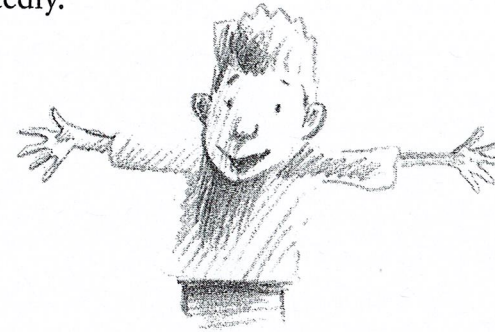


‘Well, while I was staring at her she said in a huge voice, “Who are you?”

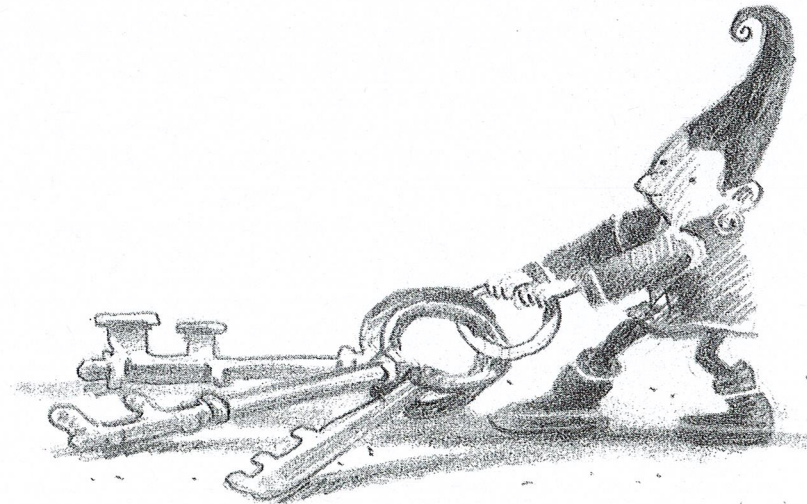
‘So I told her that I was Tashi and what had happened and that I had come to persuade Chintu not to kill me. She gave a laugh like thunder and said, “You won’t change his mind easily, it sets like concrete. I should know, he is my husband! He tricked me into this cage and locked me up, all because we had an argument about the best way to make dumplings. He likes to grind bones for them, but I say flour is much better. Now Tashi, you need me to help you.”’



‘And she needed you to help *her!*’ Jack said excitedly.

