

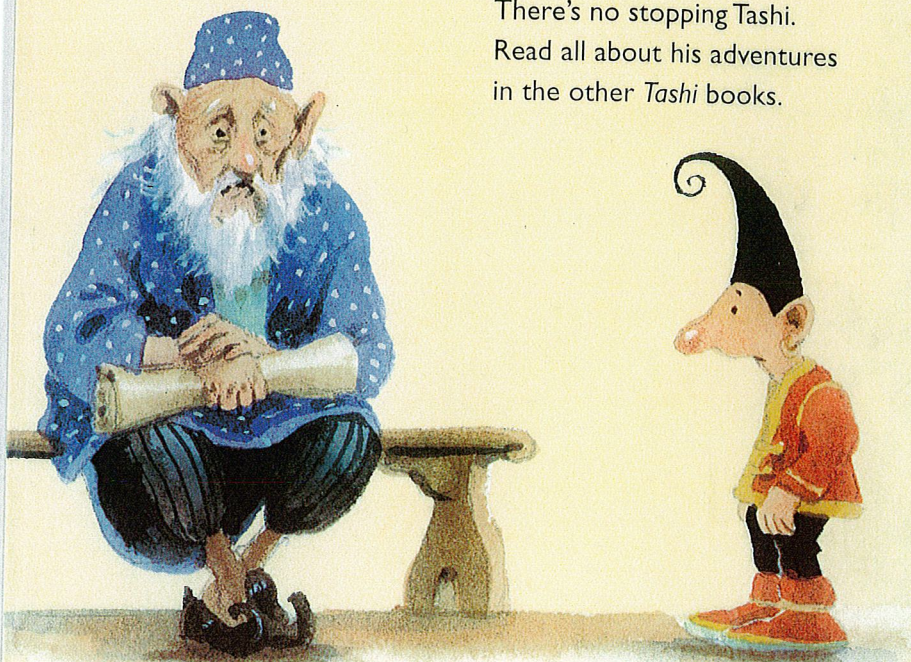
Tashi

and the
Dancing
Shoes

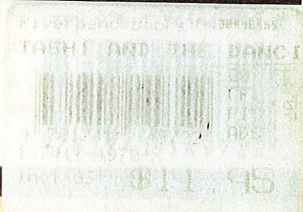
*"The crowd gasped in amazement.
"Look at those shoes!
Look at him fly!"*

Jack's Uncle Joe loves to tell stories, and so does Tashi – like the one about the magic shoes and Uncle Tiki Pu's sneaky plan...and what Tashi did when the fortune teller, Luk Ahed, said that his tenth birthday would be his last.

There's no stopping Tashi.
Read all about his adventures
in the other *Tashi* books.



