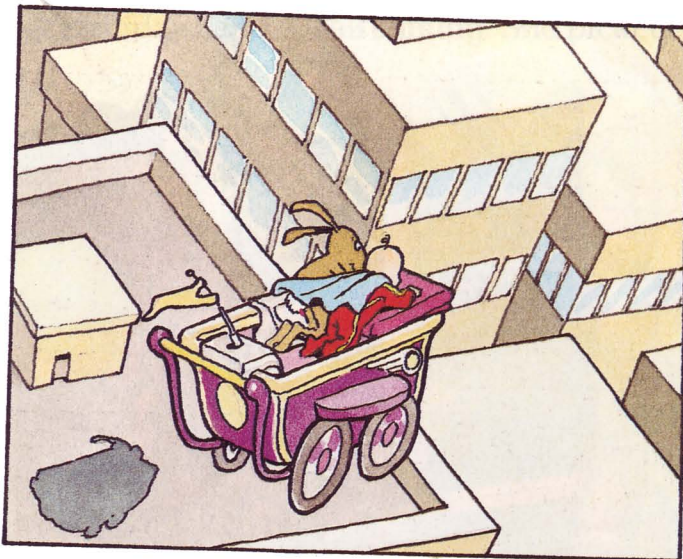
SUPERBABE



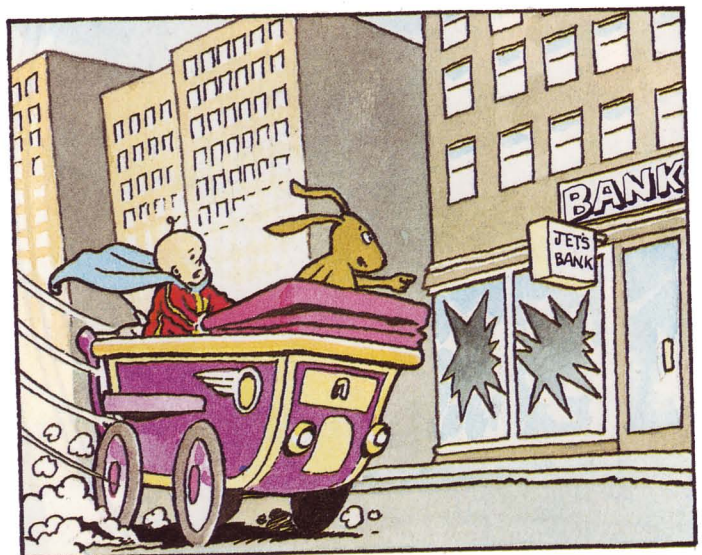
One sunny morning, Superbabe was punching instructions into the perambulator microcomputer. "Things seem a little bit too quiet round here. What do you think, CR?" But Cuddly Rabbit was too busy analysing a computer print-out to reply.



Suddenly the radio-phone shrilled. Superbabe snatched up the receiver. "What's that? A bank robbery?" Superbabe slammed the phone down. "Quick CR! The bank in Smith Street has been raided."



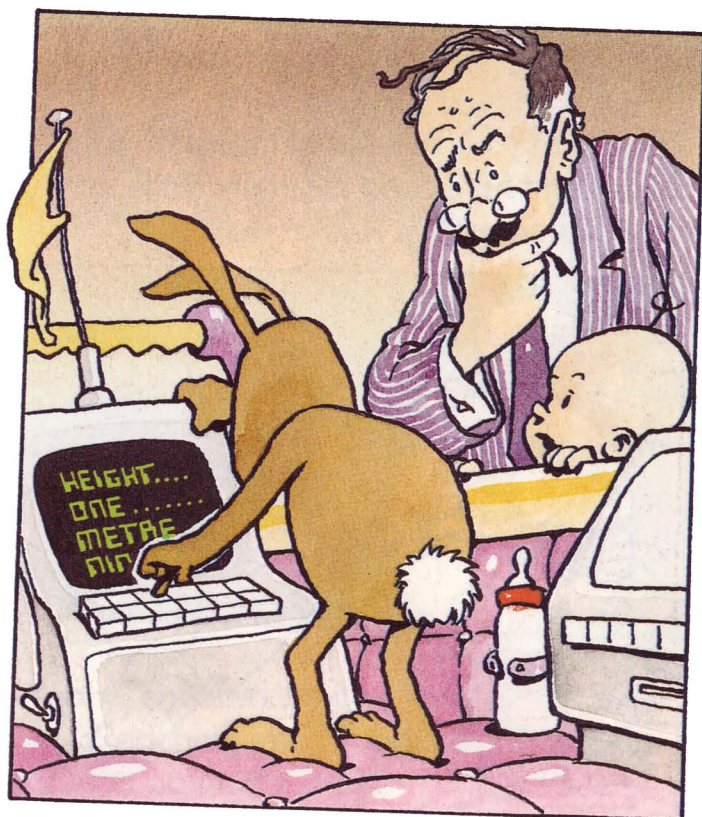
Cuddly Rabbit pressed 'Go' on the pram's controls and it started up. In ten seconds they were airborne, skimming low over the roof-tops heading straight for the scene of the robbery.