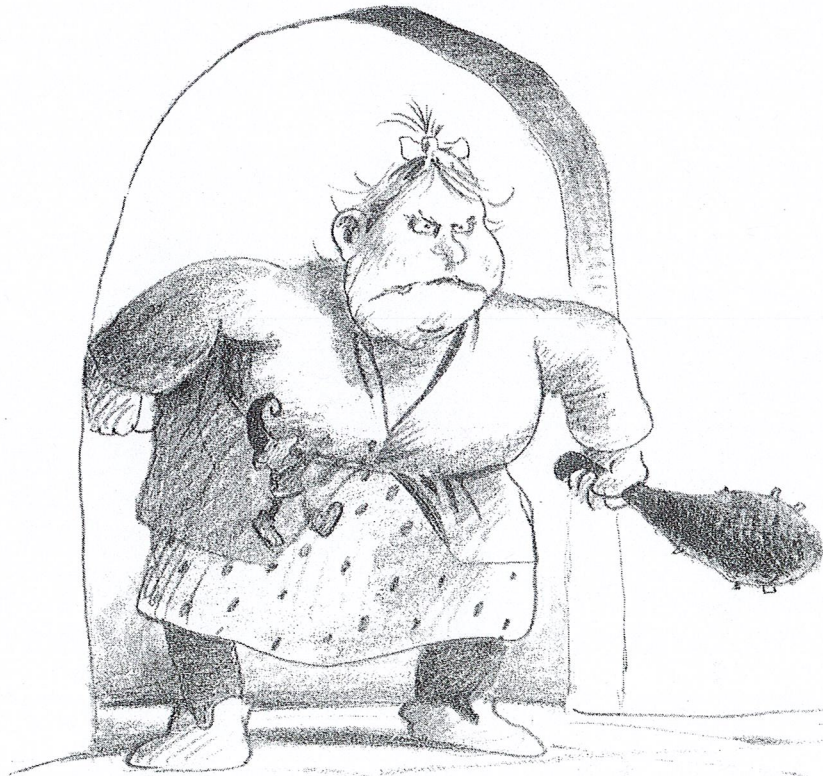


‘Right,’ said Tashi. ‘So when she pointed to the keys over on a stool, I reached up and dragged them over to her. Mrs Chintu snatched them up and turned one in the lock. “Now I’ll show that lumbering worms-for-brains Chintu who is the cleverer of us two!”’





'As she walked past, I scrambled up her skirts and hung on to her belt. She picked up a mighty club that was standing by the door and then she tip-toed to some stairs that led up and up through the middle of the castle.



'We came to a vast hall and there he was, sitting on a bench like a mountain bent in the middle. He was staring into the fire, bellowing a horrible song:

*"Fee fie fo foy,  
Tomorrow I'll go and get that boy,  
No matter if he's dead or jumping  
I'll grind his bones to make my dumpling."*





'Mrs Chintu crept up behind him, grabbed his tufty hair in one hand and held up the club with the other. I slid down her back to the floor.



“Chintu, you pig-headed grump of a husband, I can escape from your cages, *and* I make the best dumplings. Will you admit now that I am more than a match for you?”

'The giant rolled his great eyes and caught sight of me. “Who is that?” he roared.



“That is the boy who chops our wood.” And Mrs Chintu winked at me. “Now, let the boy decide who makes the best dumplings.” She let go of Chintu’s hair and gave me a hard look. “Very well,” Chintu said, and he rubbed his huge hands together.



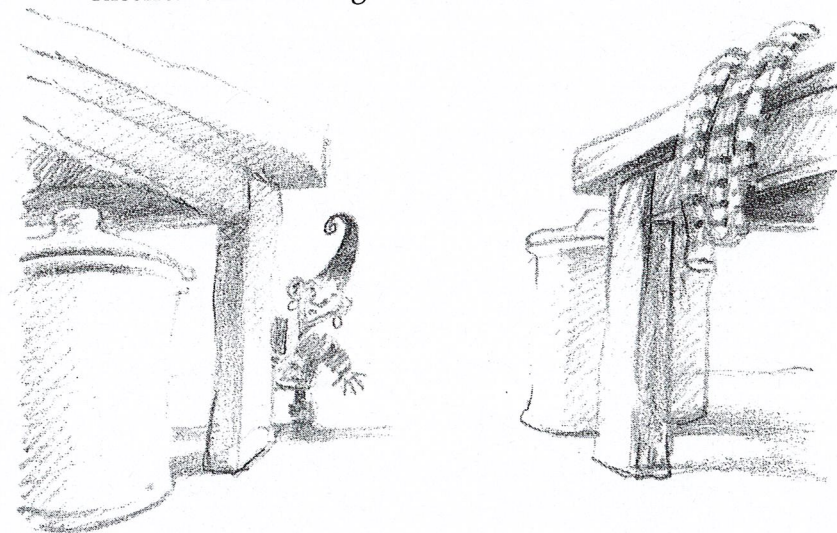
'Later, they put some sacks down on the floor for me to sleep on. As he was going to bed, Chintu whispered—it was like a thunderclap in my ear—"If you decide that *her* dumplings are better, your bones will make my next batch."