ALLEN & UNWIN



Cover design by Sandra Nobes
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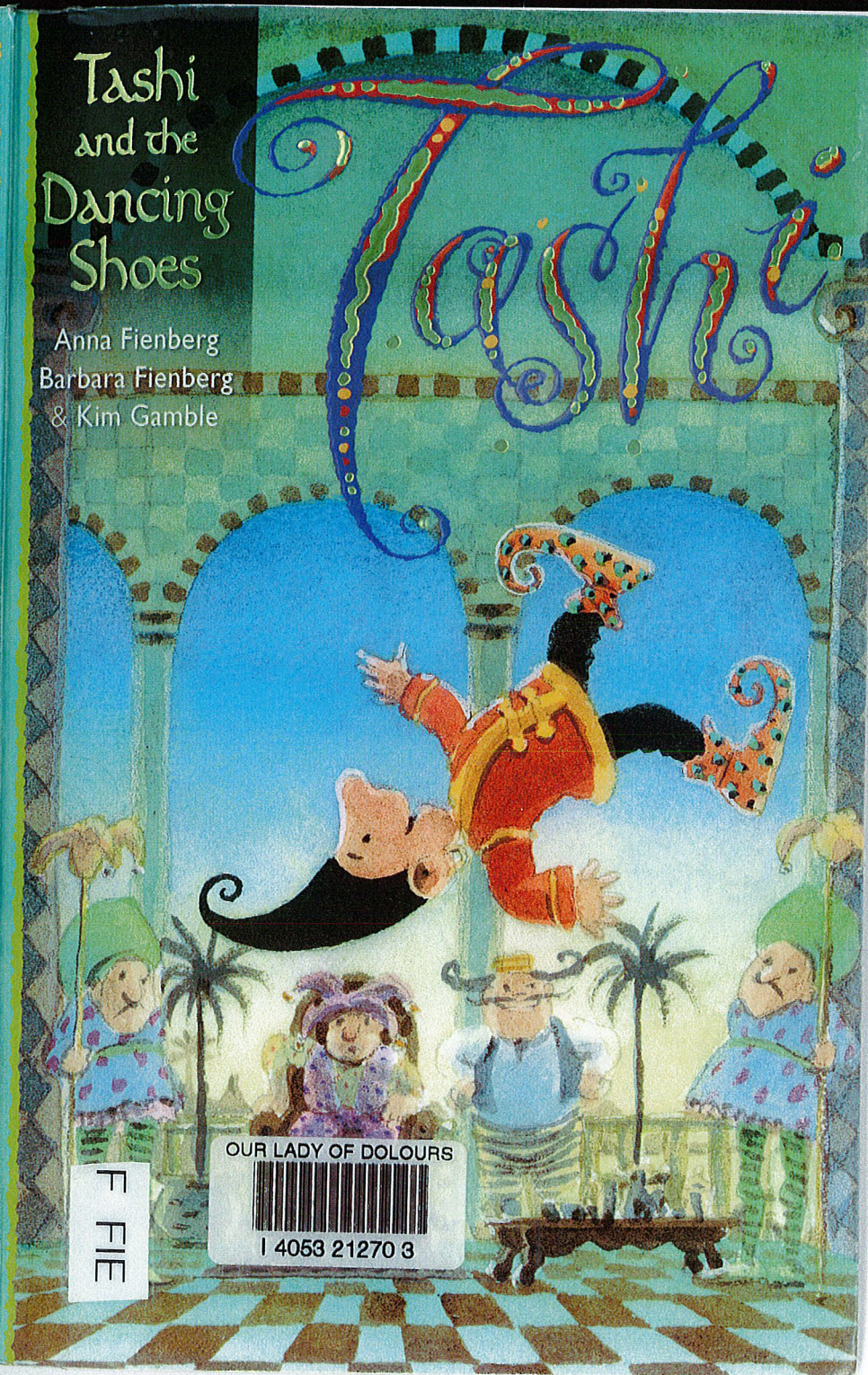
FICTION