As they approached Smith Street, Cuddly Rabbit switched to 'Vertical', and the pram landed gently outside the bank. "Hey, this is where I keep *my* money!" exclaimed Cuddly Rabbit.

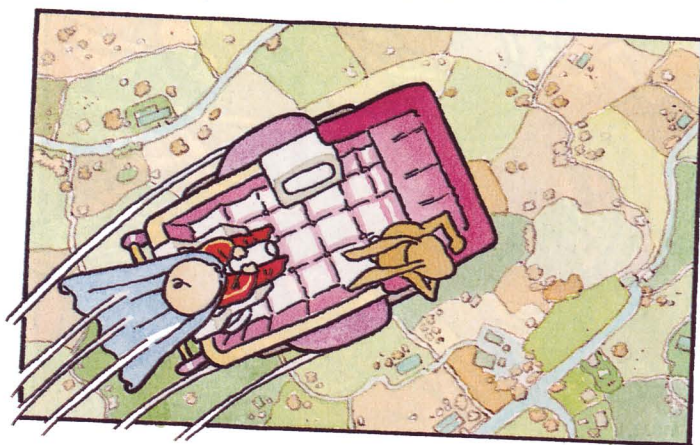


The bank manager came rushing out. "Oh, thank goodness you're here, Superbabe. They've taken everything!" "Then I've lost my savings," moaned Cuddly Rabbit. "My eighty-seven pence." "Any clues?" asked Babe. "Only this." The manager pointed out a wet footprint on the floor. "Quick, CR, check it before it dries."

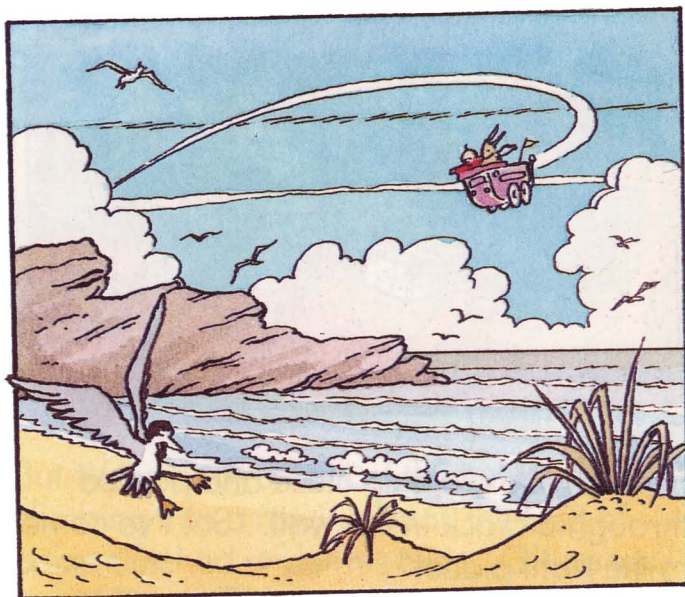


Cuddly Rabbit measured the footprint, then typed the information into the pram's computer. Within seconds an answer flashed up on the screen:

ONE METRE NINETY IN HEIGHT, SIZE TEN SHOES, WALKS WITH A LIMP, LIVES NEAR A PEBBLE BEACH.

