

Breakfast on a Dragon's Tail

and other Book Bites



Martin Springett







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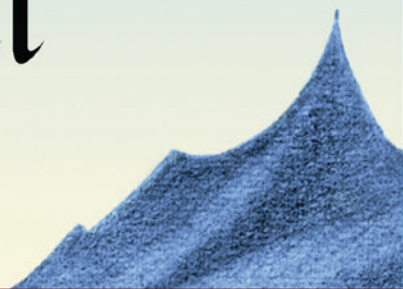
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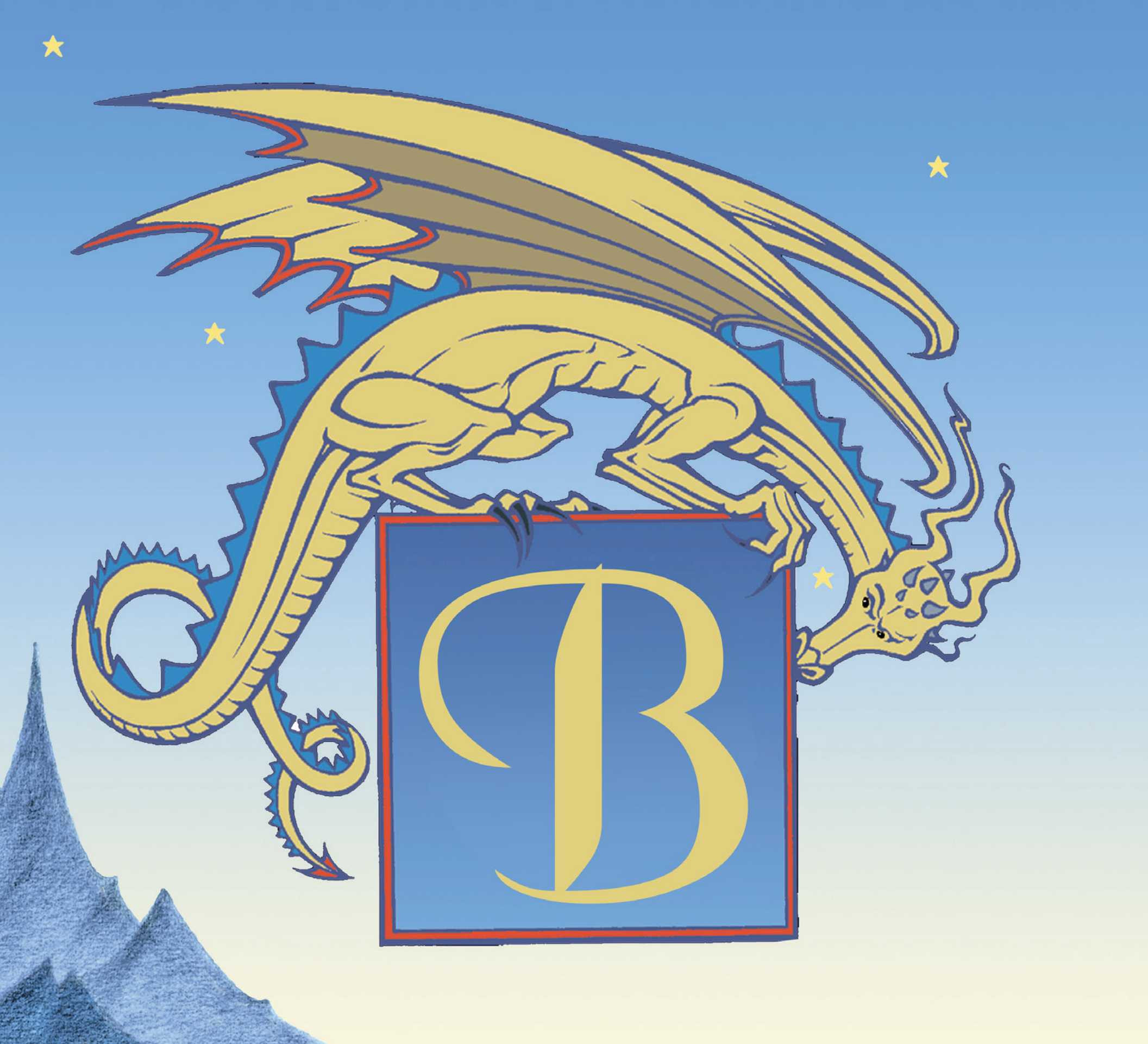


