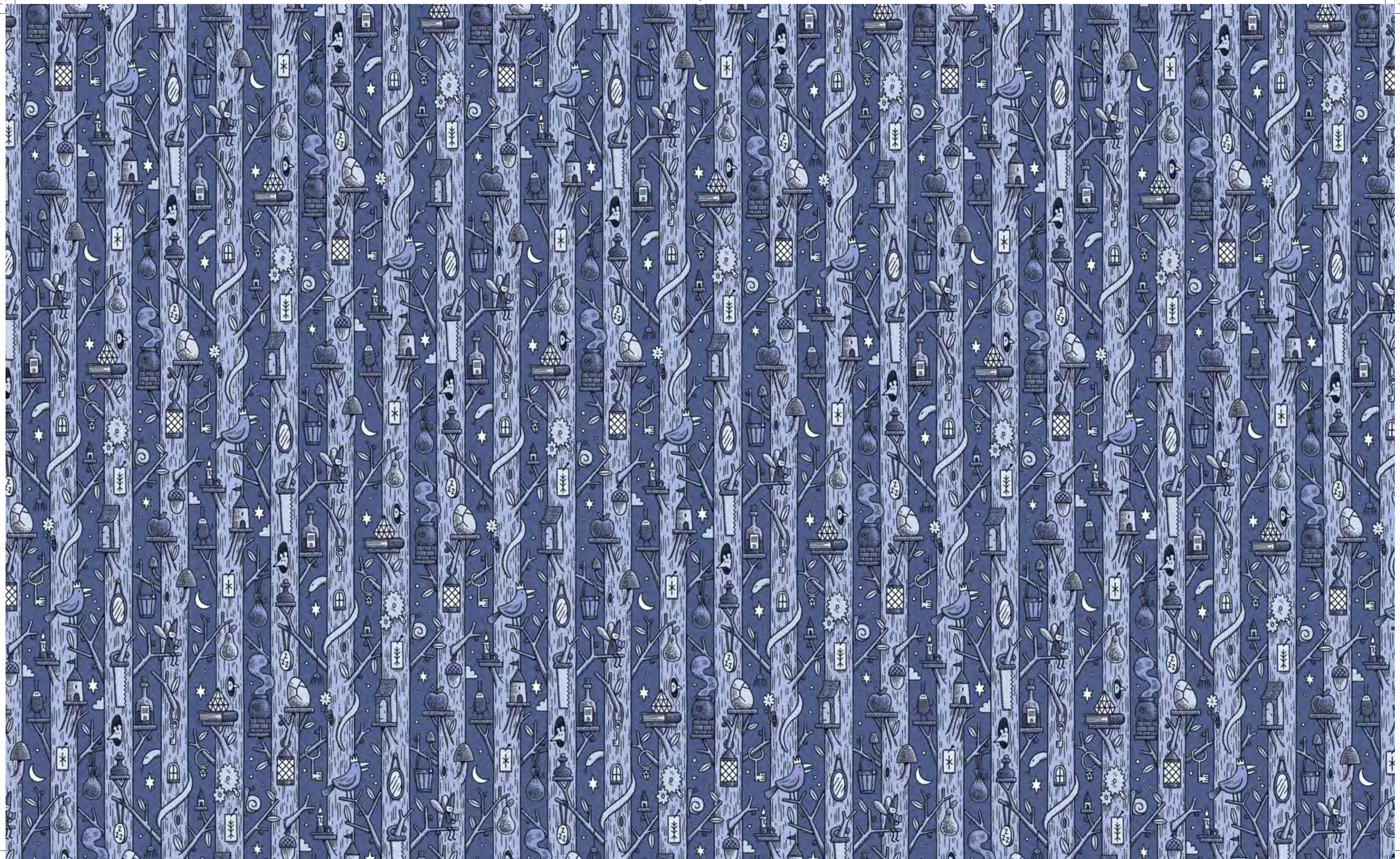
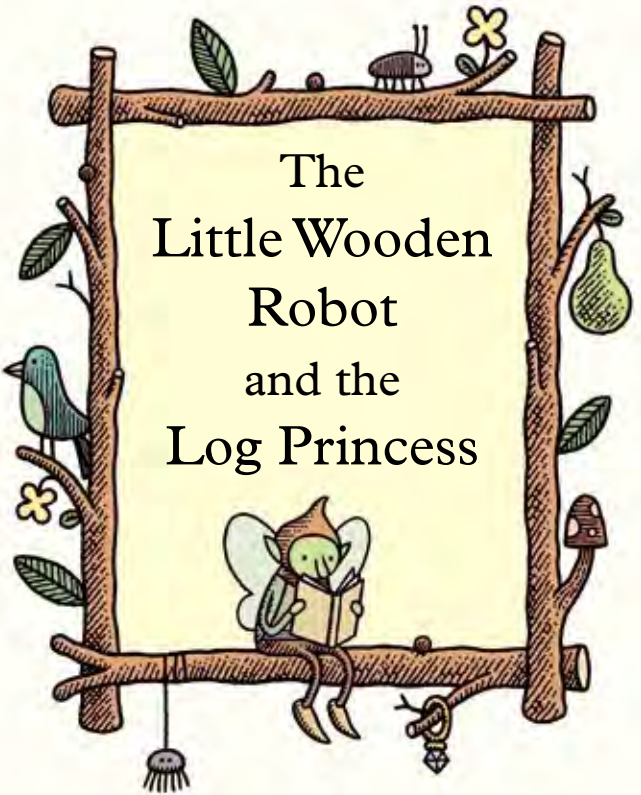
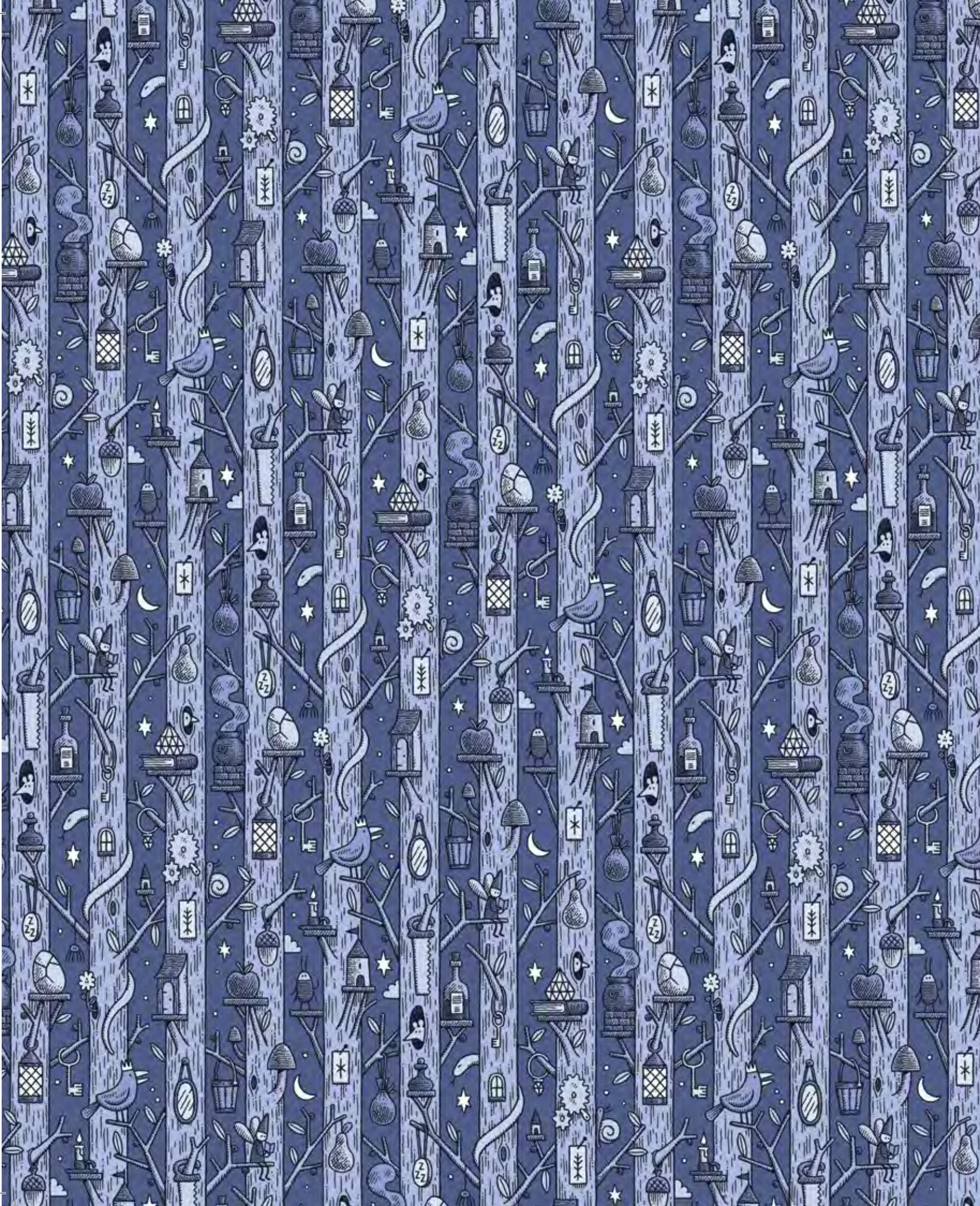


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For Ben and Jack

Thank you to Matthew Forsythe, Daphne Gauld,
Iris Gauld, Billy Kiosoglou, and Jo Taylor.