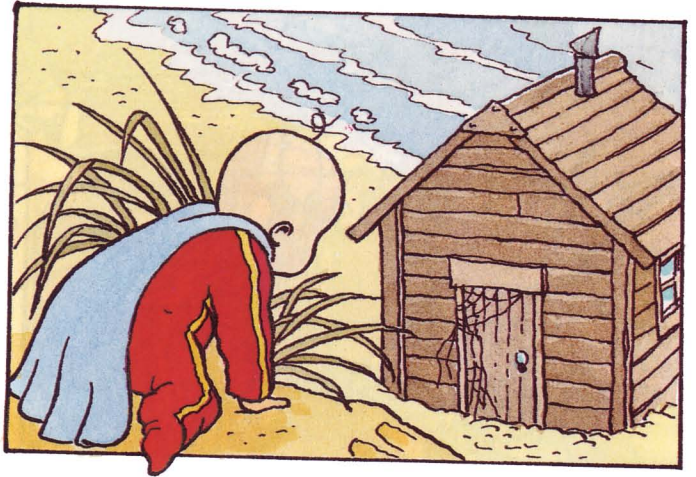


Superbabe leaped into the pram. CR started it up, and programmed it to head for the nearest pebbly beach. Meanwhile Superbabe searched the pram for his bottle. "I'm going to need all the energy I can get," he thought as he sucked his milk. "This is a big job."

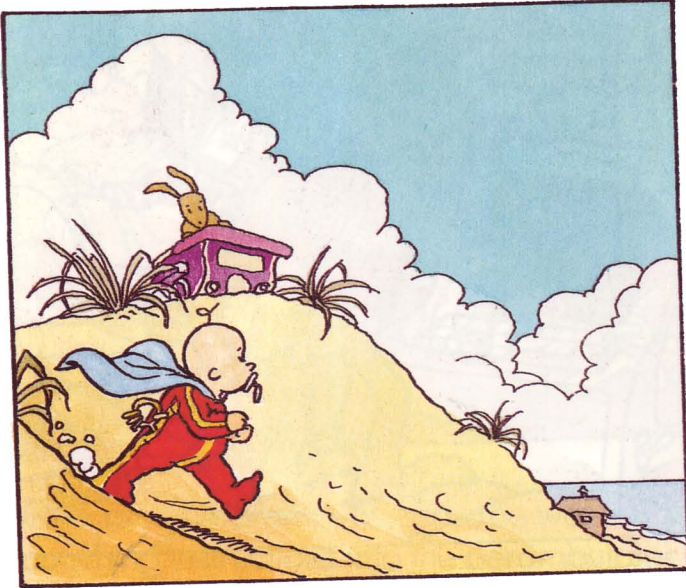


Moments later, the pram swooped low along the sea-shore. CR set it down among sand dunes. Nearby was a hut.

"Stay here," ordered Superbabe.
"Let me know if you need help."
"I'm taking this in case of trouble," said Babe, and he tucked his trusty rattle into his romper suit.



Superbabe set off through the dunes, towards the hut. Crouching behind a tuft of grass, he peered over. The wooden hut looked as if no-one had been near it for years. But Babe noticed that the spider's web over the door had been broken. "That means somebody's been here quite recently!"



Stealthily he crept up close and peered through a crack in the wall. "So! I've come to the right place!"

Inside, two men sat at a table piled high with bank notes. They were counting them busily. "10,642, 10,643, 10,644 . . . hee hee! We've done it! We're rich!"

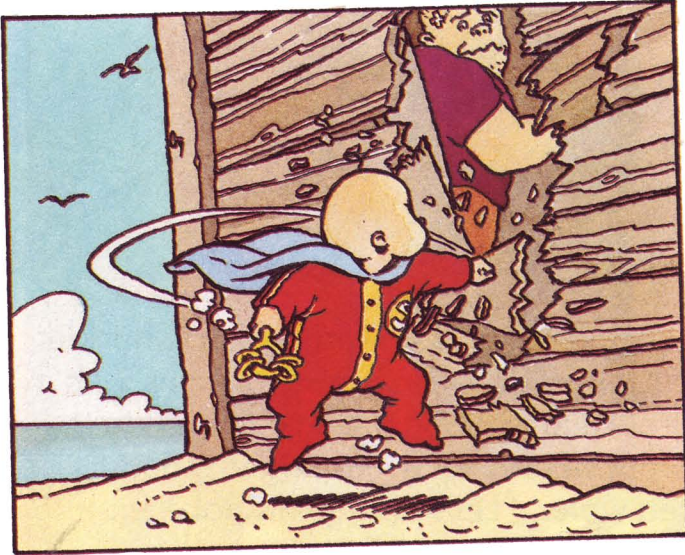


"Hey, Jimmy," said one, holding up a bag of coins. "What'll I do with these?"