Martin Springett



Fitzhenry & Whiteside





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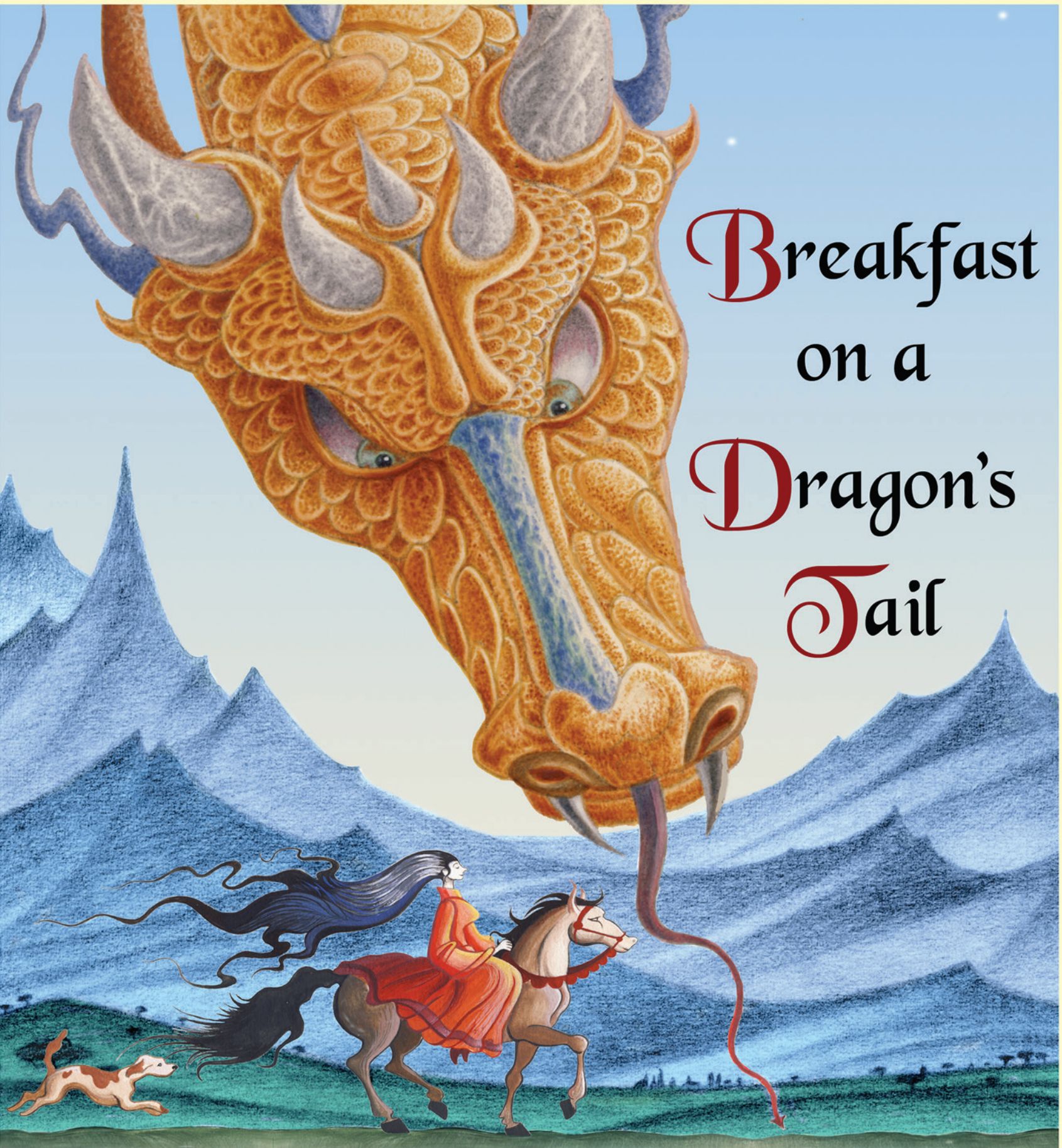
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Breakfast
on a
Dragon's
Tail