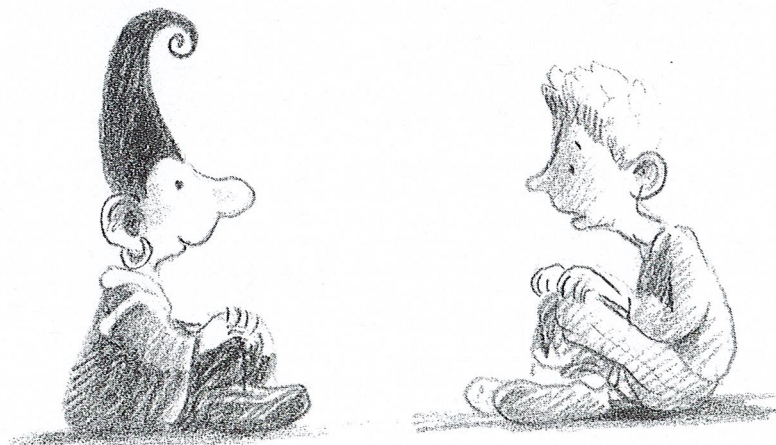
And as his wife went by, she said, "If you decide that *his* dumplings are better, I'll chop you up for my next pot of soup."



'All night I walked up and down the stone floor, thinking what to do. And then I had one of my cunning ideas. I crept downstairs to the kitchen and had a good look about.'