Neal Porter Books

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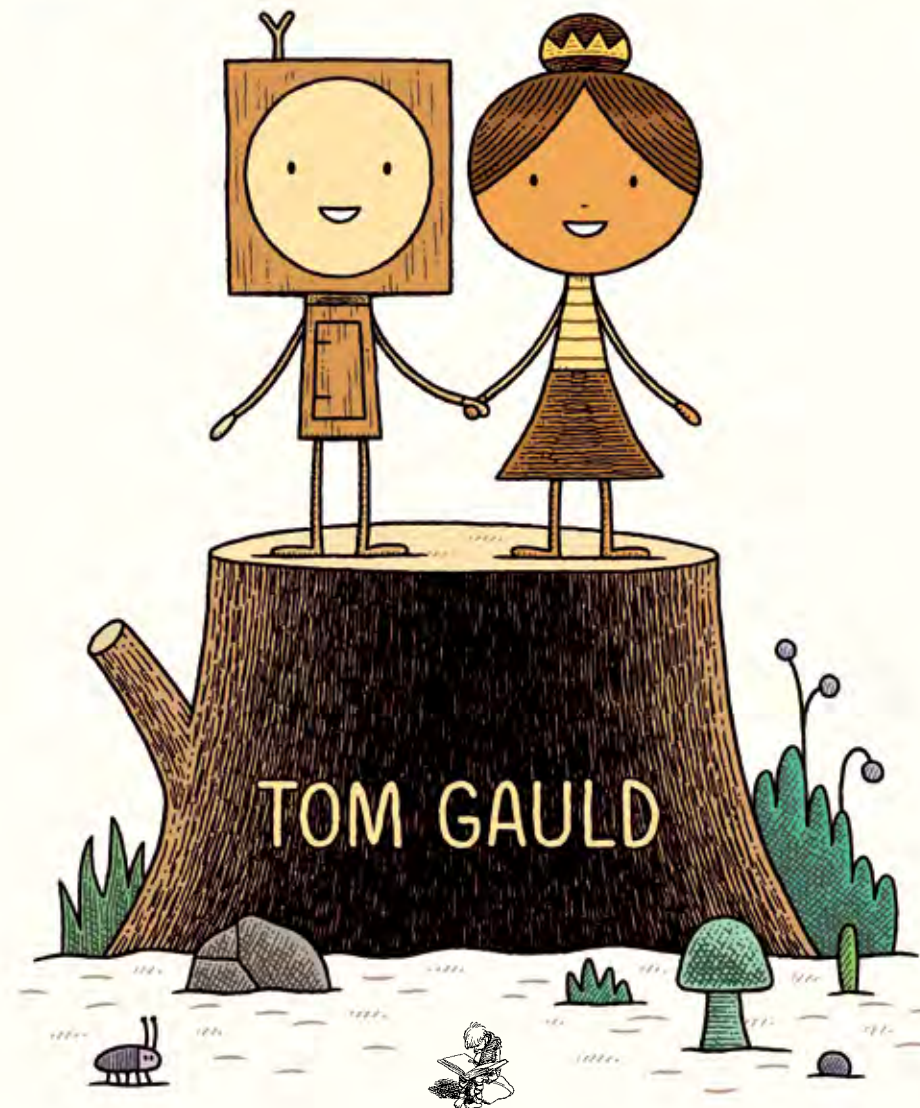
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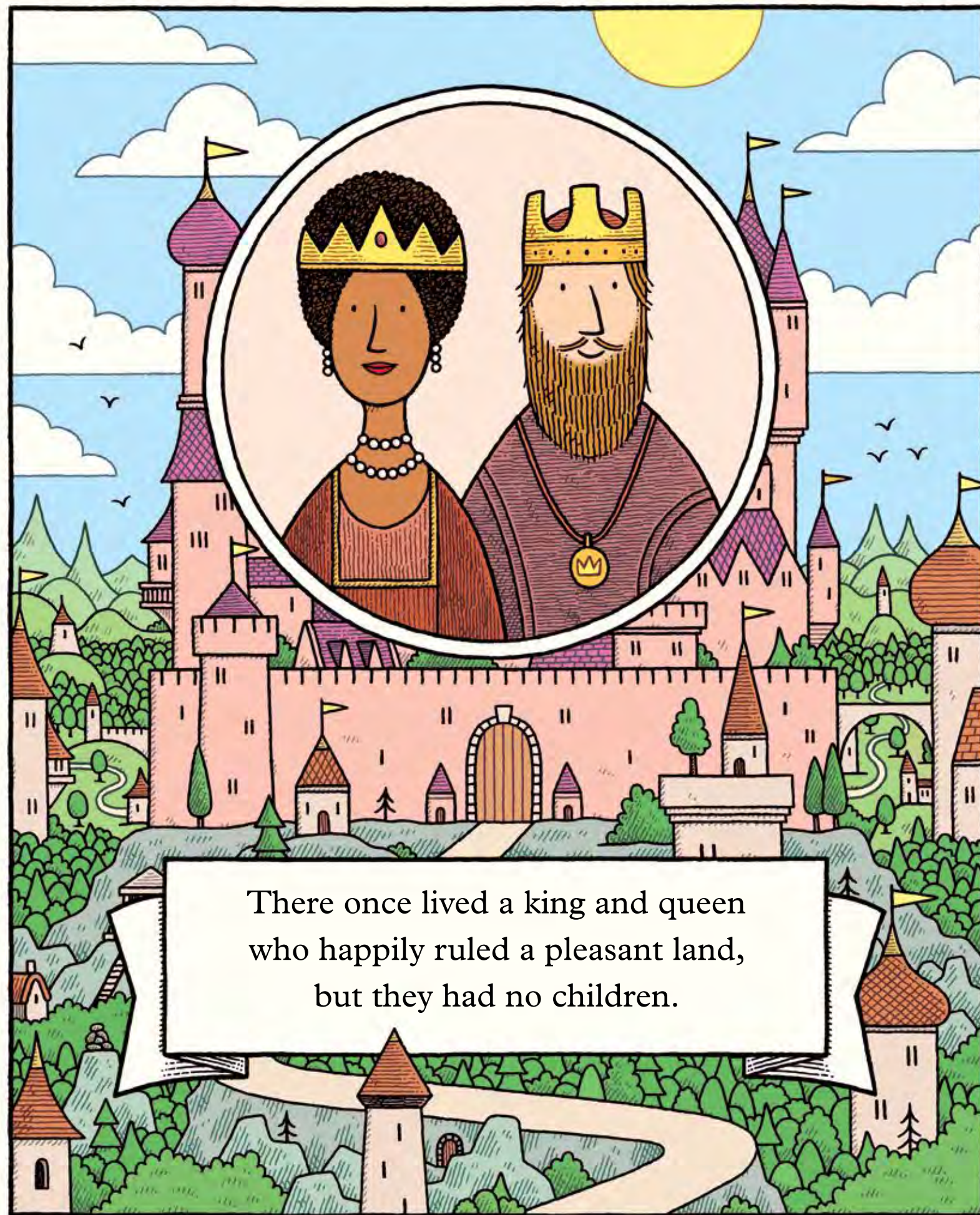
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The LITTLE WOODEN ROBOT and the LOG PRINCESS



NEAL PORTER BOOKS
HOLIDAY HOUSE / NEW YORK



So one night the king went to see the royal inventor, and the queen went to see a clever old witch who lived in the woods. They both asked for the same thing: a child.



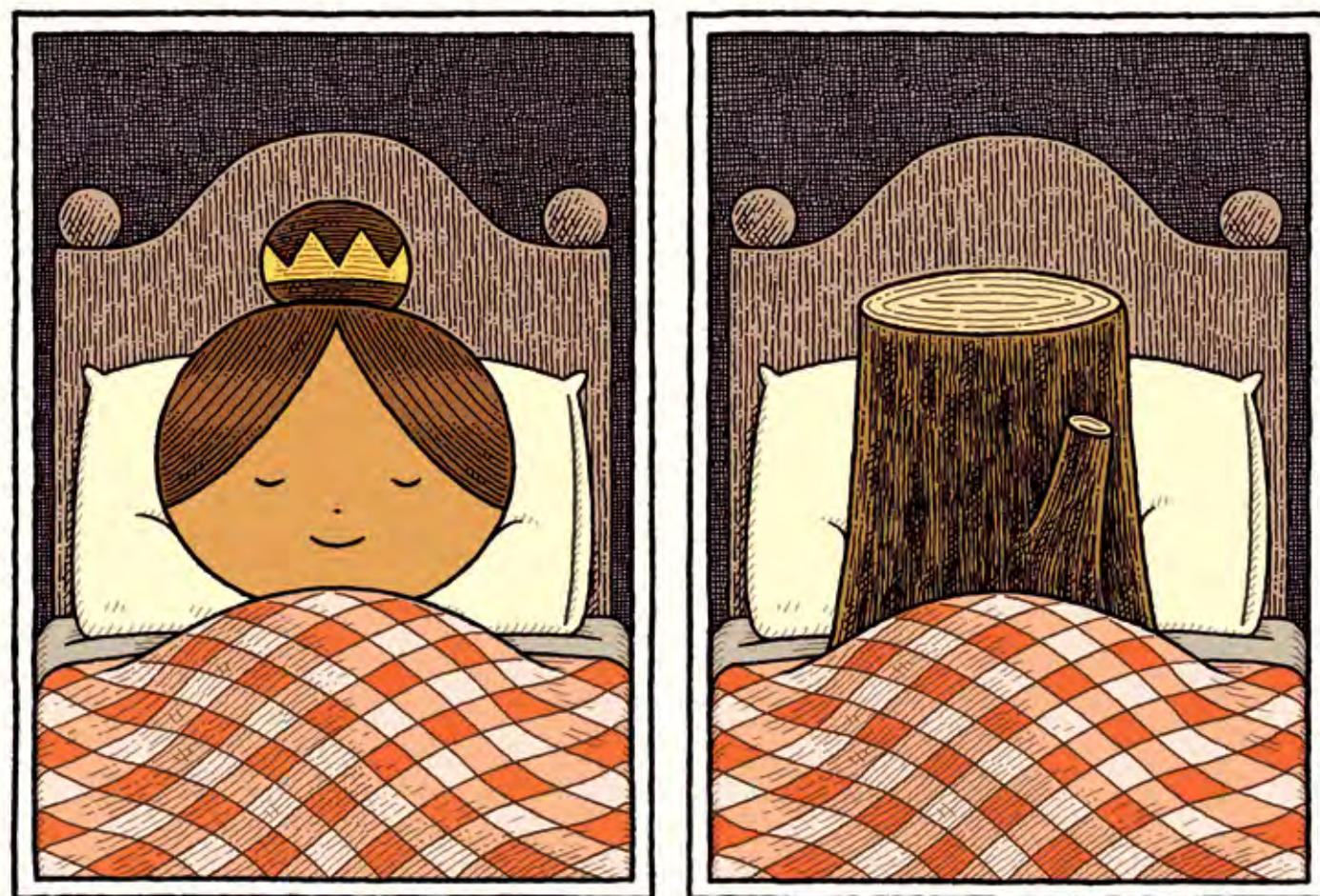
The inventor set to work straight away. She used her finest tools and her most ingenious designs and she built a wonderful, intricate little wooden robot.



The witch took a log from the basket by her fire and used her deepest magic to bring the wood to life in the form of a perfect little log princess.