Breakfast on a Dragon's Tail



On a bright summer morning, Princess Miranda decided to go riding. She told her groom, Matthew, to saddle up Thistle, her favourite horse, and call for Pip, her hunting hound.

“I wouldn’t go riding today if I were you, my lady,” said Matthew. “There be rumours about that Golmogog, the Great Golden Dragon, has returned!”

“Pish posh!” said Miranda. “I don’t care about a silly old dragon.”

“He may be old, but he isn’t silly—and he’s big! Why you and that horse of yours could disappear up his left nostril.”

“I don’t care,” said Miranda. “I will have my ride—and no dragon, big or small, is going to stop me!”

(Phew! Either Miranada is very brave or very silly.
What do you think happens next?)



Septimus Sneeze & The Ghosts of Gargantua



SEPTIMUS SNEEZE & THE GHOSTS OF GARGANTUA

Septimus Sneeze adored his mother. Septimus Sneeze was convinced that his mother was the most beautiful, most talented mom in the world! The trouble was, Septimus didn't know where in the world she was. An opera singer of great renown, Madame Cecelia Sneeze travelled constantly. After every marvellous performance, it was her habit to visit a desert, jungle, or some other exotic out-of-the-way place and go on what she called, "a little getaway, a little explore."

Her last message to Septimus and his dad was, "See you soon, boys. Don't worry—gone to Gargantua!"

Septimus had tried to find Gargantua on the big map that hung in his mom's rehearsal room, but it was nowhere to be found and it had been a month now since any word had come from his adored mom. Septimus knew he had to go on an "explore" of his own to find Gargantua and his mother!

Colin, his dachshund, was not keen on this idea and hid under the couch for three days. Septimus's dad was even less keen. "I'm an accountant, not an explorer! Your mother will turn up. She always does."

"But Dad, we have to find Mom! We just *have* to!" said Septimus.

"All right Sep, but what do you suggest?" said his dad.

"Grrrrrrowl," said Colin.

(Gosh! Where in golly is Gargantua, and how will Septimus, Colin, and his dad find Madame Cecelia Sneeze, the opera star?)

The Gloomy Spong & the Sparkly Girl



The Gloomy Spong & the Sparkly Girl *

Once, a long time ago, there lived the Gloomy Spong. The Spong sat and wondered—he wondered (mainly) what he should do next. He shifted this way; he shifted that way. He scratched his bushy eyebrows. He picked at his enormous claws. He licked his spiny tail. He ate a passing fly.

“Something must be done!” he roared. “I know, I shall ask the Harumpf. He is wise and knows all.”

The Gloomy Spong spread his leathery wings. He found the Harumpf sitting in a thorn bush eating thimble fruit. “What can be done?” cried the Spong.

“*Harumpf!*” said the Harumpf. “Why ask me? I’m stuck in a thorn bush and very busy. May I suggest a chat with the Egg?”

“I have never found my chats with the Egg to be very satisfying—a bit one-sided.”

“That is because you have never asked the *right* question,” said the Harumpf.

With a slow, mournful flap and snap, the Gloomy Spong took flight once more. He found the Egg in its usual spot (it didn’t get about much). The Gloomy Spong sat atop the Egg for some time and thought hard about his first question. But before he could ask the question, a girl in a sparkly dress wandered out of the forest. She twirled around once, pulled out a wand from her sparkly dress, and tapped the egg lightly. The egg jiggled.

“Who are you?” cried the Spong.

