

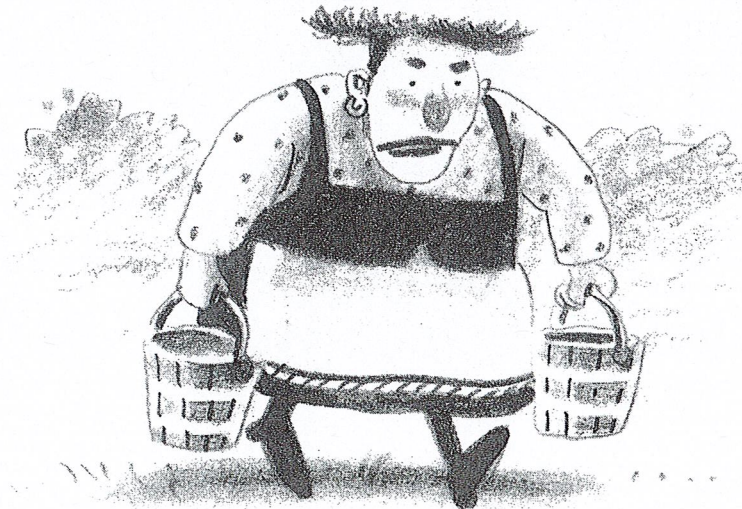


“Enough!” shouted the Bandit Chief to his wife. “This boy is not like our son. He sings like a crow, he tangles your hair, he loses the rice, he scatters the horses, he warns our enemies—and now he has spoilt our dinner. This is too much.” And he turned to Tashi.

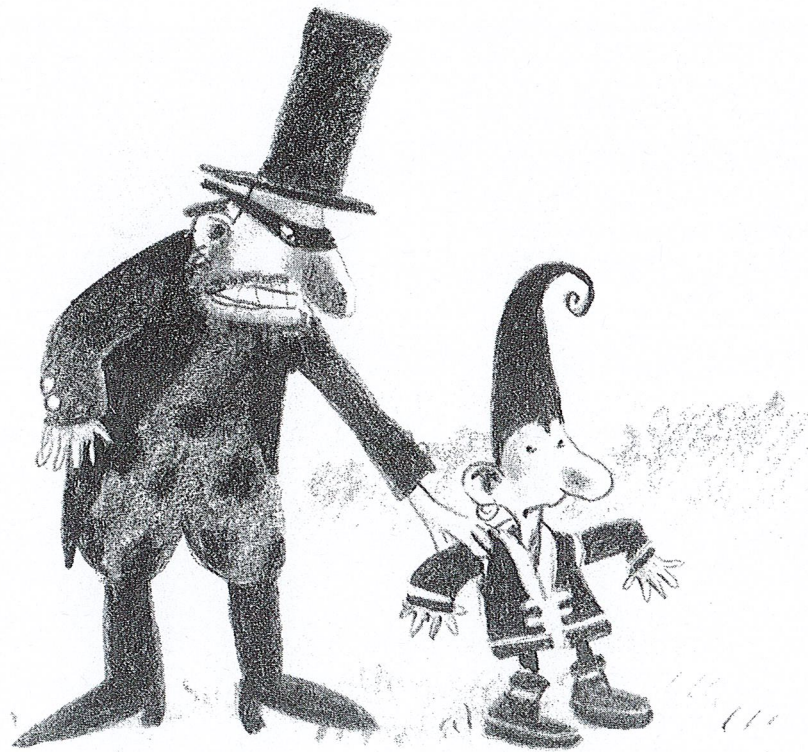
“You must go home to your village now, Tashi. You are a clumsy, useless boy with no more brain than the ducks you ruined.”



“Tashi smiled inside, but he put on a sorrowful face and turned to the Bandit Wife. “I’m sorry that I wasn’t like your son,” he said, but she was already on her way down to the river to fetch some more water.



'Tashi turned to go when a rough hand pulled him back.