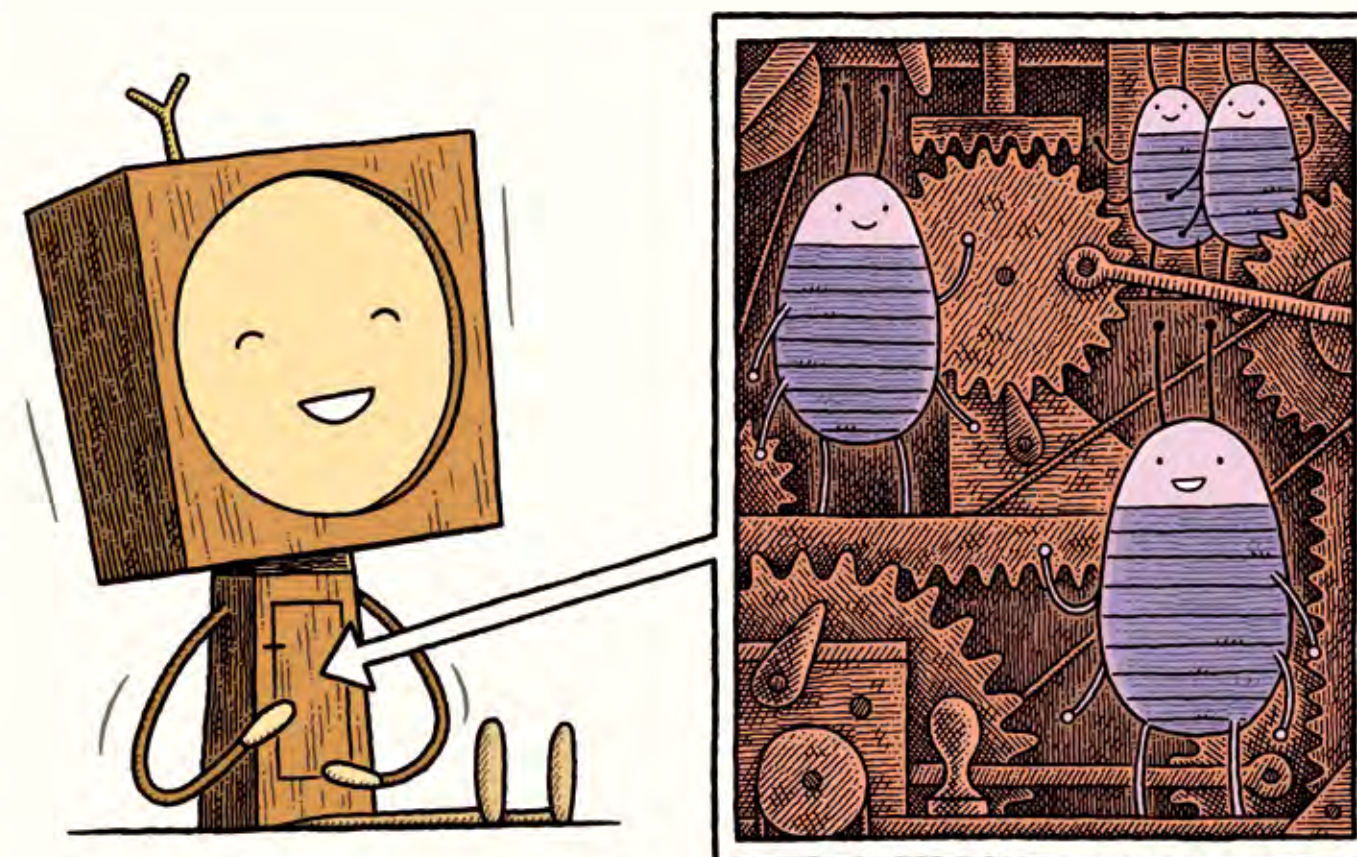


The king and the queen and the princess
and the robot all loved each other instantly.

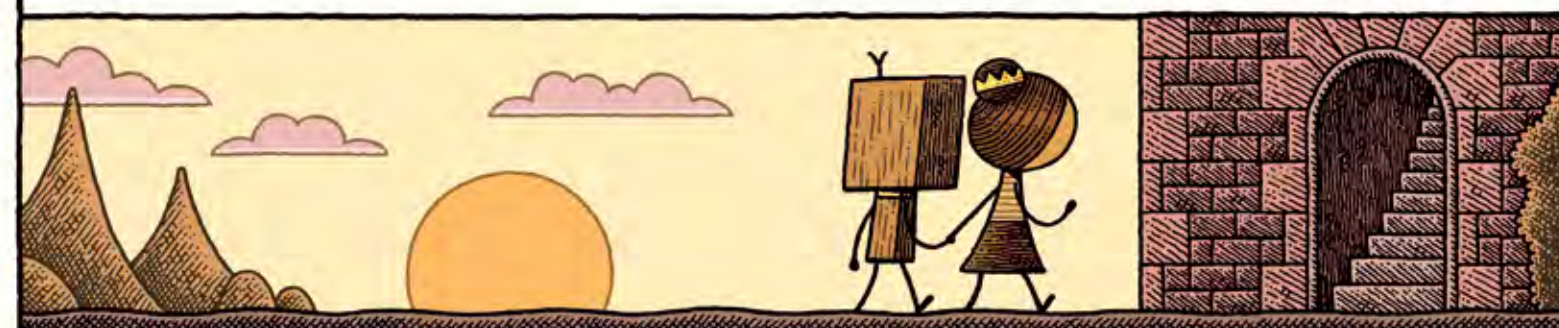


The log princess was bold and clever,
but she had a secret: each night when she fell asleep,
she turned back into a log and would stay like that
until she was woken by the magic words
“Awake, little log, awake.”

The little wooden robot was brave and kind.
So kind, in fact, that he let a family of beetles nest
in his workings, even though it tickled sometimes.

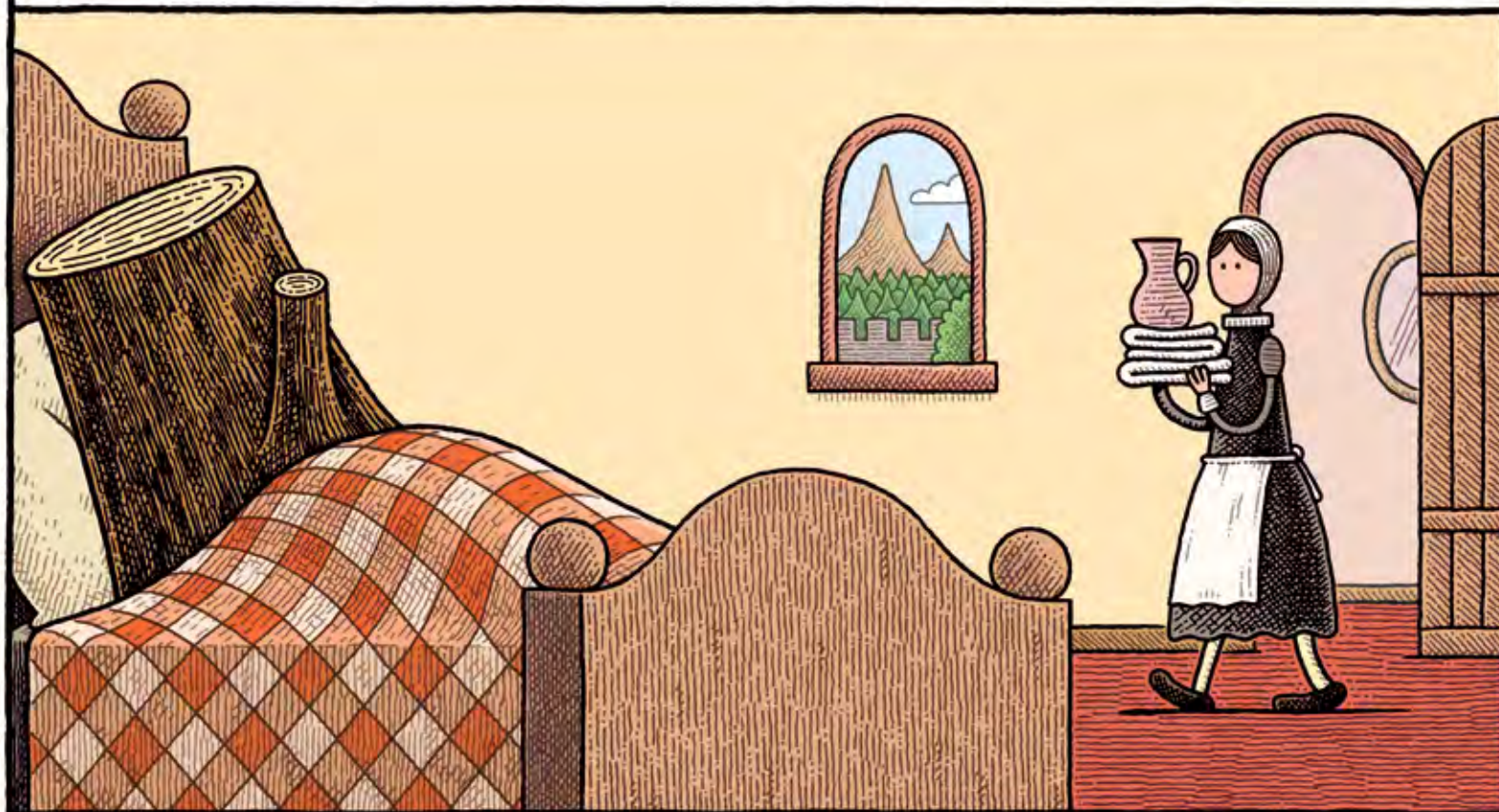


Every day, the robot would wake his log-sister and they
would play in the castle and the gardens until the sun
went down and they were tired out.

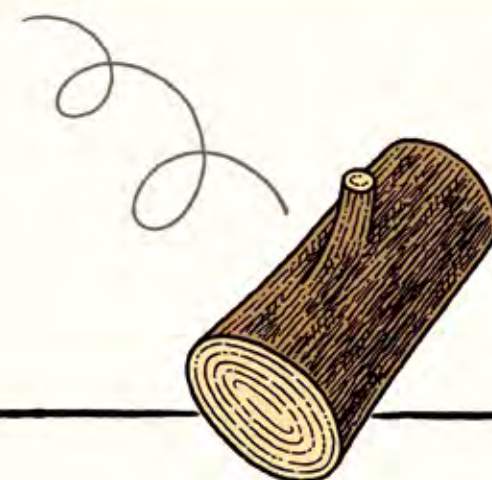




However, one morning, a traveling circus came to visit and the robot rushed down to the courtyard without waking his sister. On the stairs he passed a maid going up to tidy the princess's bedroom.