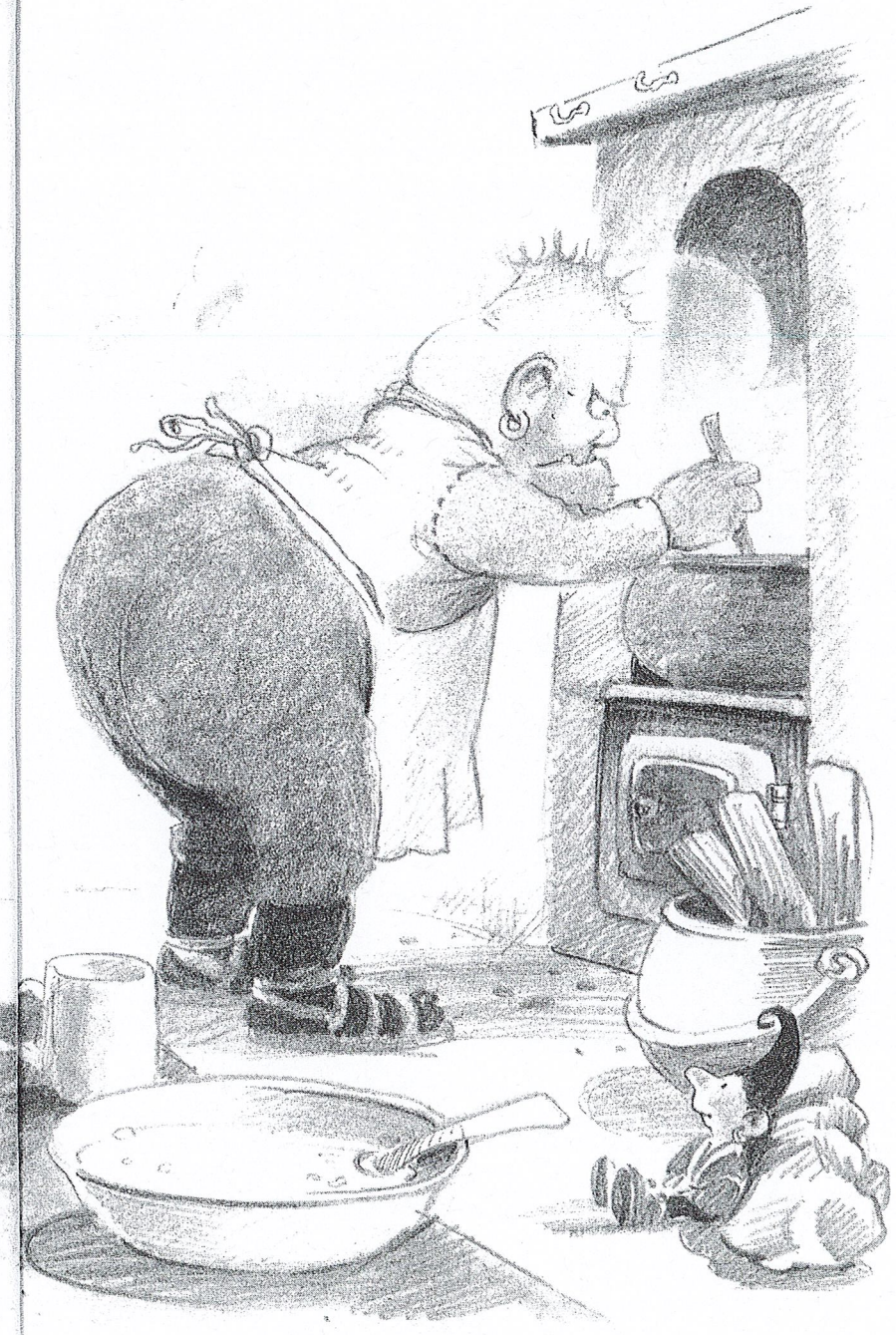


'What were you looking for, Tashi?' asked Jack.



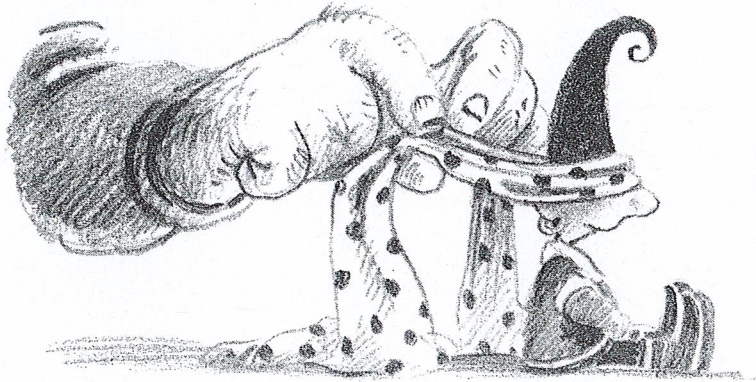


'Well,' said Tashi, 'it was like this. The next morning Mrs Chintu boiled her dumplings and then Chintu boiled his. When the dumplings were cooked they both spooned up one each, as big as footballs.'

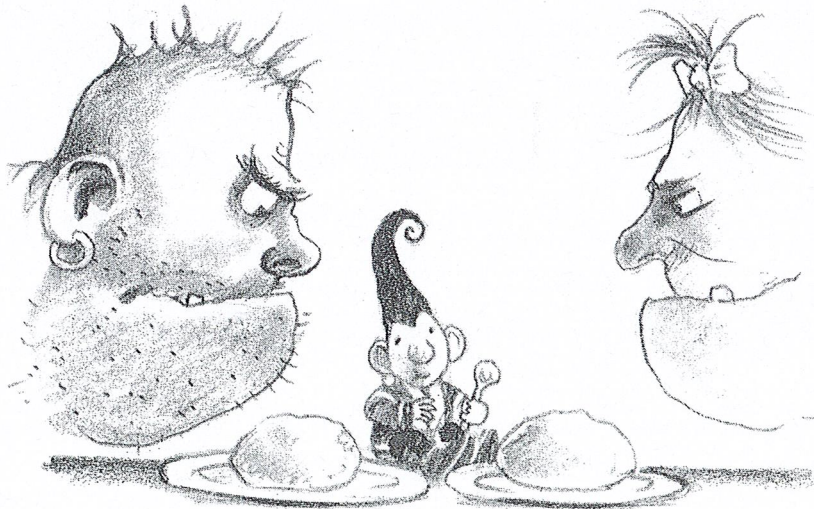




“We must put a blindfold on the boy so he doesn’t know which dumpling he is eating,” said Mrs Chintu, and her husband tied a handkerchief over my eyes.



