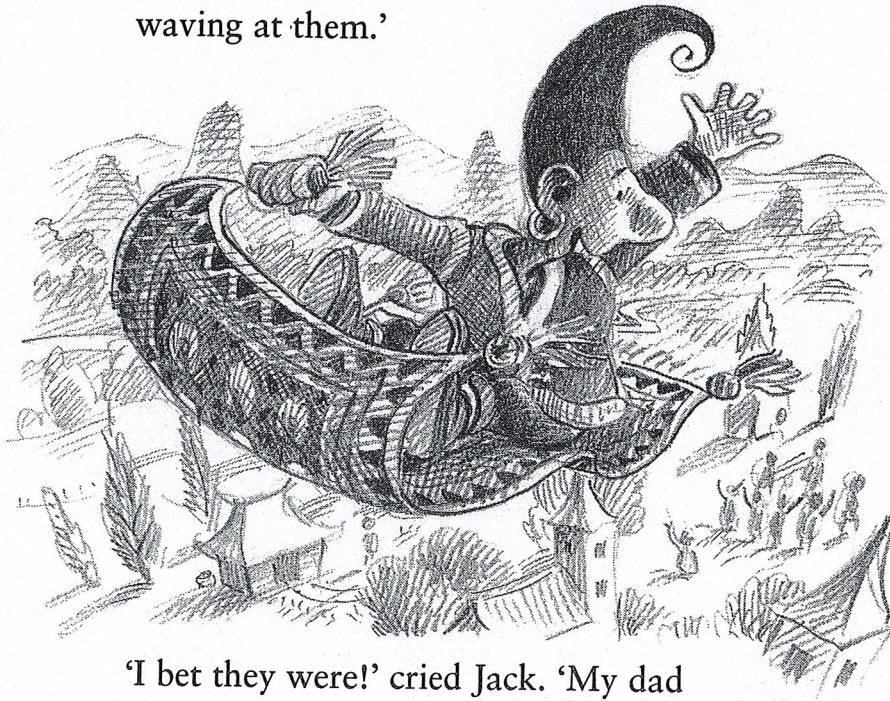
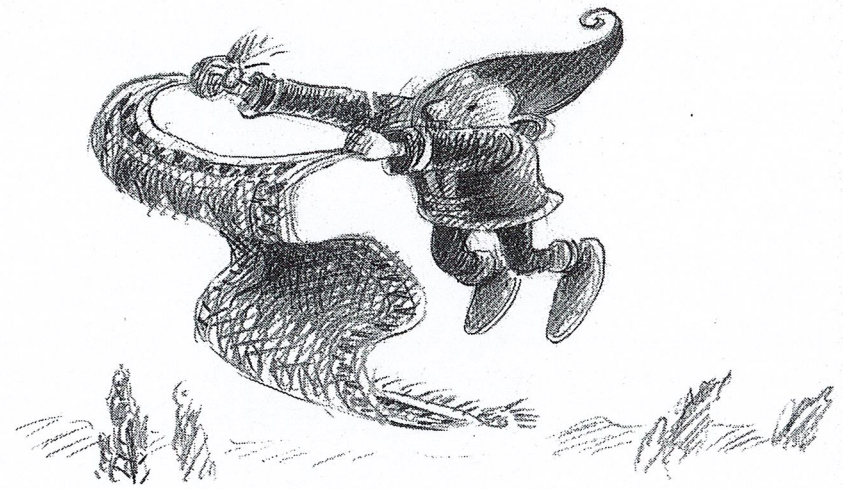


‘The carpet trembled as I climbed on. The genie showed me how to tug at the corners to steer it. And then we were off, the carpet and I, out of the shed, over the house and across the village square. All the people were amazed, as they looked up and saw me waving at them.’



‘I bet they were!’ cried Jack. ‘My dad would have fainted with shock. So, did you get to see Africa? Or Spain?’