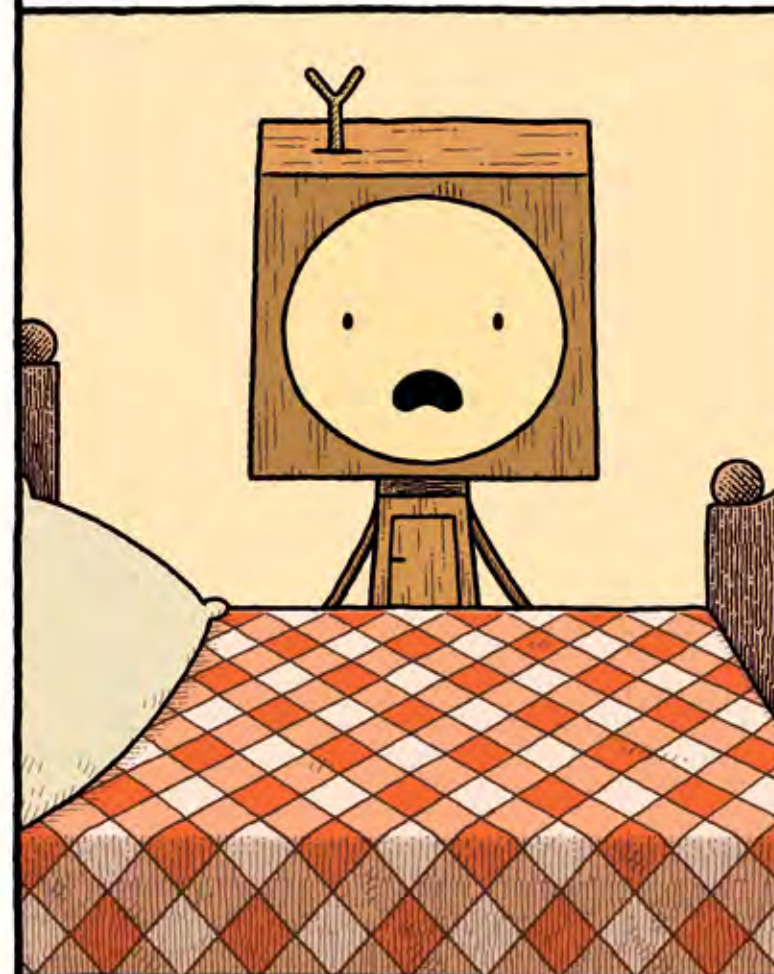
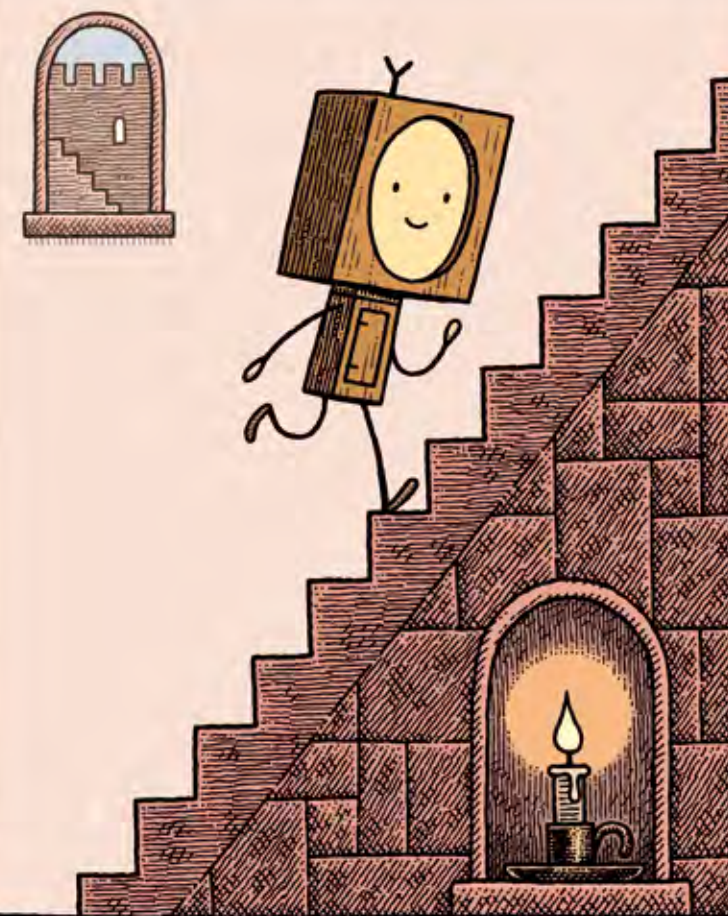
When the maid saw the log she said, "Oh dear! A plain old log, lying in the princess's bed! What a disgrace!" And threw it out of the window.



At that very moment the little robot thought of his sister.

"How selfish of me!" he said to himself. "She's missing out on all these wonderful things."

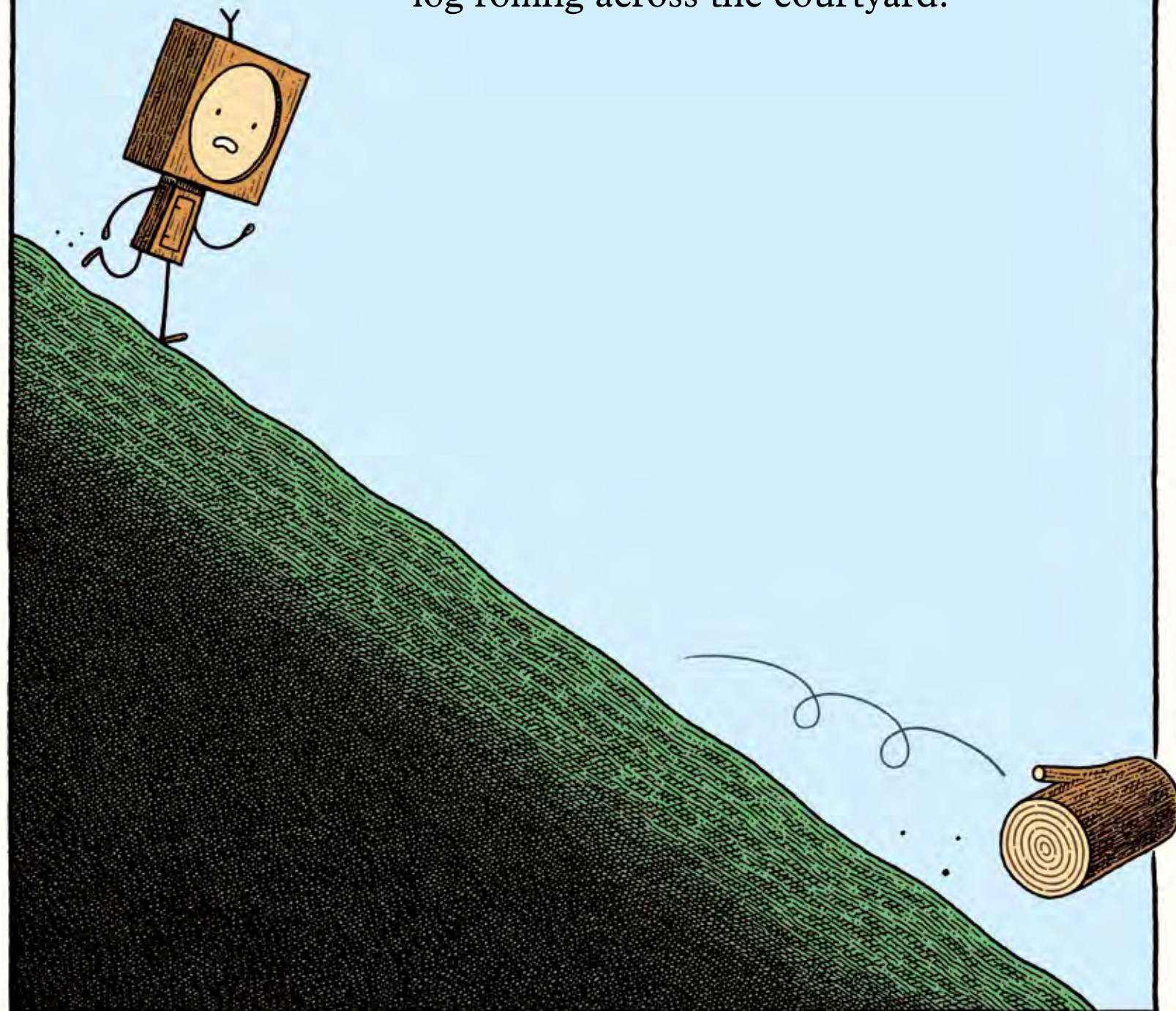
And he ran to her bedroom to wake her up.



He looked at the empty bed in horror. "Where's the log?" he cried.

"Oh, *that*," said the maid. "I threw it out of the window."

The robot looked out and spied the
log rolling across the courtyard.



He raced down, but the castle was atop a steep hill,
and the log had rolled through the gate, over the
drawbridge, and down toward the village.



A goblin was pushing
a barrow of logs through
the village and the
princess-log rolled
right up to him.

“What a lucky day!”
he said. “Another fine
log for my load.”

The goblin took the logs
to the river, where a
barge was tied up.
The captain paid him
a copper coin and his
barrow-load was tipped
into the barge with
hundreds and hundreds
of other logs.



The robot ran to the barge.
“Please, sir,” he said to the captain. “My special log is in your barge. May I come aboard and search for it?”



“You may,” said the captain.
“But we must set sail straight away, while the wind is right.”

So the robot clambered on,
and the barge set off for the frozen North. They sailed for days, but there were so very many logs that, even with the help of the crew, the little wooden robot could not find the right one.