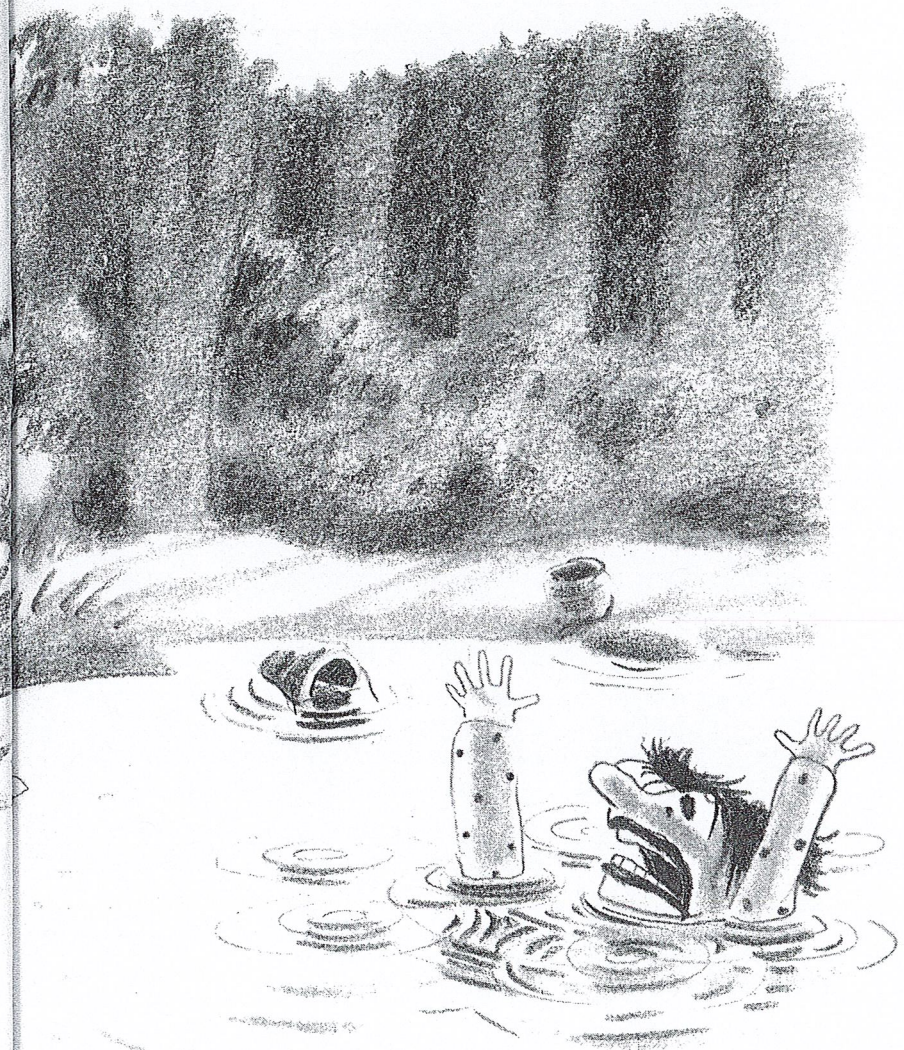


“You don’t deserve to go free, Duck Spoiler,” snarled Me Too. “Say goodbye to this world and hullo to the next because I’m going to make an end of you.”

‘But as he turned to pick up his deadly nose-hair plucker, Tashi shook himself free and tore off into the forest. He could hear the bandit crashing through the trees after him, but if he could just make it to the river, he thought he would have a chance.

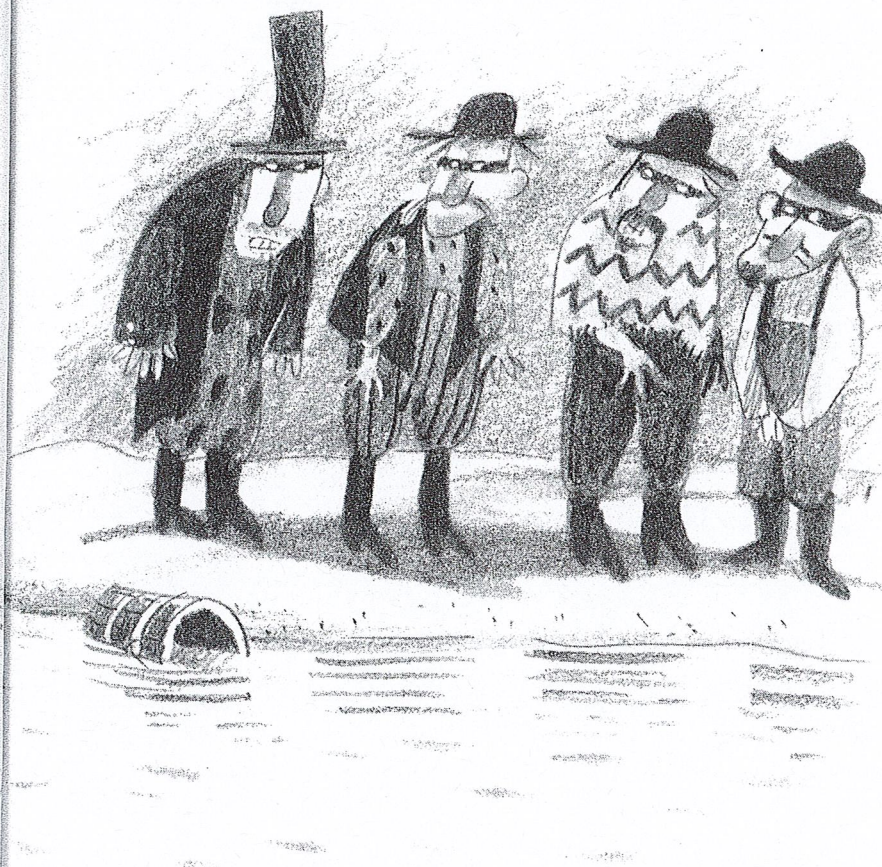


'He was almost there when he heard a splash.
He looked up to see the Bandit Wife had
slipped on a stone and had fallen into the water.