‘No,’ Tashi frowned. ‘It was like this. I had just turned in the direction of Africa, in fact, when the carpet suddenly dipped and bucked like a wild horse. My knees slipped right to the edge! I threw myself face down on the carpet, grabbing hold of the fringe.’

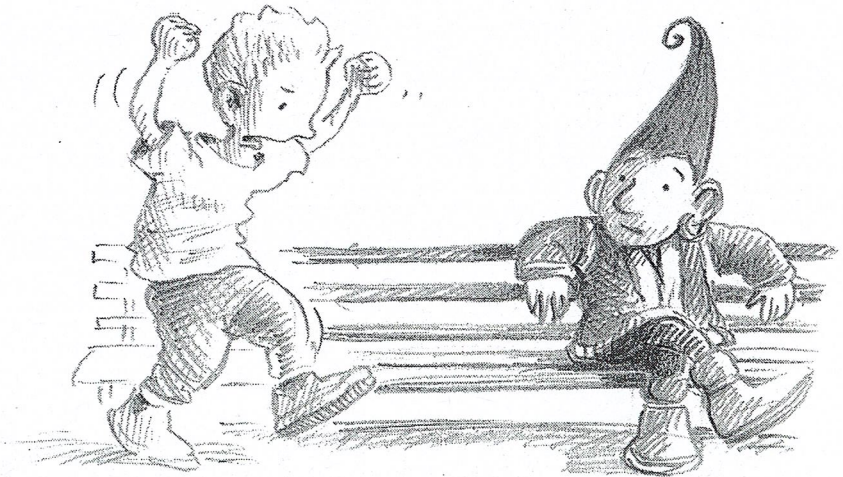


'The carpet heaved up and down, and side to side, trying to throw me off. A hundred times it kicked me in the belly, but I clung on. The world was swirling around me like soup in a pot, and then I saw we were heading straight for the willow tree beside my house. I came crashing down through the branches. When I got my breath back, I marched off to find the genie.

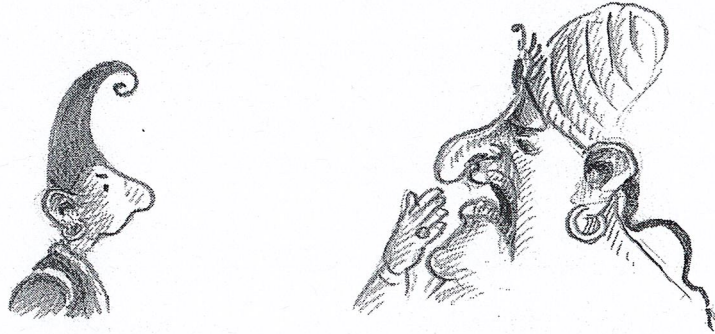


“Well, you certainly aren’t very good at your job, are you?” I scolded as I brushed the leaves from my hair.’

‘Is that all you could say?’ yelled Jack. ‘I would have called him a fumble-bumble beetle-brain at the very least.’



‘Yes, but I still wanted my third wish,’ Tashi sighed. ‘Oh, if only I’d known. Well, the genie just yawned at me and said, “What is your third—and last—wish, master?”’