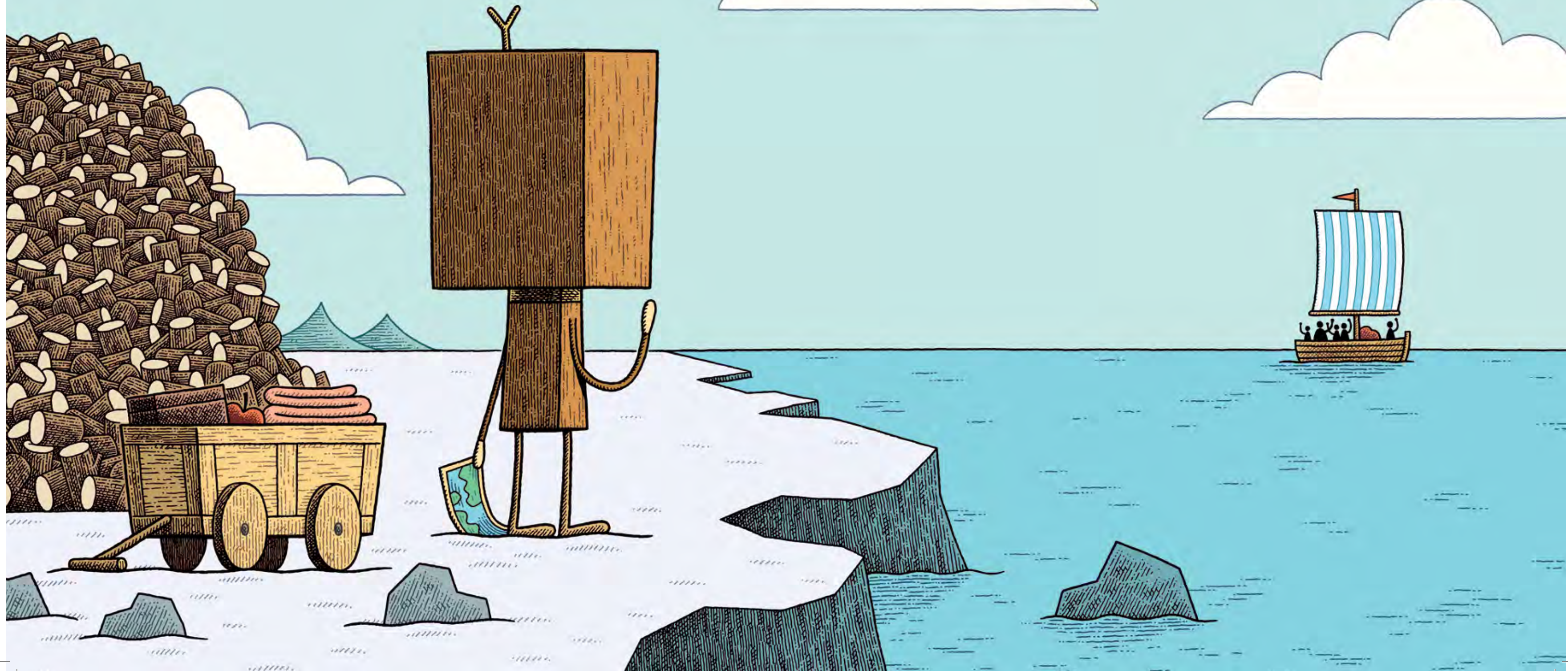


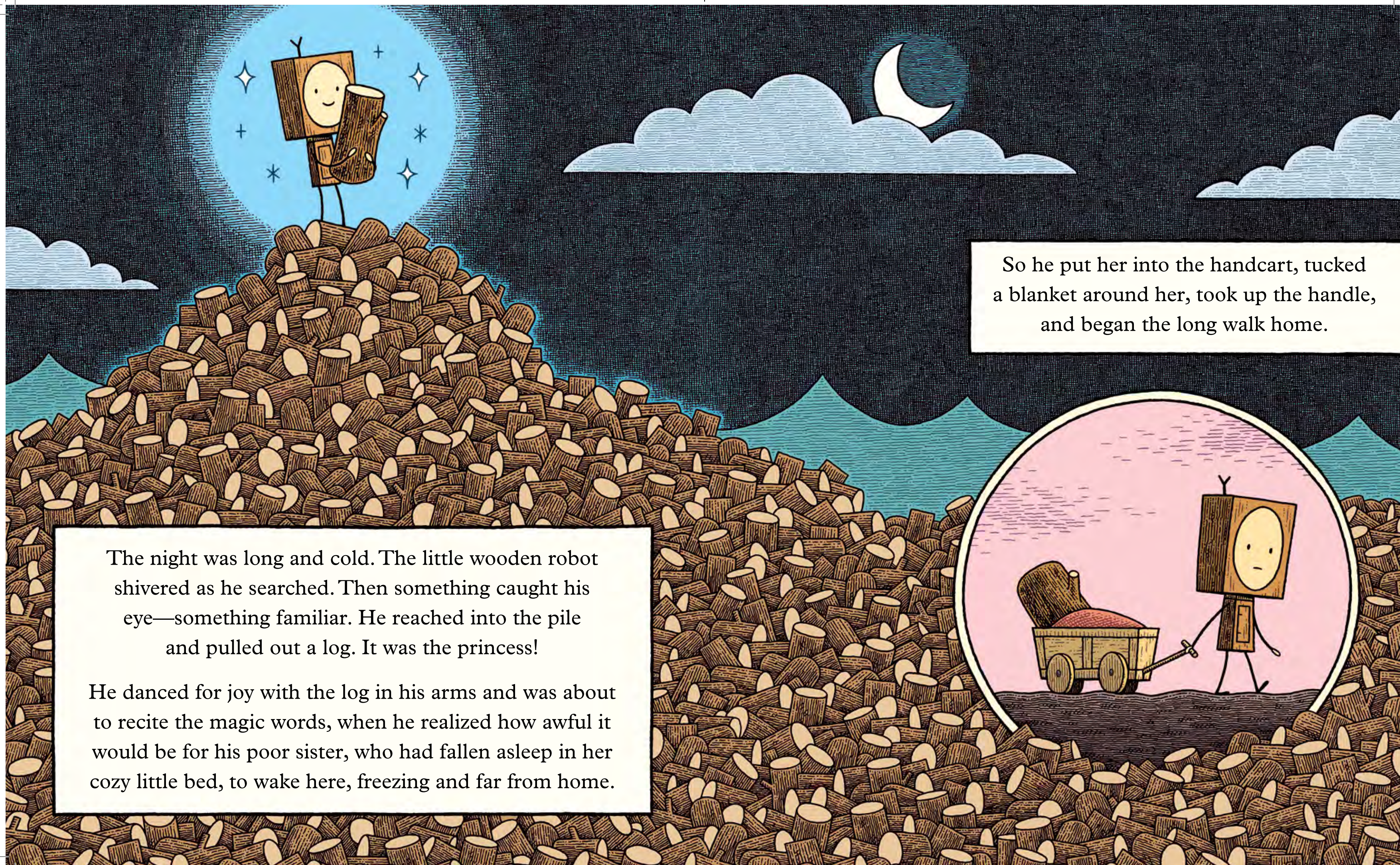
They arrived and unloaded the cargo.

“Come back with us,” said the captain. “The North is a dangerous place and we can easily find you another log when we get home.”

“I can’t,” said the robot. “That log is the most precious thing in the world to me. I won’t leave without it.”

So the crew gave him a map, some supplies, and a handcart and sailed back to the pleasant land where our story began.



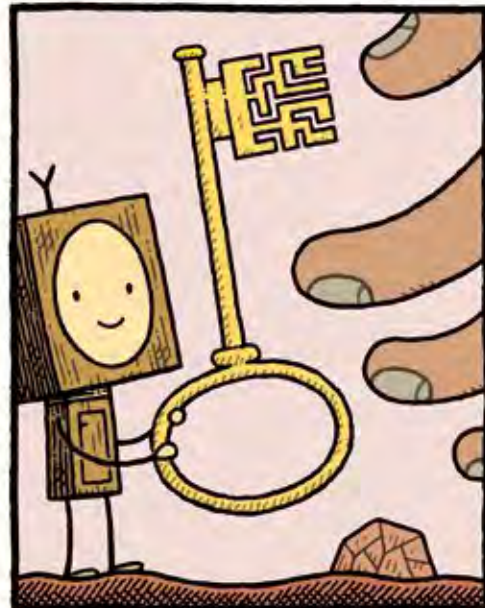


So he put her into the handcart, tucked a blanket around her, took up the handle, and began the long walk home.

The night was long and cold. The little wooden robot shivered as he searched. Then something caught his eye—something familiar. He reached into the pile and pulled out a log. It was the princess!

He danced for joy with the log in his arms and was about to recite the magic words, when he realized how awful it would be for his poor sister, who had fallen asleep in her cozy little bed, to wake here, freezing and far from home.

Along the way he had too many adventures
to recount here:



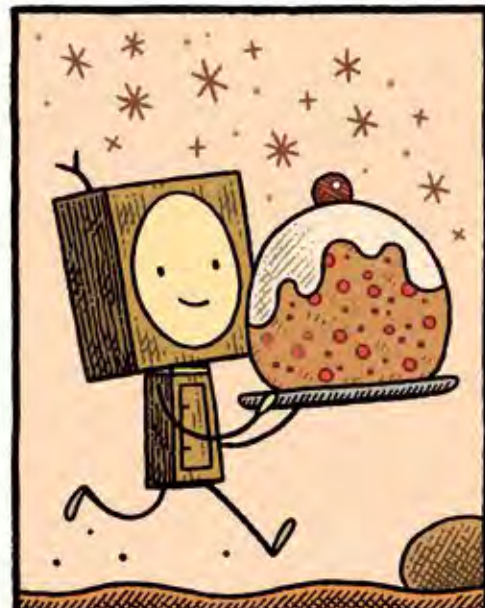
The
Giant's Key



The Family
of Robbers



The Old Lady
in a Bottle



The Magic
Pudding

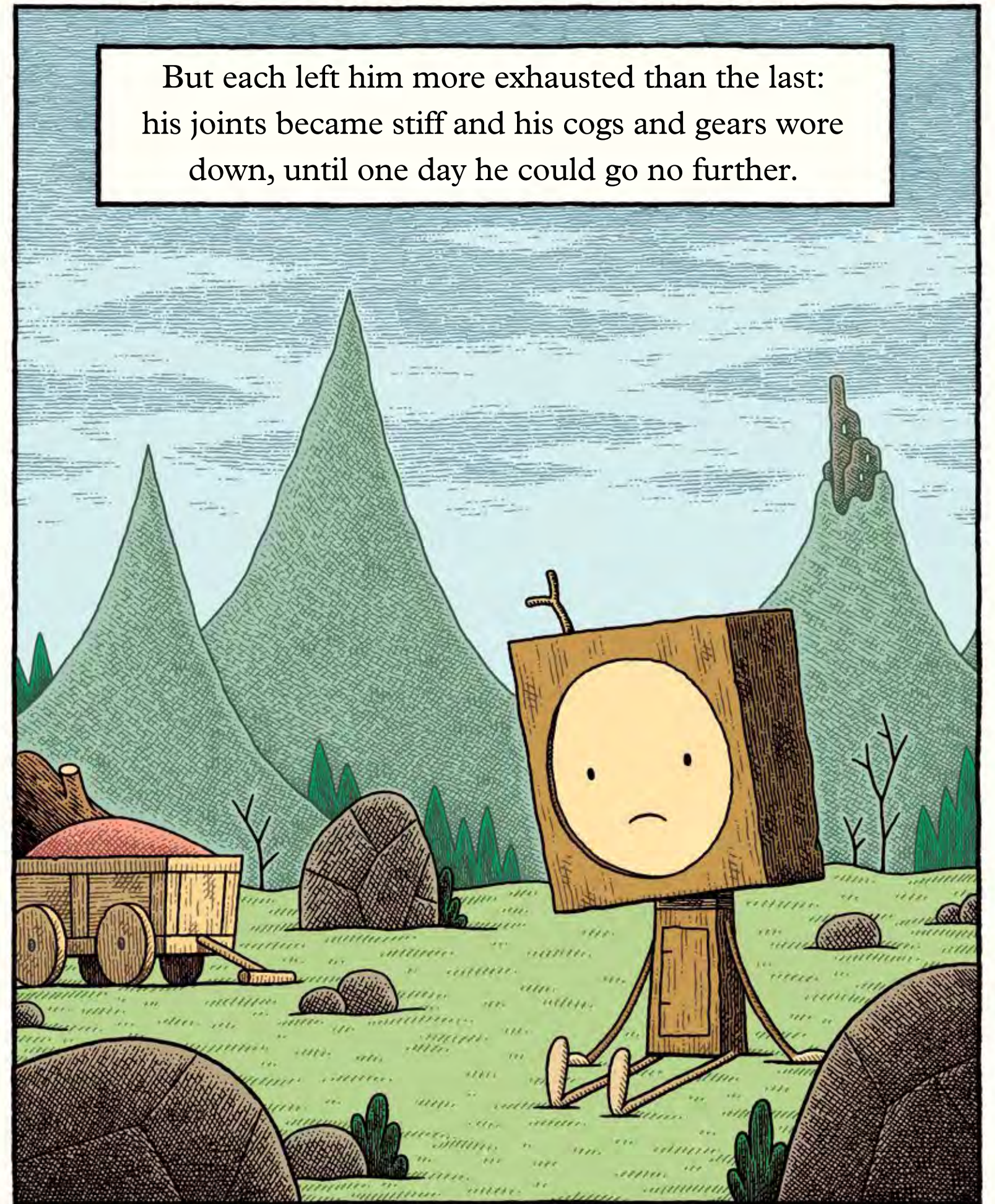


The Lonely
Bear

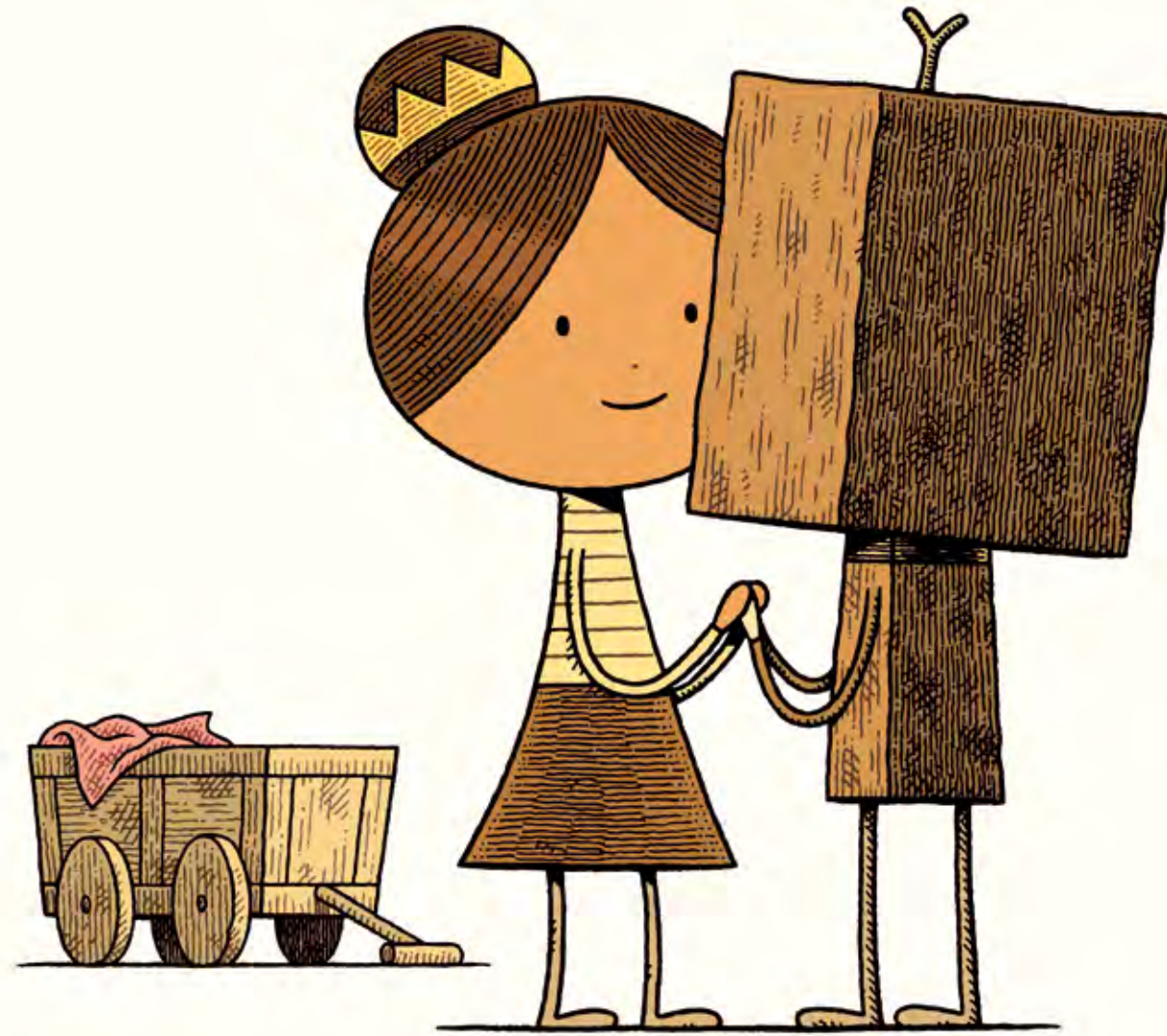


The Queen of
the Mushrooms

But each left him more exhausted than the last:
his joints became stiff and his cogs and gears wore
down, until one day he could go no further.



With the last of his strength he said the magic words,
woke the princess and told her what had happened,
how it was all his fault, and that he understood that
she would probably never forgive him.



“Oh, Brother,” she said, “how silly of you to keep all
these worries to yourself. Of course I forgive you!”

She helped him into the handcart, where he fell
into a deep sleep. She took the map and the handle
of the cart and continued the walk home.

She too had many adventures:



The Mischievous
Pixies



The
Dragon's Egg



The Feuding
Hunters



The
Haunted Well



The Enormous
Blackbird



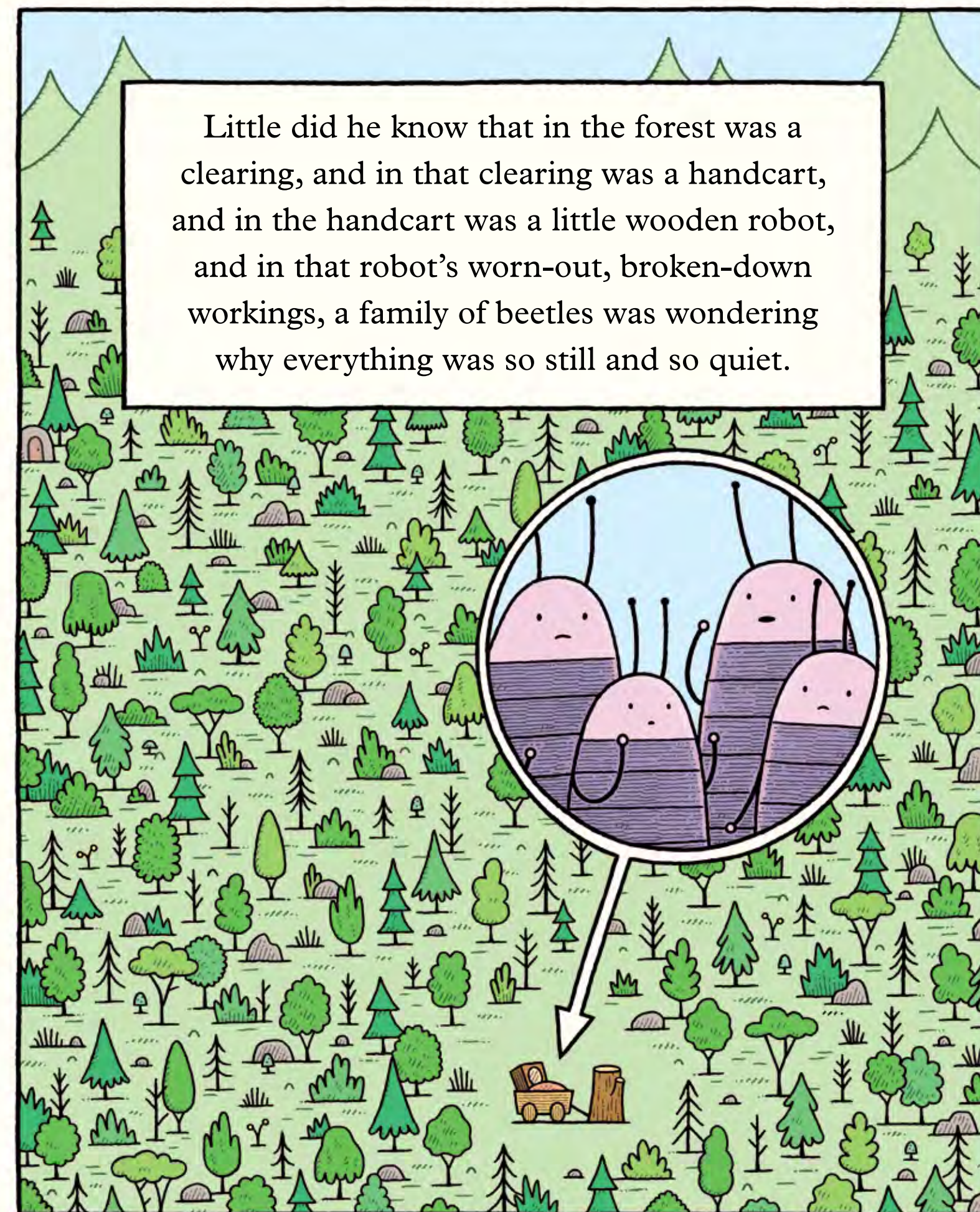
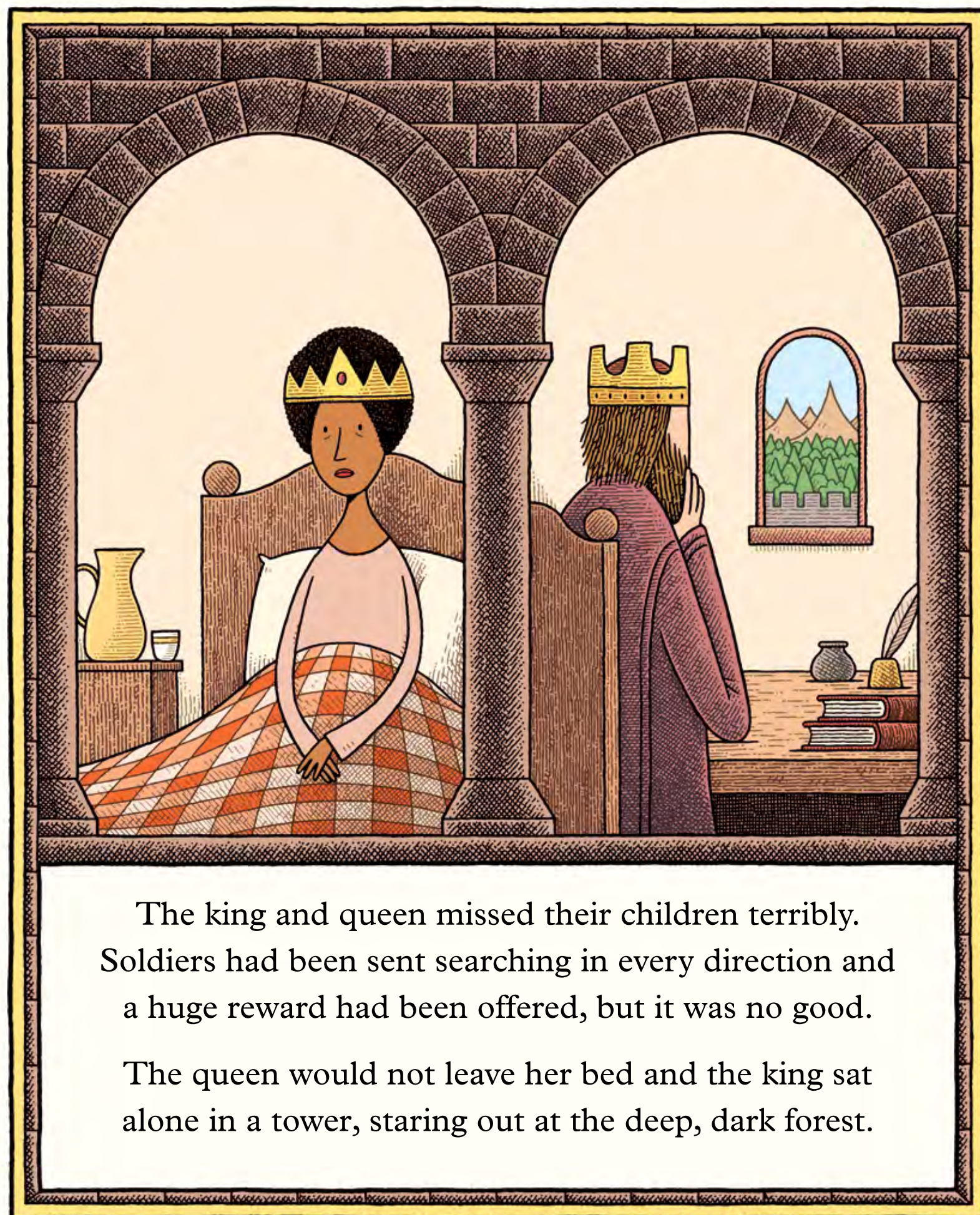
The Baby in
a Rosebush