(Who is this Sparkly Girl? Will the Spong get an answer to his important question? What is the right question? And what do you think is happening to the Egg?)



SAFFRON & LICORICE



Saffron & Licorice

Every Sunday night, Saffron would have the same dream. She found herself walking down a long road with her dog, Licorice. Way at the end of the road, she saw her school. As she walked closer, she could see what looked like huge statues in front of the imposing building.

At this point in the dream, she wanted to run away, to be anywhere but here, because she knew who these statues were: bullies and teasers—kids who enjoyed making her cry. But somehow she could not turn away. She had to face them, just as she did every day at her school.

She did her best not to look at them as she walked by. Licorice, her best friend, always licked her hand to give her the courage she needed. The really frightening part of the dream was when the statues started to talk; first they made a grumbling, stony sort of sound, like gravel flowing down a metal chute. Then they began to shout and Saffron could make out words—words that were meant to wound.

Usually, these scary sounds would cause Saffron to wake up in a cold sweat. But this time, things suddenly changed.

For the first time in this recurring dream, Licorice barked at the statues. Startled, Saffron somehow found the courage to yell at the looming figures, “I’m not listening to you anymore! I’m not listening!”

Then the statues started to move and as they did so, large cracks appeared in their bodies and faces. Huge chunks fell off them as they moved menacingly towards Saffron and Licorice.

(How will Saffron tackle her bully dilemma in her dream? And will she ever be able confront the real bullies in school?)



The Dithering Ducks Of Deptford



The Dithering Ducks of Deptford

“Are we there yet? Are we there?”

“I recognise this tree—we passed it an hour ago.”

“This is not Deptford. This is most *definitely* not Deptford.”

“Never listen to a gnome! They are born naughty!”

“That cat was crafty too. Did you see the gleam in its eye? I think it had it in for us.”

“Oh no! A *dragon*—that’s all we need!”

“Dragons eat ducks. I am certain of it!”

“Well, I’m not taking directions from a dragon, even if he is cute.”

“What’s he holding up—a sign?”

“Oh, he’s one of those *clever* dragons. He expects us to *read*.”

“Maybe he’s showing off.”

“I think it’s a book—he’s written a book!”

“Never trust a clever dragon, especially one who’s written a book!”

“I could write a book.”

“Well, I wouldn’t read it. You and your ‘Here’s a nice gnome. He’ll know the way.’”

“Oh, and I suppose your ‘Cats are clever, let’s ask him!’ worked out any better?”

“We must stop dithering and ask this dragon if he knows the way to Deptford.”

“I think we are okay. This is a *fruit-eating* dragon, and I happen to know that *fruit-eating* dragons are friendly.”

“Oh, really?”

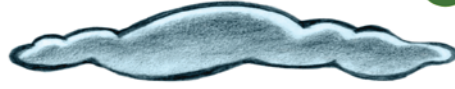
(Will this lot *ever* stop talking? Will the dragon help them get home to Deptford?)



The Nattering Tree



The Nattering Tree



The Nattering Tree was an unusually talkative sort of tree. People would come from many miles around just to sit under the Tree and listen to it natter.

Mostly it spoke to itself: “It’s a lovely day... My leaves are gorgeous this year... I could do with more rain... I sometimes wish I was part of a forest...”

Folks had tried talking to the Tree over the years, but it rarely answered anyone. The last time was twenty-five years ago, when a small boy asked a question. Then, all the Tree had said was, “I don’t *think* so!”

And it hadn’t replied directly to anyone since.

But now, the man who was once that little boy had returned with the same question—and some big earth-moving equipment. Once again, the Tree said, “I don’t *think* so!” to his repeated question. It shook its leaves in anger and the ground shuddered.

“Well, that’s too bad,” said the man as he bent down to pick up a chainsaw.