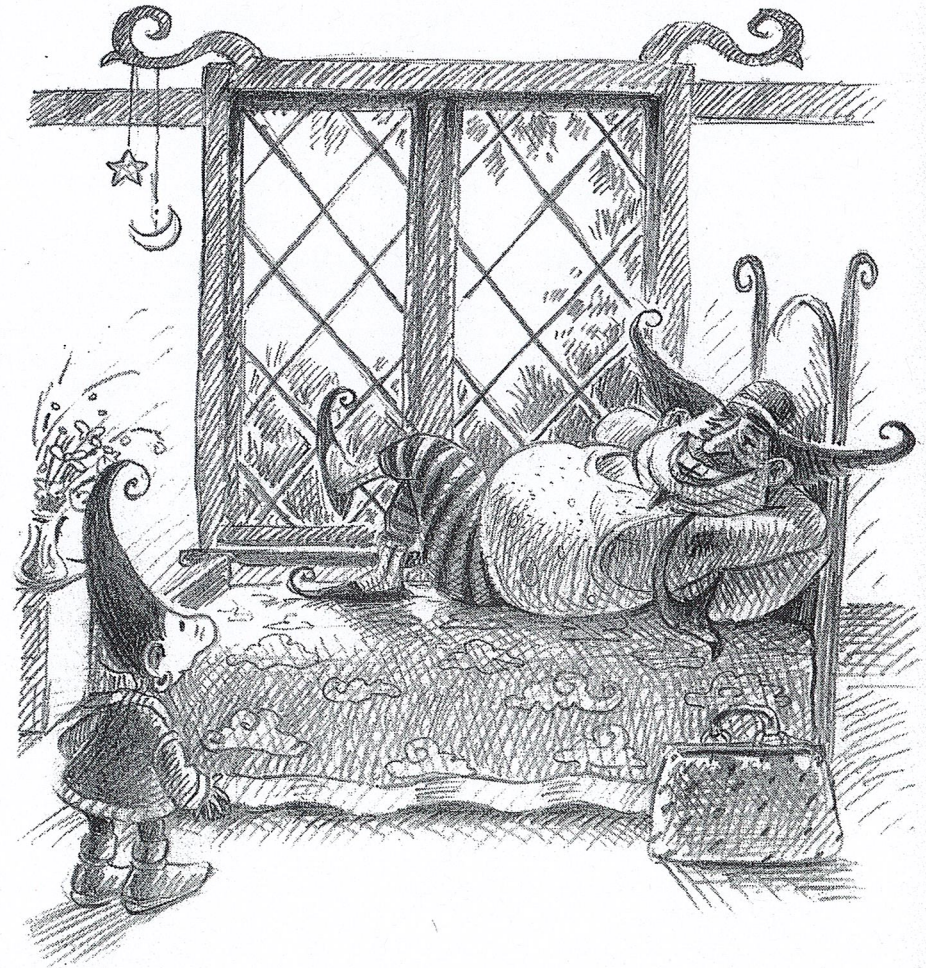
‘I thought carefully. One thing I had often longed for was to meet Uncle Tiki Pu, my father’s Younger Brother. He had run away to the city while he was still a boy, but my father had told me stories of his pranks and jokes.



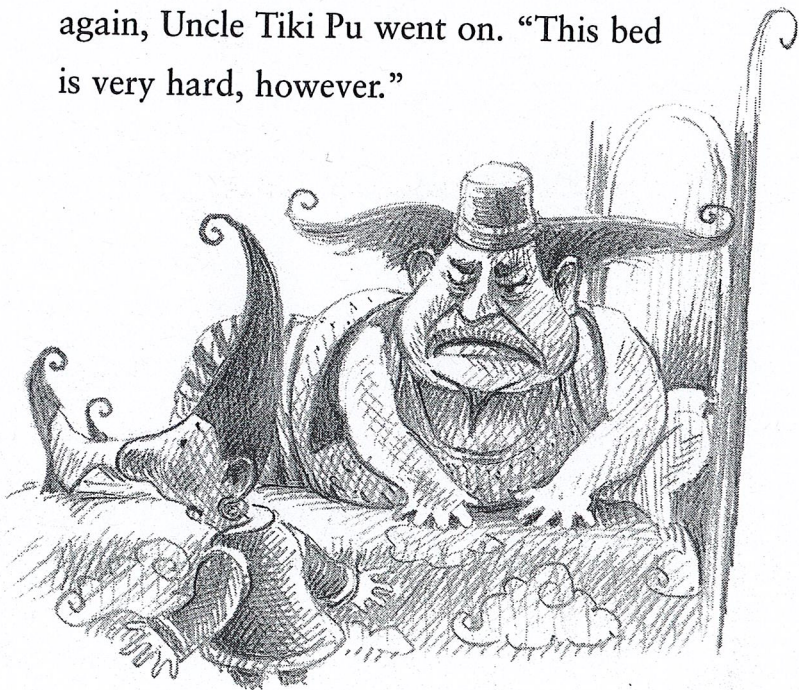
“Yes, that’s it!” I said.