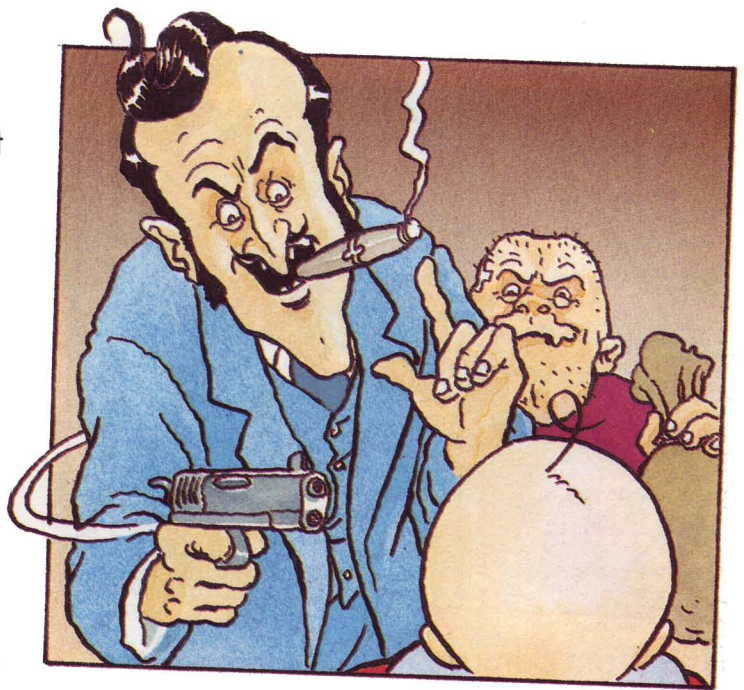
"Oh, throw them away, Willie. *This* is what we want!" And he flung a pile of paper money into the air. Willie limped towards the door.

"I'll chuck them in the sea, then."

"What! CR's eighty-seven pence is in there!" thought Babe. He drew back his fist and, with a blood-curdling yell, punched a hole in the wall. The two men jumped up. "It's Superbabe!" gasped Willie.



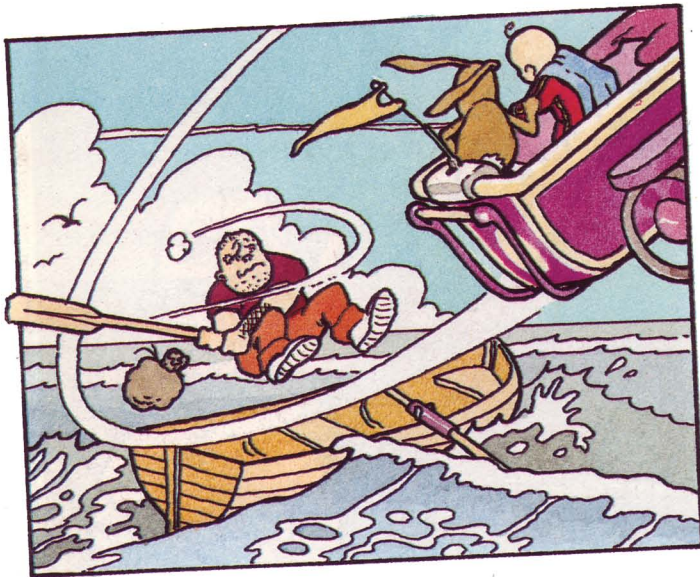
Superbabe went into action. Brandishing his rattle, he knocked the gun from Jimmy's hand and hit him on the nose. "One down, one to go!"