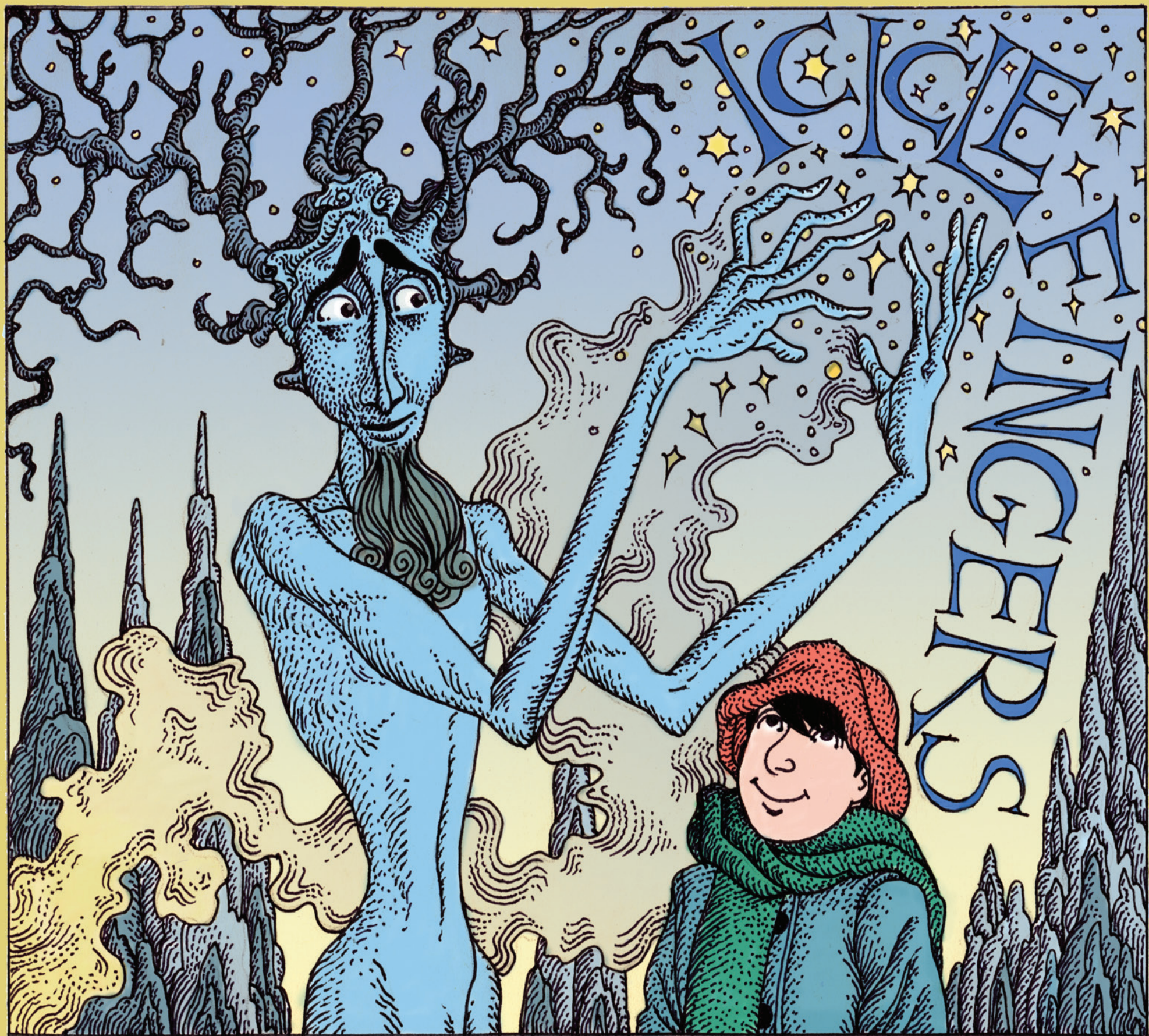
“You can’t cut down the Nattering Tree!” said two little girls who had been sitting contentedly amongst the roots of the Tree, listening to it burble away.

“Oh, but I can,” said the man. “I own all this land—including the Tree.”