“I would like to meet my Uncle Tiki Pu.”

‘It was suddenly very quiet in the shed. The genie rose up and clicked his fingers. Nothing happened. “You will find him in your bedroom,” said the genie, and slithered back into his bowl. I ran to my bedroom and there was my uncle, stretched out on my bed.

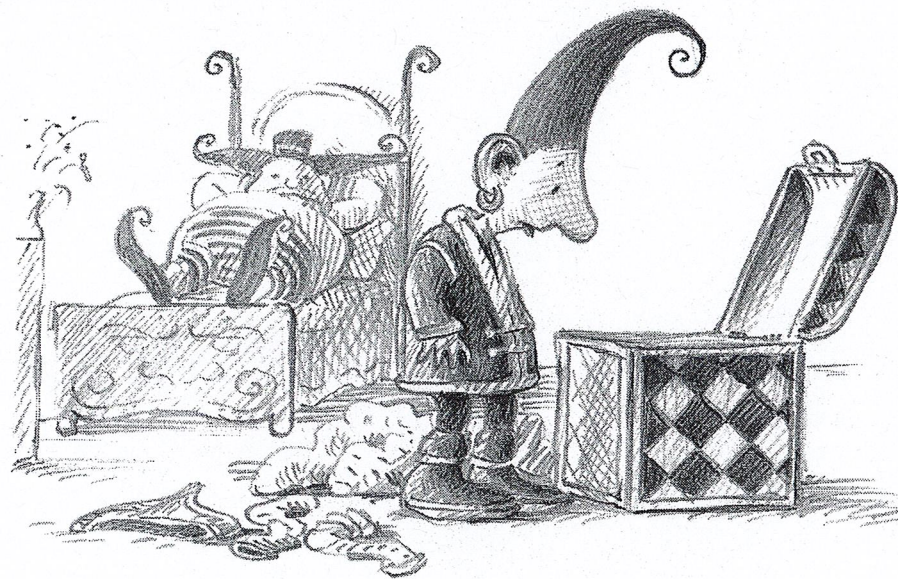


“Ah, Tashi,” he said, “it’s about time someone came to find me. My life has been very hard in the city.” Before I could say that I was sorry to hear it, and how pleased the family would be to have him back home again, Uncle Tiki Pu went on. “This bed is very hard, however.”



‘I looked around the room. “Where will I sleep, Uncle?”

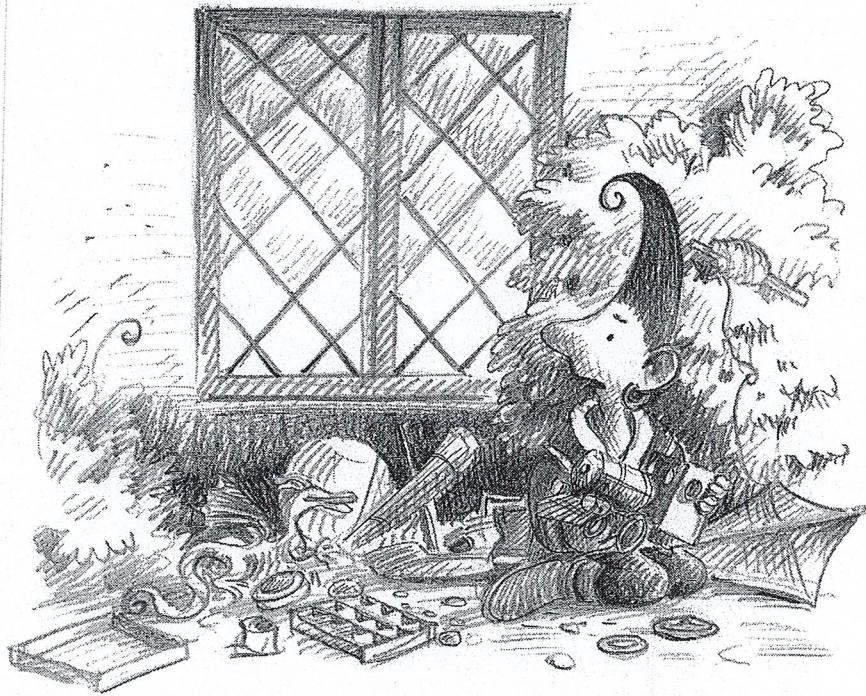
“Who knows?” he answered in a bored voice. “Get me something to eat, Tashi, a little roast duck and ginger will do. And tell your mother when she comes home that these clothes need washing.”