‘I took a bite of one dumpling and swallowed it slowly. Then I tried the other. They watched me fiercely.



‘When I had finished I said, “These are the best dumplings I ever tasted, and they are exactly the same.”

“No they’re not!” thundered Chintu.



“Taste them yourself and see,” I said.



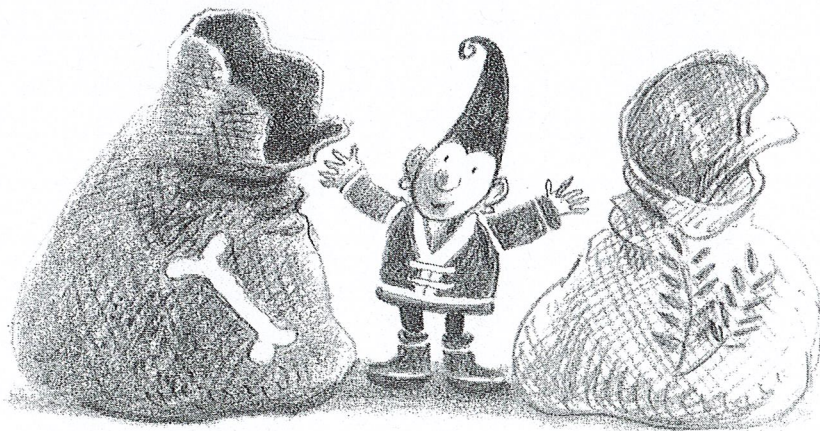


“So they did and they were very surprised.

“The boy is right. They *are* the same,” said Mrs Chintu. “And they are the best dumplings I ever tasted.”



“So then I told them, “That’s because I went downstairs to the kitchen last night and I mixed the ground bones and the flour together. That’s what makes the best dumplings—bones *and* flour.”



““What a clever Tashi,” cried Mrs Chintu.



““Oho! So that’s who you are,” bellowed Chintu, and he scooped me up in his great red hands. “I promised my friend the dragon that I would serve you up to him in a tasty fritter the next time he came to breakfast.”



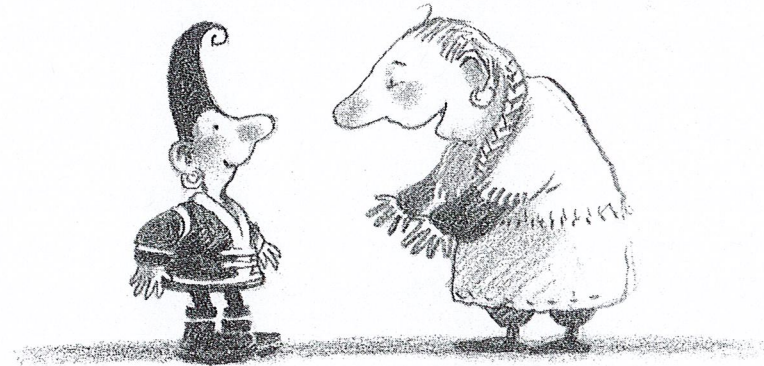


“Maybe so,” said his wife, “but just try another dumpling first.”

‘The giant did, and when he had finished he thought for a minute. It was the longest minute of my life. Then the giant sighed and licked his lips. “Dragon can have a plate of these dumplings instead,” he said. “They are exquisite. Be off with you now, Tashi.”’

‘And so this time I walked out the great front door, as bold as you please. When I returned to the village they were still arguing about whether to give me up to Chintu or to let me run away. “I don’t have to do either!” I cried, and I told them what had happened.

“What a clever Tashi!” cried Grandmother.’



‘So that’s the end of the story,’ said Jack sadly.

‘And everyone was safe and happy again.’



‘Yes,’ said Tashi, ‘that is, until the bandits arrived.’