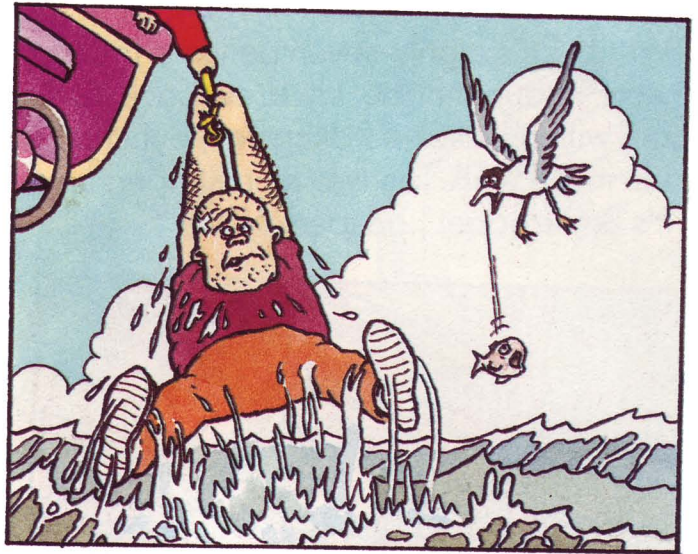
"Yeah," sneered Jimmy, "and on his own, too." Reaching into his pocket, he drew a gun and pointed it at Superbabe. "Say bye-bye, Baby!"



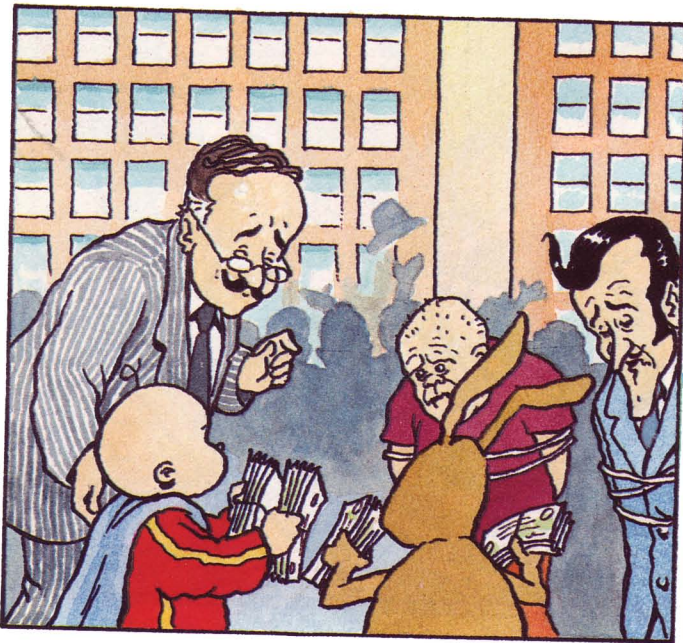
But Willie had run out of the hut and was climbing into a rowing boat, the bag of coins clutched under his arm. "Oh no you don't! That's CR's money!" Babe signalled to CR, and in seconds the pram was overhead. Superbabe jumped in. "After him! He's got your money!"



The pram skimmed over the waves and quickly caught up with Willie. He stood up and hit out at the pram with an oar. Just then, a wave caught the boat and tipped it. With an enormous splash, Willie fell in. The coins went too, and sank like a stone. "There goes your money, CR!"