‘He pointed to a pile of his clothes beside my toy box. The lid was open and inside my box were jars of hair oil and tins of tobacco instead of my train set and kite and rock collection.

“Where are my things?” I cried.

“Oh, I threw them out the window,” he told me. “How else could I make room for my belongings?”



I ran outside and gathered up my toys. Two wheels had fallen off my little red train.

“What about *my* belongings?” I called through the window.



“Don’t worry about them,” replied Uncle Tiki Pu. “You won’t be living here much longer. This house is too small for all of us now that I’ve come back. You can have my old job in the city, Tashi. But mind you take a rug to sleep on because they don’t give you any bedding there, and the stony ground is crawling with giant spiders that bite. See, I’ve got the wounds to prove it.”

‘And he lifted his holey old singlet to show big red lumps all over his tummy, like cherry tomatoes.’



“Do they give you food in the city?” I could hardly bear to ask.

“No, there’s never enough, so you have to hunt for it. That’s where the spiders come in handy. If you squish them first, they’re not bad in a fritter. Oh, and watch out for alligators—they swim in the drains. Well, goodbye and good luck! You’ll need it, ha ha!” And he laughed a wicked laugh.’

Tashi stopped for a moment, because he couldn’t help shivering at the terrible memory of his uncle, and also because Jack was jumping up and down on his seat in outrage. The woman who had said ‘What a magical day!’ was staring.

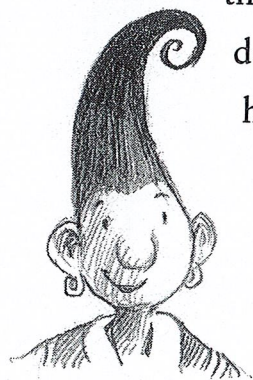


‘I know,’ said Tashi. ‘I know, I couldn’t believe it either, that a member of my family could be so evil. My head was pounding, and I ran straight to see the genie.’

‘How could *he* help, that old *beetle-brain*?’



'Well,' said Tashi. 'It was like this. I picked up his bowl and tried to wake the genie again. I shook him and begged him to get rid of Uncle Tiki Pu, but he just closed his eyes tightly and said, "Go away, Tashi. You've had your three wishes and that's that." Suddenly I put the bowl



down and smiled. I had just had a cunning idea. I remembered another thing Grandmother always told me about genies.

'I hurried back to my room and said to Uncle Tiki Pu, "You are quite right. This house is very small and poky. How would you like to live in a palace instead?"



'Uncle Tiki Pu sat up with a bounce. "Just what I've always wanted!" he cried. "How did you *know*?"

"Come with me," I told him, "and I will show you how to do it."

I opened the door of the shed and led him to the genie's bowl. Uncle let out a howl of joy when he saw what was curled up inside, but when the genie rose into the air, his eyes weren't sleepy any more. They were bright and sly.



