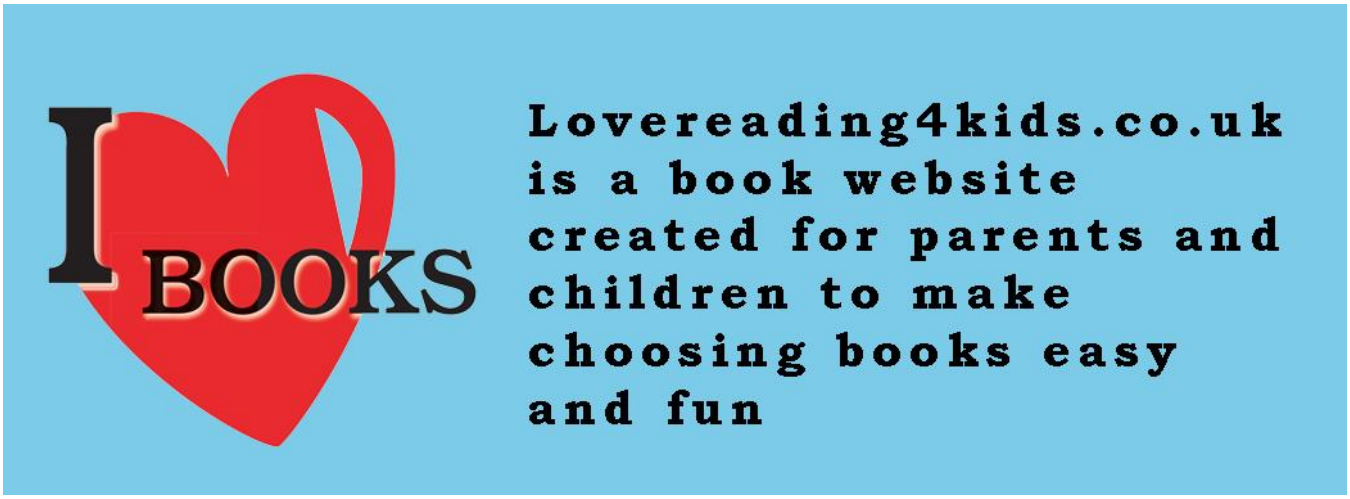


Opening extract from

The Genie's Curse

Written & Illustrated by

Tom Percival

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This book is dedicated to
Joshua and Zachary for saying,
'WhaAaat?!'

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Ella sat under the Story Tree and gazed up at the gold and silver branches. Each one contained a record of every story that had *ever* been told near it. To 'read' one, all you had to do was touch a branch or a leaf and the story would spring to life in your head. Somewhere up there was the tale of how she and Cole, her Fairy Godbrother, had been rescued from



an *awfully* wicked witch by Red, Jack, Anansi and Rapunzel.

Ella smiled as she looked at her new friends and picked up a sock with a hole in it that needed darning – so many chores, so little time!

'Hey, Ella,' said Rapunzel. 'Can I have my foot back, please?'

'Oh! Sorry!' replied Ella, dropping Rapunzel's foot. 'Was I doing it again?'

Everybody nodded. Ella had a habit of fixing *anything* that looked broken, ripped, dirty or torn – even if it didn't need it. Like the time that she'd sewn up all the holes in Anansi's favourite jumper – including the neck and both arms.

'It isn't Ella's fault!' protested Cole.

‘The wicked witch cast a spell on Ella that makes her want to fix everything – but I can’t reverse it, the magic is too strong.’

‘Isn’t there anyone –’

‘– else who could help?’ asked Hansel and Gretel, who often finished each other’s sentences, meals and crossword puzzles.

‘Whaaaat?’ squawked Jack’s magical talking hen, Betsy.

‘I don’t think the magic set I was given for my birthday would do the trick,’ replied Jack. ‘You *can* use it to make it look like your finger’s been chopped off though!’

‘Cool!’ said Anansi.

‘Whaaaat?’ screeched Betsy again.

Although she *was* a talking hen, the only word that Betsy could actually say was 'what', but somehow Jack always seemed to understand her.