Tashi and the Dancing Shoes

Anna Fienberg
Barbara Fienberg
& Kim Gamble

TASHI and the DANCING SHOES Anna Fienberg • Barbara Fienberg • Kim Gamble

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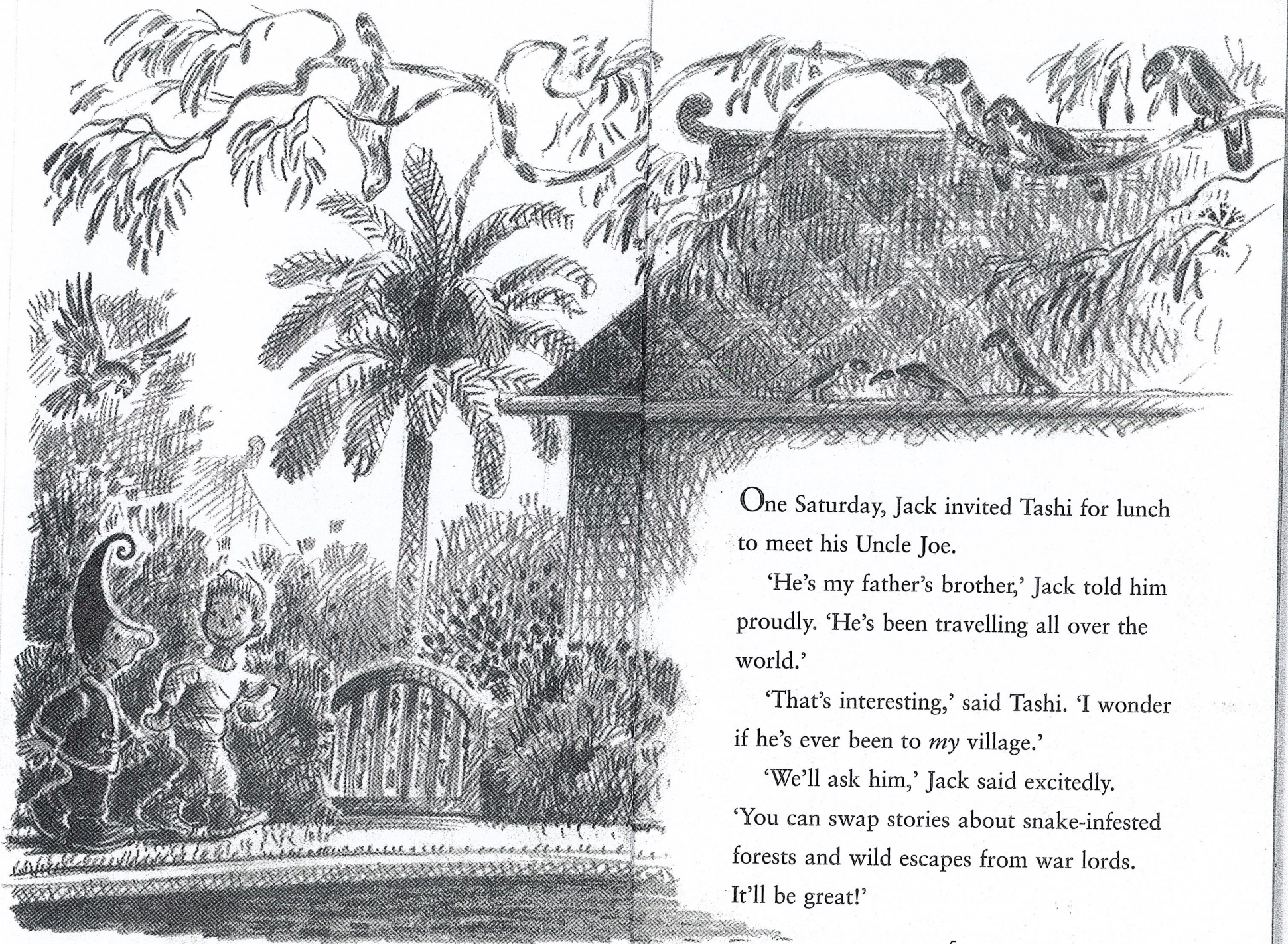


OUR LADY OF DOLOURS



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One Saturday, Jack invited Tashi for lunch to meet his Uncle Joe.

‘He’s my father’s brother,’ Jack told him proudly. ‘He’s been travelling all over the world.’

‘That’s interesting,’ said Tashi. ‘I wonder if he’s ever been to *my* village.’

‘We’ll ask him,’ Jack said excitedly. ‘You can swap stories about snake-infested forests and wild escapes from war lords. It’ll be great!’

Tashi and Joe did have a lot to talk about. They talked all through the soup, well into the beef with noodles, pausing only when the apple cake was served.

'It's very good to meet an uncle of yours, Jack,' said Tashi, taking a bite of his cake. 'Have you got any more?'

'There's some in the kitchen,' said Mum, hopping up.



'He meant *uncles*, Mum,' laughed Jack. 'You know, if we asked all *yours* to lunch, Tashi, we'd have to hire the town hall!'



Tashi nodded. 'It's true. But I'll tell you something. No matter if you have forty uncles and fifty-six aunts and nine hundred and two cousins, all of them are precious.' He sighed. 'Take Lotus Blossom, for example.'

'Who's that?' asked Dad, scratching his head. 'An uncle?'

Tashi scooped up the last of his cake. 'No, Lotus Blossom is my cousin. We used to play chasings near the river in summer. *Wah*, was she a fast runner! Nearly quicker than *me*! She'd go streaking off on her own then hide in the tiniest, most impossible places. I'd take ages to find her.'

Tashi finished up his cake and pushed back his chair. 'So when they told me Lotus Blossom had disappeared, I wasn't too worried. At first, that is.'



Uncle Joe leaned forward. 'Disappeared, eh?' He nodded knowingly. 'What was it? Bandits, war lords, *kidnappers*?'

Dad winked at Jack. 'Here we go!' he whispered, bouncing on his chair.

'Well, it was like this,' began Tashi. 'One afternoon, my mother and I had just come back from a visit to Wise-as-an-Owl, when there was a furious knocking at the door and Lotus Blossom's grandmother, Wang Mah, stumbled in. Her face was wet with tears and strands of hair from her bun were plastered across her cheeks.'