The princess knew that whatever happened, however tired she felt, she must not fall asleep.

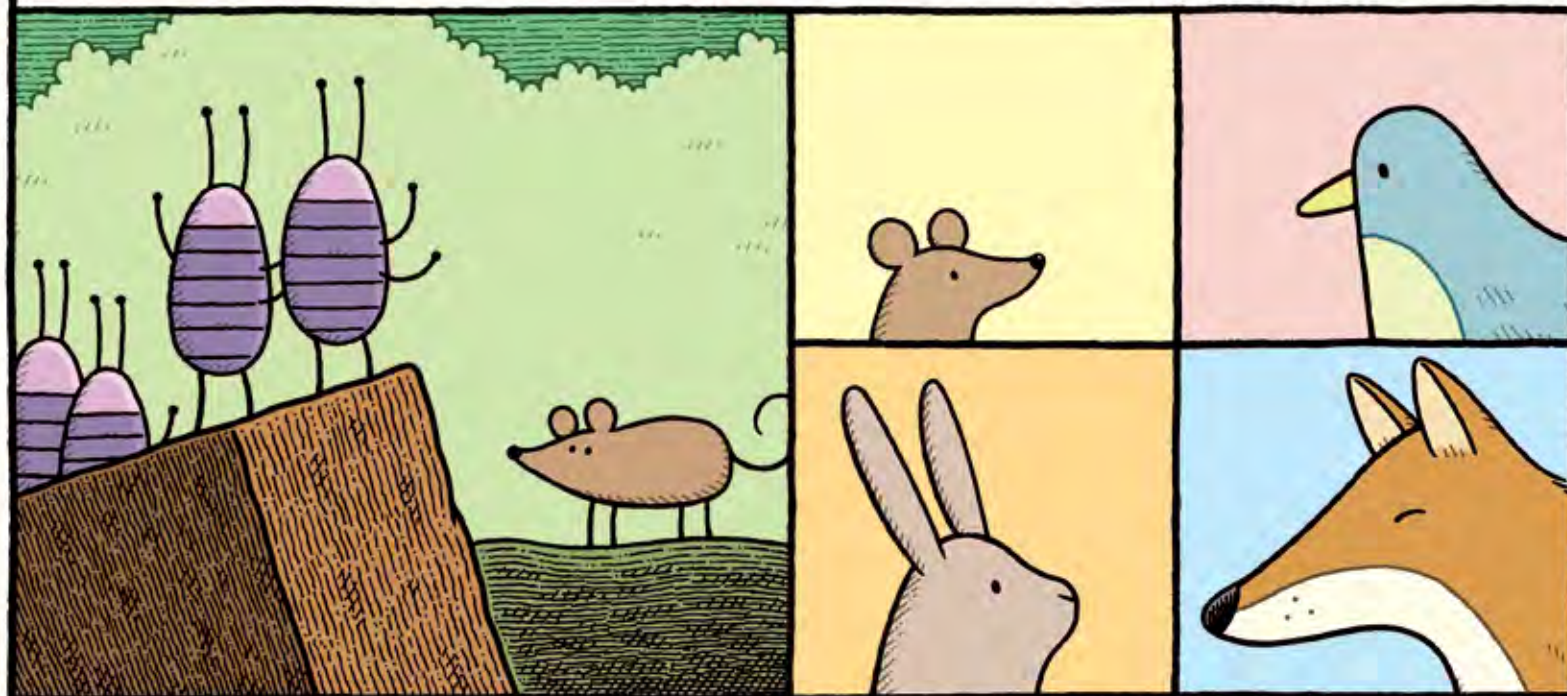
But one night, as she was trudging through a dark forest—which she was sure couldn't be *that* far from home—she began to yawn. And then she yawned some more. And her eyes felt heavy. And her legs felt tired. And she thought of her cozy little bed in the castle.

“Perhaps I shall close my eyes, just for a moment,” she said. And with that, she fell asleep and—pop!—turned into a log.

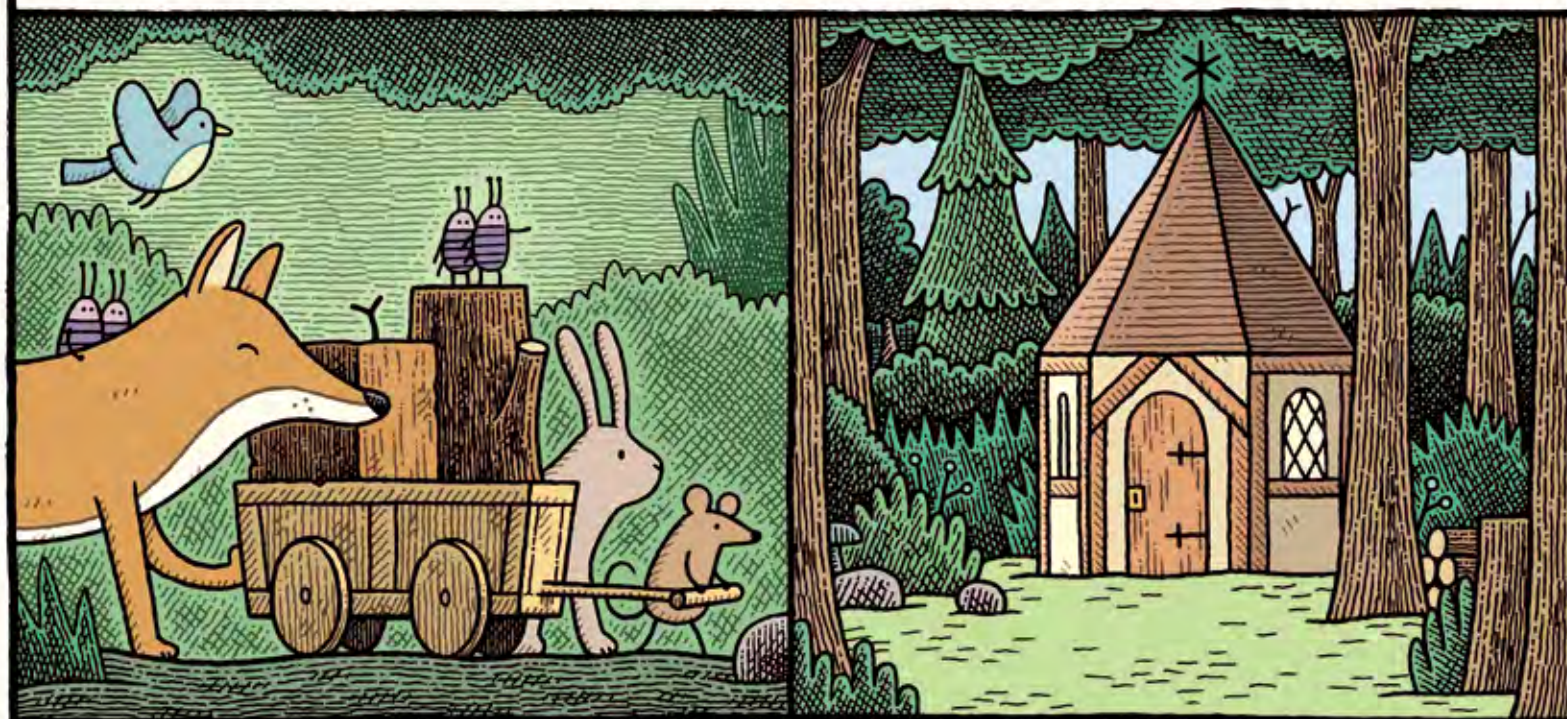




They climbed out and looked at the log and the robot and knew that they must do something.