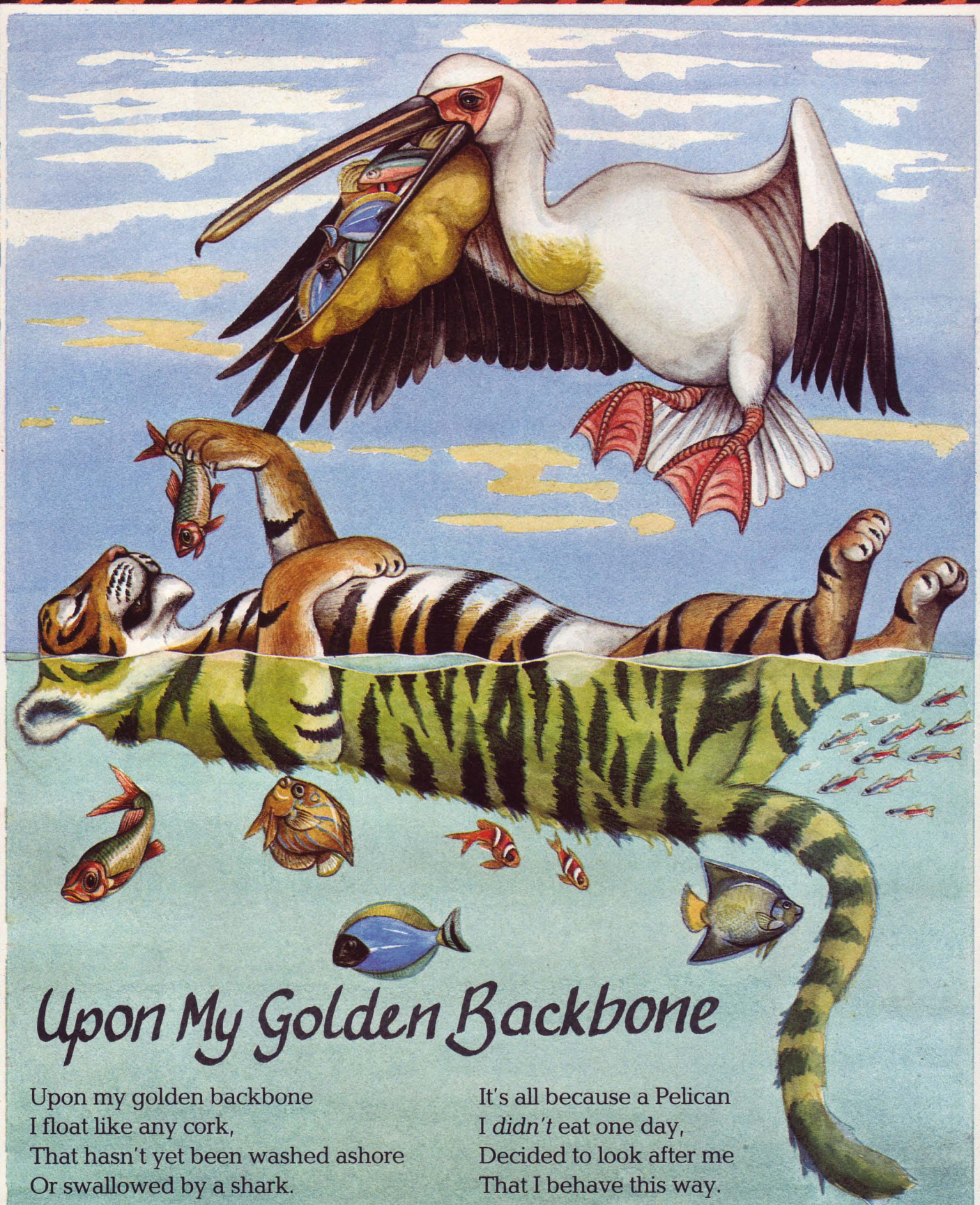
Leaning out of the pram, Superbabe held out his rattle. Willie grabbed it and, with a great heave, Babe pulled him into the pram where he lay gasping in a puddle of sea water. "Let's pick up his pal, then head back to town. Everyone will be wondering what's happened to us."



The pram landed safely in Smith Street. A crowd was waiting. "Here are your bank robbers," said Babe to the bank manager, "and the money. But the coins were lost." "Thanks, Superbabe! You'll get a reward for this — at least a pound, I should think!"



"Great! In that case you can have it, CR, old friend. Well, we must be off now. It's nap time, and I'm getting sleepy. Back to base!" Cuddly Rabbit pressed a button and the pram rose high in the air — and headed home.



Upon My Golden Backbone

Upon my golden backbone
I float like any cork,
That hasn't yet been washed ashore
Or swallowed by a shark.

I never seem to want to snarl
In jungles all day long —
I've been so much upon my back
My legs aren't very strong.

It's all because a Pelican
I didn't eat one day,
Decided to look after me
That I behave this way.

And so, while Other Tigers slink
From tree . . . to tree . . . to tree,
I lie upon my back, and blink,
In Aqueous Ecstasy.



IN PART 25 OF

STORY

Teller

2

GIVE IT TO ZICO! is the cry, as the children of Brazil discover a new football star

IT TAKES TIME TO TEACH A KING – and Odysseus the Greek hero has a lot to learn

How did **THE DONKEY WHO FETCHED THE SEA** achieve such an impossible task?

Whiz! Bang! Is it a power cut – or has someone stolen the electricity robot? Either way it's a case for **THE ELECTRIC IMPS**

PLUS

HARLEQUIN AND COLUMBINE
CABBAGE AND THE FOXES

IF YOU SHOULD MEET A CROCODILE

Stories read by
LEONARD ROSSITER
IAN LAVENDER
DERMOT CROWLEY
CAROLE BOYD