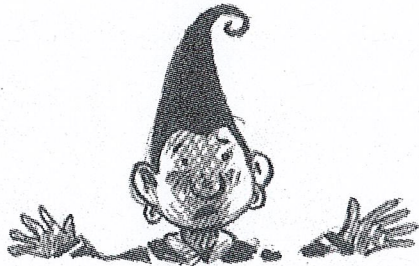


"'I've lost her!'" Wang Mah burst out. "One minute my dear little Lotus Blossom was playing in the courtyard right next to me – the *next*, she was gone!" She wrung her hands. "Oh, what will happen when night falls?"

'My mother sat her down on a chair.

"I was just painting my screen," Wang Mah went on. "You know, the one with the Red Whiskered Dragon? Well, I couldn't get the green right on the scales - "

"Where did you look for her?"
I interrupted.



'Wang Mah threw up her hands.

"Oh, everywhere! The fields, the cemetery - I've told the whole village, practically. Everyone's out looking, but no one can find her. Oh, my little one, where could she be?"

'Well, I knew we wouldn't find her sitting there in the house worrying, so I told my mother that I was going to join the search party and that I would be back later.

"Oh, thank you, Tashi," cried Wang Mah. "If anyone can find her, you will, I know."

'I wasn't so sure, but I crossed my fingers and gave her the sign of the dragon for luck. But as I walked towards the village square, a cold fear was settling in my stomach. Whenever Grandmother was painting one of her screens, she didn't hear or see anything else for hours. Lotus Blossom might have been missing since dawn. So I decided to go at once to the village fortune teller.'



Uncle Joe nodded wisely. 'I went to one last year, when I was back in the tropics. Did I ever tell you about the time - '



'Yes,' said Dad quickly.

'So, Tashi,' said Mum, 'did the fortune teller have any news?'

'Well, it was like this. Luk Ahed had done horoscope charts for everyone in our village, so I thought he might give us a clue about Lotus Blossom. Luk Ahed is very good at telling the future, but not so brilliant at keeping things tidy. He rummaged through great piles of sacred books and maps of the stars and bamboo sticks. But he couldn't find her horoscope anywhere.



"'I'll start on a new one right away,'" he promised. Then he grunted with surprise. He had *my* chart in his hand.

"'Just look at this,'" he marvelled. "I see a great adventure awaiting you, Tashi, just as soon as you find a very special pair of red shoes with green glass peacocks embroidered on them."

'I walked out of there very thoughtfully, I can tell you. I could almost remember seeing such a pair of shoes, but where? As I turned the corner into the village I heard the familiar rat-a-tat-tat coming from the shoemaker's shop.

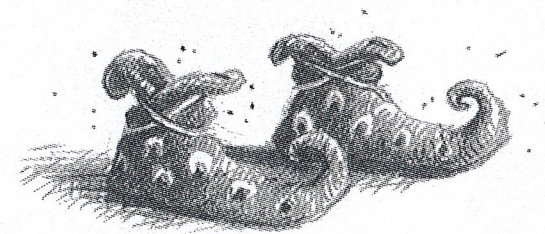


“Hello, Tashi,” Not Yet called from his open door. Our cobbler was called Not Yet because no matter how long people left their shoes with him, when they returned to see if they were ready, he always said, “Not yet. Come back later.”

'Well, I stopped right there on the doorstep. Of course, *that's* where I'd seen those strange shoes. I ran into the shop and asked Not Yet if he still had them.

“I think so,” said Not Yet. “I know the ones you mean. They were here when I took over this shop from my father years ago.” He poked around at the back of the shelves and finally fished out a dusty pair of shoes. He wiped them clean with his sleeve.

“The shoes were just as I remembered. They were red satin and glowed in the dingy room. I took some coins from my pocket and asked, “Could I take them now?”



‘Not Yet look at the worn soles and heels and clicked his tongue. “Not yet,” he said. “Come back later.”

‘So I went down to the river for a while and looked along the banks and in our usual hiding places for any sign of Lotus Blossom. After an hour, without a speck of dragon luck, I returned to the shop.

“Be careful with them, Tashi,” Not Yet said as he handed the shoes to me. “Be *very* careful.” And he looked at me in a worried way.



‘Clutching them tightly to my chest, I ran as fast as I could to the edge of the village. The shoes glowed like small twin sunsets in my hand. When I stopped and put them on, my feet began to grow hot and tingle. I gave a little hop. At least I meant to give a little hop, but instead it was a great whopping *leap*, followed by another and another, even higher. I couldn’t help laughing, it felt so strange. I ran a few steps, but each step was a huge bound. In a few seconds I had crossed the fields and was down by the river again.