“But this is the Nattering Tree,” said one little girl. “You can’t do this, you just *can’t*!”

(What was the question that the boy asked the Tree? Will the man chop it down?)





ICICLE FINGERS

Once again, Icicle Fingers, the Winter Imp, had woken up and gone off to play in the fields and forests at the wrong time of year. Odd, frozen moments were going on—in the middle of summer! The King and Queen of Winter were outraged.

“Fingers must be taught a lesson,” grumbled the King. “He can’t just wake up and toddle off when he wants to. He’s a Winter Imp, not a Summer Imp!”

“I agree,” said the Queen. “This has got to stop. These summer wake-ups are giving me a royal headache!”

“What do you suggest?” asked the King.

“First, let’s pop Fingers into a deep-freeze spell for the rest of the summer and fall; then we’ll wake him up on the first day of winter and send him on a quest.”

“Splendid!” exclaimed the King. “What did you have in mind?”

“The first part will be to discover the true meaning of the winter season,” the Queen answered.

“And what would that be?” asked the King.

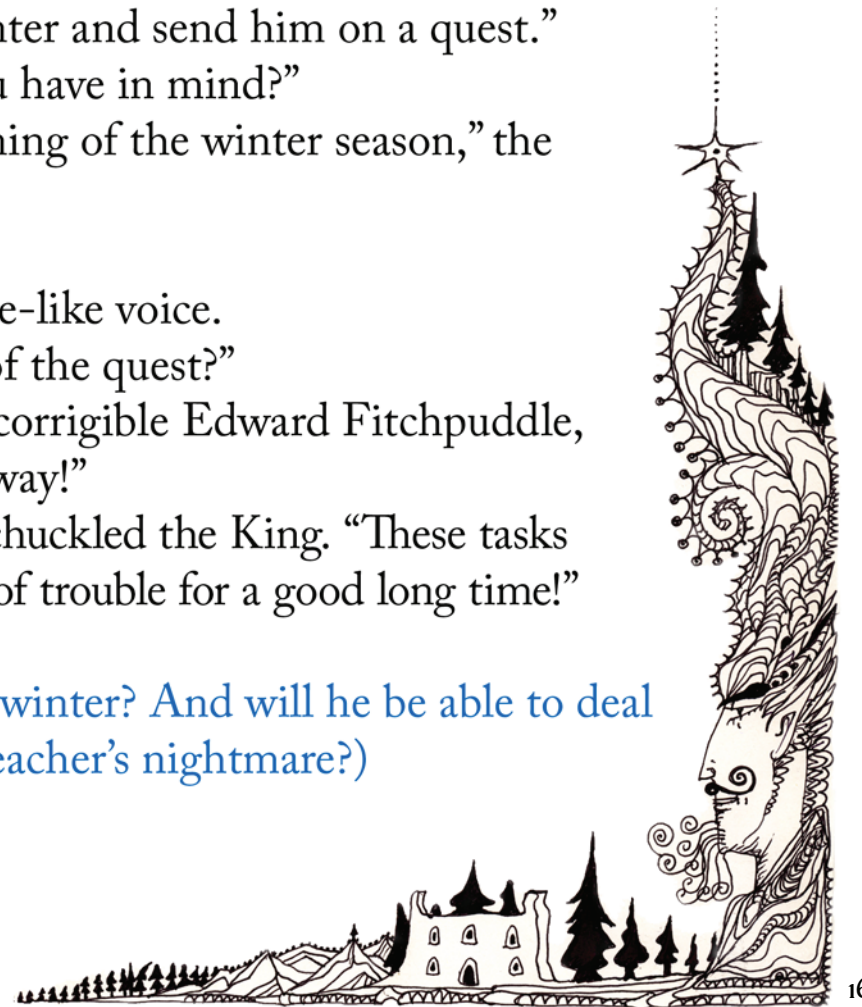
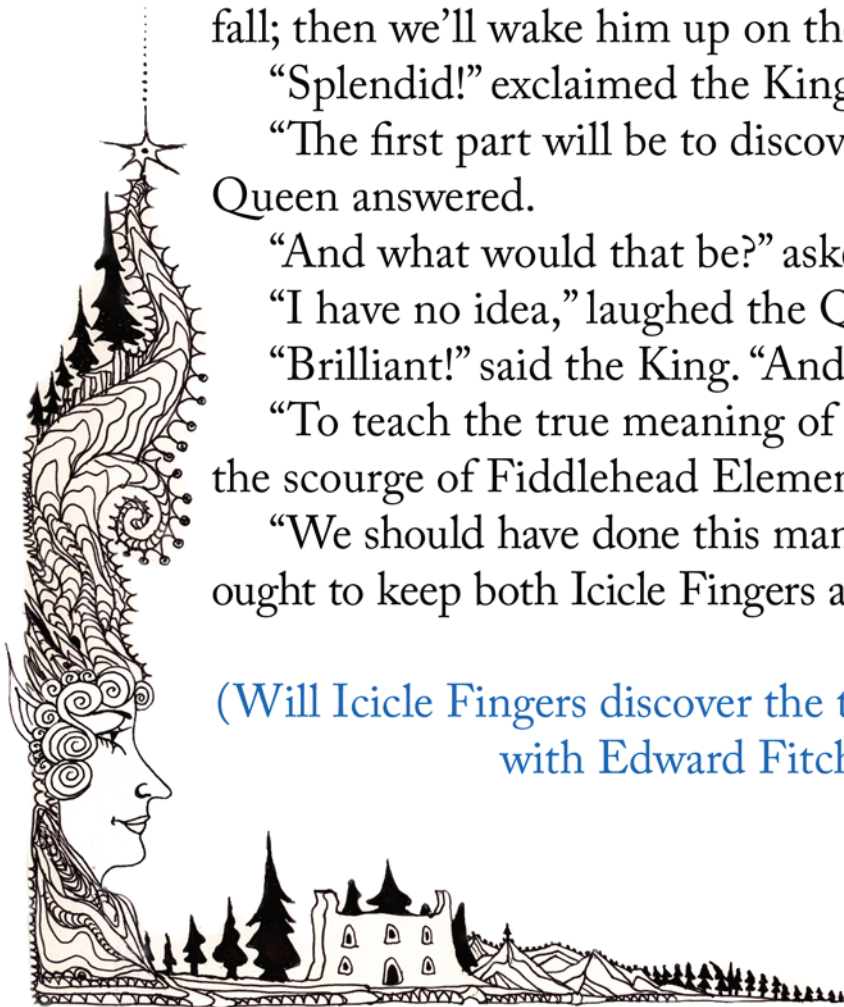
“I have no idea,” laughed the Queen in her flute-like voice.