So they stopped a passing mouse and asked her for help, and she asked a bird, who asked a rabbit, who asked a fox. And they all worked together to take the princess and the robot to the nearest house: the home of a clever old witch.



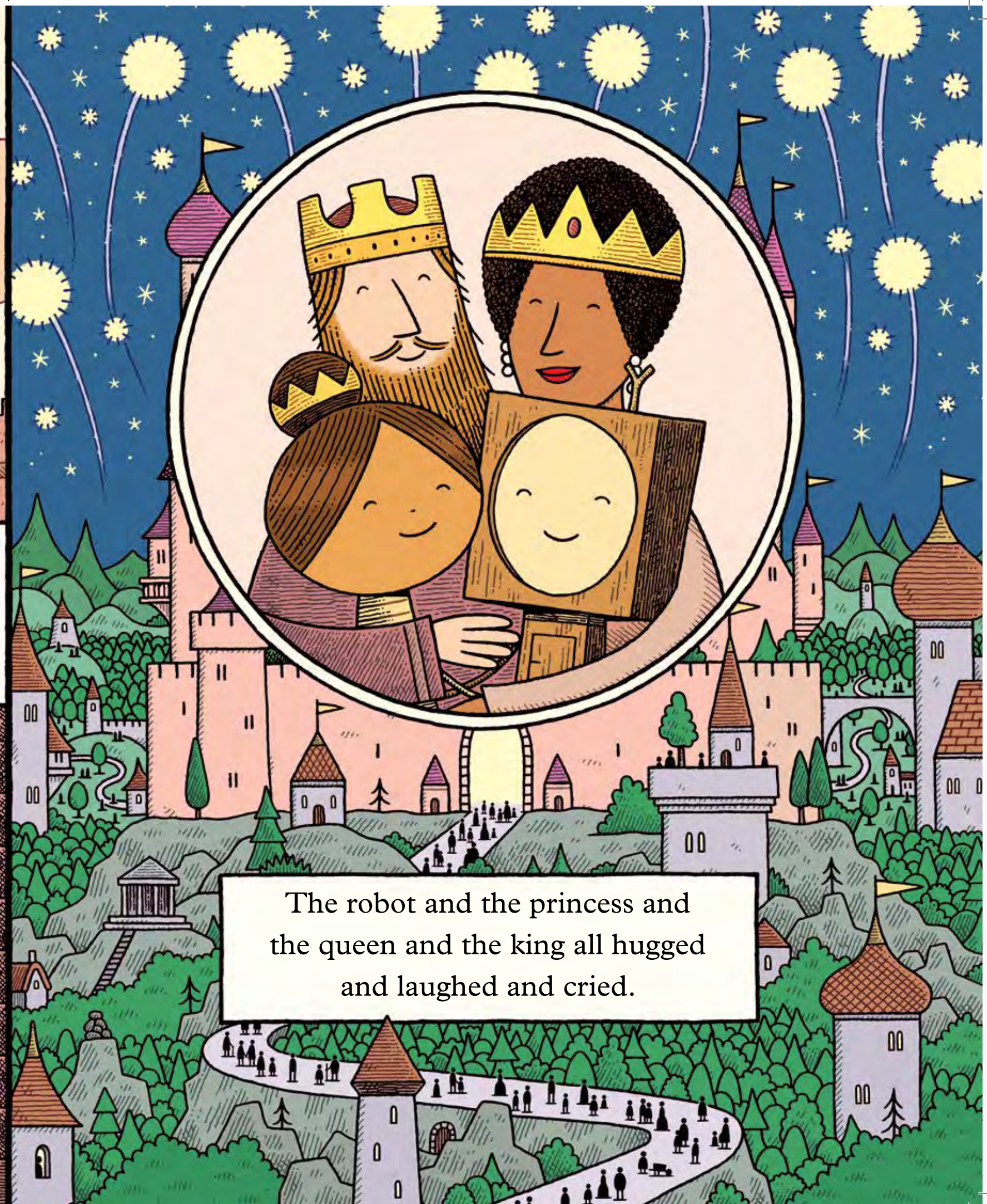
The witch recognized the pair immediately.



She woke the princess, repaired the robot, and set off for the castle.

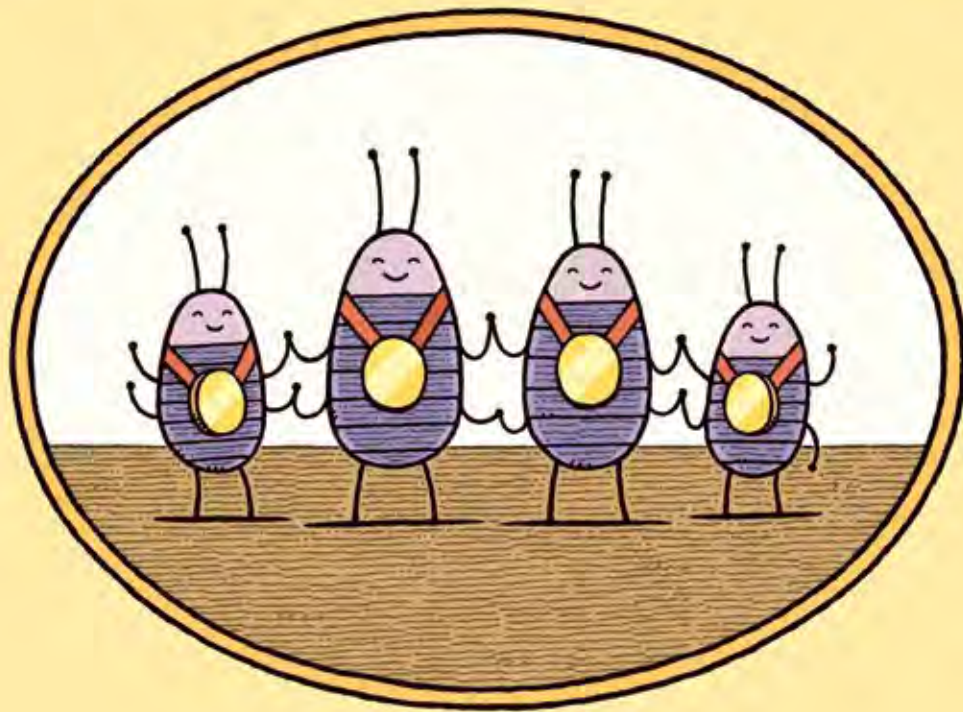


The king could hardly believe his eyes as he watched the little group, all crowded onto a broomstick, fly over the forest and set down in the castle courtyard.



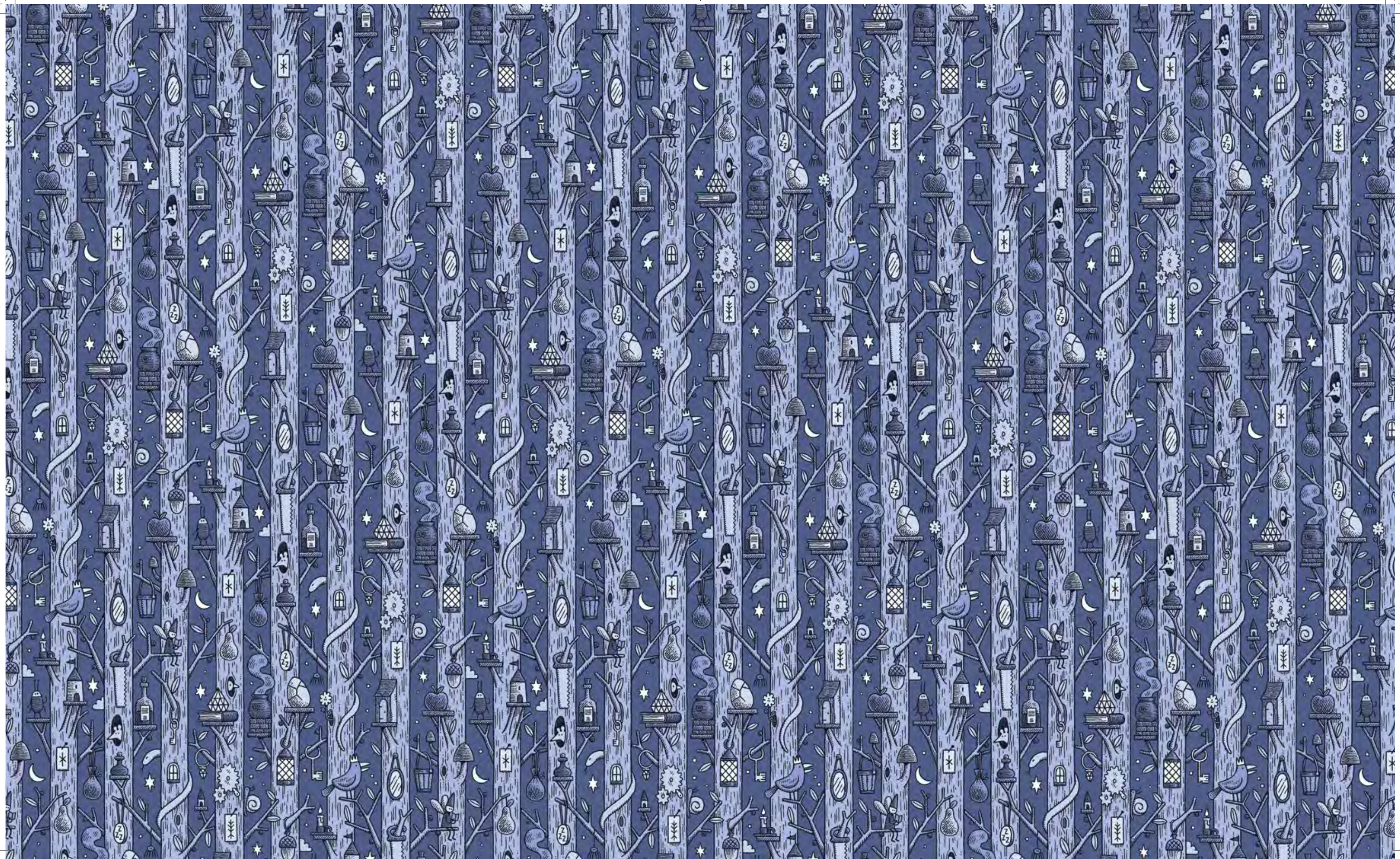
The robot and the princess and the queen and the king all hugged and laughed and cried.

The witch was thanked, the month was
declared a holiday for the whole kingdom, the
beetles were each given a tiny golden medal,



and they all lived happily ever after.





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