"I am your new master, so listen carefully, Genie," Uncle Tiki Pu began. "For my first wish—"



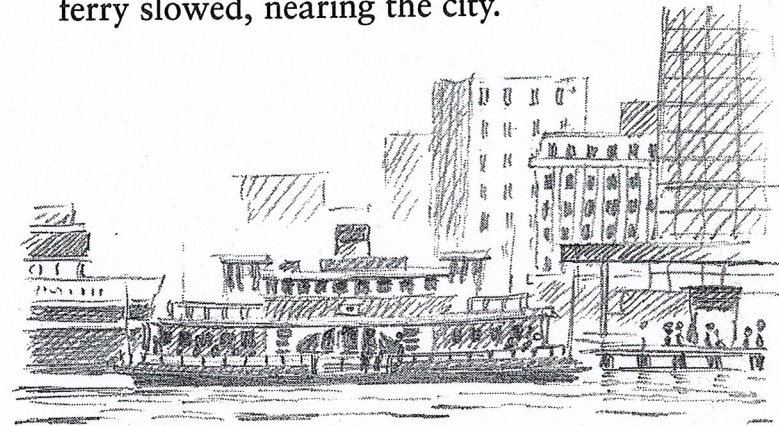
The genie interrupted him. "There will be no wishes for you, my friend. You really should have been more careful. Don't you know that every seventh time a genie is disturbed, *he* becomes the master, and the one who wakes him must be the slave?" He glided over and arranged himself on Uncle Tiki Pu's shoulders. "Take me to the city," he commanded, "and be quick about it."





“Uncle Tiki Pu’s face was bulging with rage and his knees sagged, but he staggered out of the shed with his load. As he sailed past, the genie turned and gave me a big wink. “Look out for alligators!” I called.’

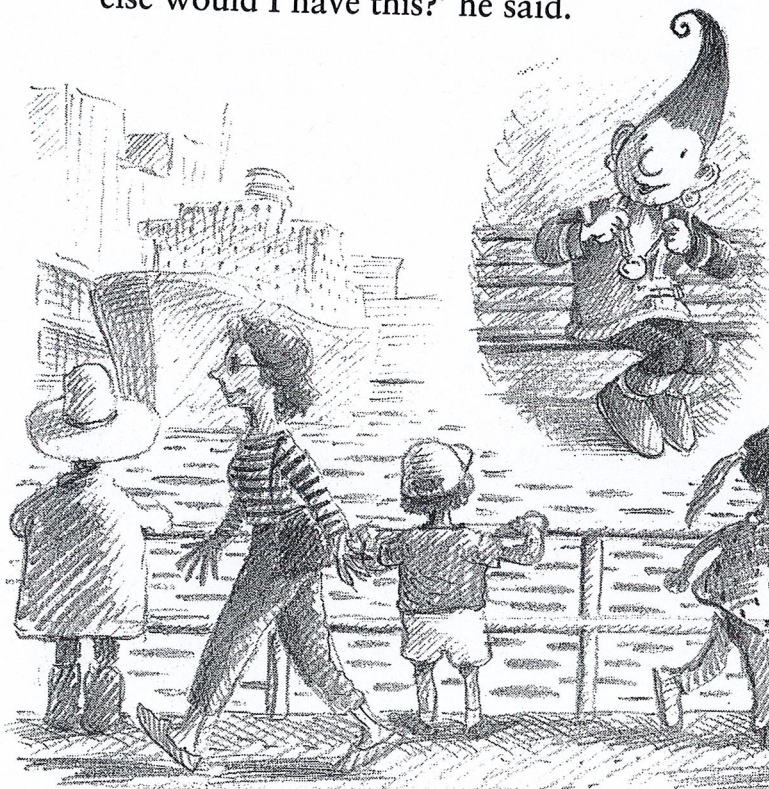
Jack was quiet for a moment, thinking. He watched people stand up and stretch as the ferry slowed, nearing the city.



‘I hope nothing with teeth lives in *our* drains,’ he said. ‘Well, Tashi, that’s amazing! Did you really fly on a magic carpet?’



For an answer, Tashi opened the top buttons of his jacket, showing Jack the gold coin hanging on a cord around his neck. 'How else would I have this?' he said.



And the two boys stepped off the ferry and strolled over to the ice-cream stand at the end of the wharf.