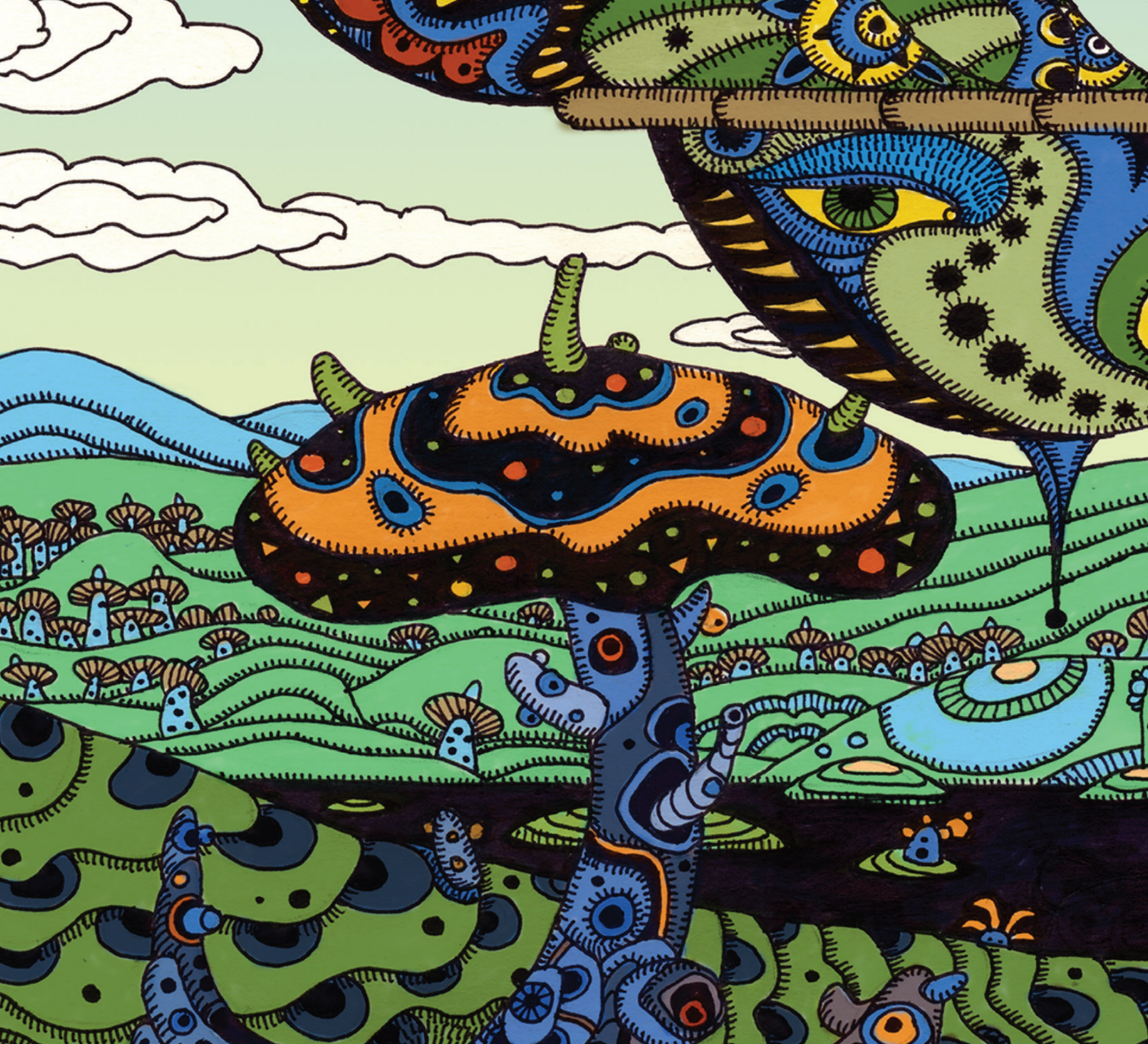
“Brilliant!” said the King. “And the other part of the quest?”

“To teach the true meaning of winter to the incorrigible Edward Fitchpuddle, the scourge of Fiddlehead Elementary, along the way!”

“We should have done this many winters ago,” chuckled the King. “These tasks ought to keep both Icicle Fingers and Edward out of trouble for a good long time!”

(Will Icicle Fingers discover the true meaning of winter? And will he be able to deal with Edward Fitchpuddle, every teacher’s nightmare?)







A Baker's Dozen of imaginary book covers with a bit of a story
for each—but YOU write the ending!

www.fitzhenry.ca/breakfastbites



Martin Springett is an award-winning illustrator and author. His previous books include *Mei Ming and the Dragon's Daughter*, *The Follower*, *The Night Walker* and *Jousting with Jesters*. Martin lives with his family in Toronto, Ontario.

Praise for *Jousting With Jesters*

"[Springett's] pictures are full of delightful details... This is an ABC book which young readers will return to again and again." *Highly recommended.* **** / 4 stars. *CM Magazine*.

Ontario Library Association Best Bet (2006).

"Brightly worded and beautifully illustrated: an alphabet that weaves a magical spell." Fitzhenry & Whiteside
O. R. Melling—*Books In Canada Magazine*



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