'Good idea!' said Jack. He turned to Anansi. 'What about your Uncle Rufaro? He understands magic, doesn't he?'

'Yeah, but he's not here at the moment,' said Anansi. 'He's still trying to break the curse on . . . you know . . .' Anansi shrugged, trying not to look too upset that most of his family had been cursed to look like trolls. 'He should be back by tomorrow night though,' he added.



'That reminds me!' said Jack. 'Have you seen the posters that Mayor Fitch has been putting up? Telling everyone to report any troll sightings? Well, the troll on the poster looks *exactly* like Rufaro.'

'You mean *those* posters?' said Anansi, pointing to the noticeboard which was plastered with them. 'They're *everywhere*! I was standing still earlier and nearly had one pinned to my back!'



'Whaaat!' interrupted Betsy.

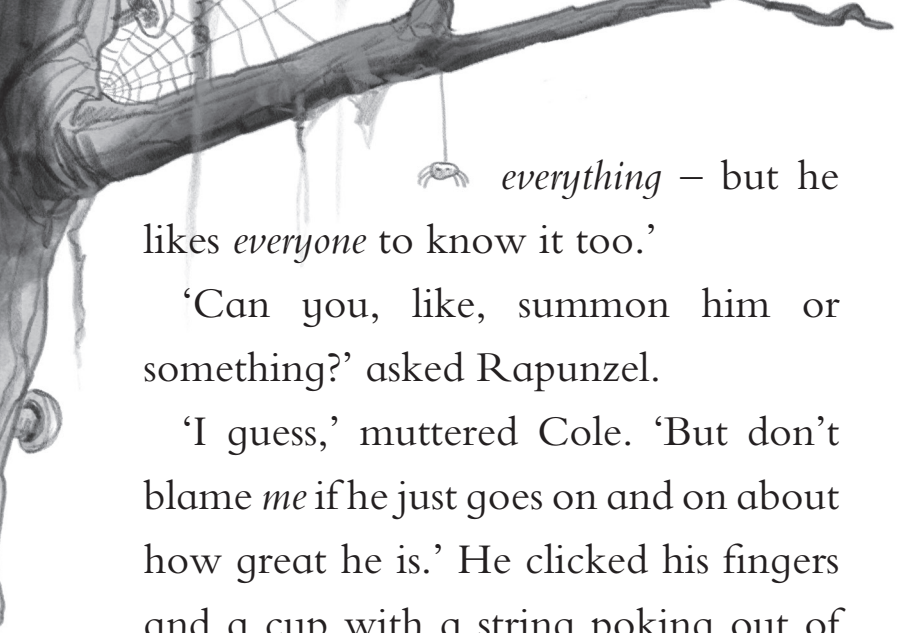
'Well, yes, Mayor Fitch *does* seem a *bit* mean . . .' replied Jack. 'But he *is* the mayor of Tale Town, so we shouldn't be *too* rude!'

'I think we're getting off-topic here,' interrupted Rapunzel. 'Right now we need to work out what to do about *Ella*.' Everyone watched Ella trying to sweep the dust off a small pile of dirt.

'What about one of the other fairies, Cole?' asked Red. 'Like your Fairy Grandmother, or Fairy Half-Cousin? Do you think any of them could help?'

'They're all off at some big Fairy Folk meeting,' said Cole. 'But there *is* my Fairy Big Brother, Zak . . . He's pretty much amazing at, well . . .





everything – but he likes *everyone* to know it too.'

'Can you, like, summon him or something?' asked Rapunzel.

'I guess,' muttered Cole. 'But don't blame *me* if he just goes on and on about how great he is.' He clicked his fingers and a cup with a string poking out of the back appeared in mid-air next to him. He leaned forward and spoke into it.

'Zak? Hello? Yeah, hi, it's me Cole . . .' He paused and listened to the muffled sound which came out of the cup.

'Yes, *of course* your little brother!' Cole rolled his eyes. 'How many other Coles do you know?' He paused again and listened to the cup.