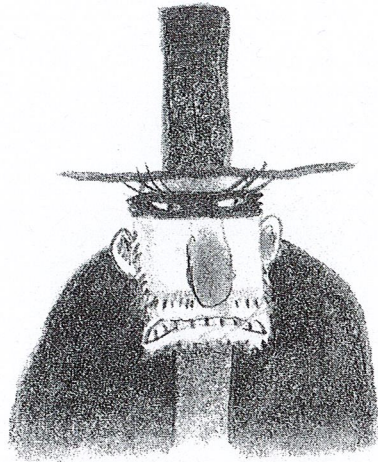
“Help!” she cried when she saw Tashi. “Help
me, I can’t swim!”

'Tashi hesitated. He could ignore her, and dive in and swim away. But he couldn't leave her to drown, even though she was a bandit. So he swam over to her and pulled her ashore.



'By now all the bandits were lined up along the bank and the Chief ran up to Tashi. "Thank you, Tashi. I take back all those hard words I said about you. Fate did send you to us after all."

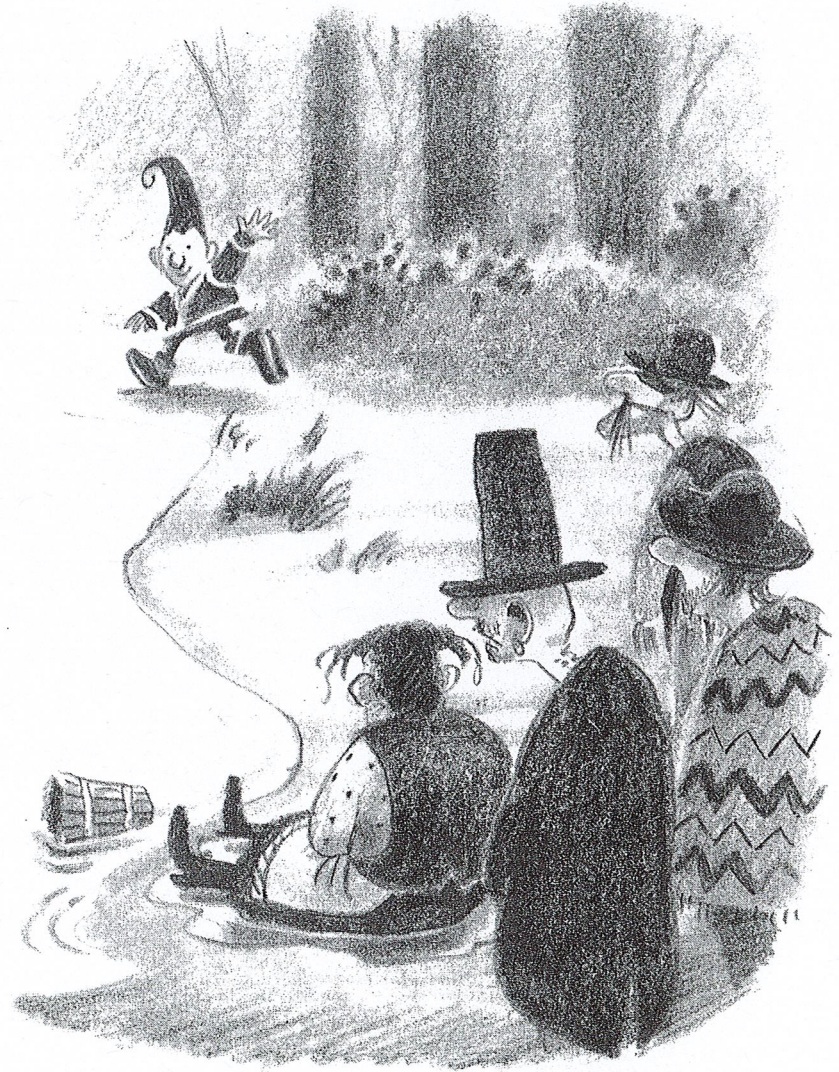
'Me Too groaned and gnashed his teeth.



“Brother,” said the Bandit Chief, “you can see Tashi safely home.”



“Oh no, thanks,” said Tashi quickly, “I know the way,” and he nipped off up the bank of the river, quicker than the wind.’



'So,' said Dad sadly, 'that's the end of the story and Tashi arrived safely back at his village.'



'Wrong!' said Jack. 'He did arrive back at the village and there were great celebrations. But at the end of the night, when everyone was going sleepily to bed, Third Uncle noticed that a ghost-light was shining in the forest.'



'And that's another Tashi story, I'll bet!'
cried Dad.

'Right!' said Jack. 'But we'll save it for dinner
when Mum gets home.'

