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Opening extract from

The Magic Looking Glass

Written by

Tom Percival

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This book is dedicated to Gastrells School and everyone in it, for being generally AWESOME!

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It was the annual trimming of the Story Tree and *everyone* in Tale Town was excited. Even Sleeping Beauty was excited and she wasn't even awake, but she *looked* excited – sort of. The Story Tree was the reason that the town had first got its name – every one of its many leaves contained a different story. To 'read' them, all you had to do was run your finger along the leaf,

and that story would happen *inside your head*.

With every new story that was told nearby, a new branch or shoot would sprout on the tree, so it could easily get very overgrown. This is why every year the oldest stories were trimmed from the tree, dried out, and turned into scrolls that were kept in a vault deep beneath the Tale Town library.

Huge crowds had gathered to watch the ceremony, and Jack and Betsy, his magical talking hen, struggled to push their way to the front to meet their friends.

'Excuse me!' called out Jack as he elbowed his way

past three little pigs and three *much* larger bears. 'Coming through!'

'PaaaAaardon!' squawked Betsy as she hopped up and down in front of Jack.

'Sorry?' said Jack. 'What was that, Betsy?'

Betsy rolled her eyes. The only word she'd ever been able to say was 'what', but somehow Jack always knew what she meant. Recently he'd been trying to teach her some more polite words, like 'pardon', but it wasn't really working out.

'WHAaAaaaAaaat!' shrieked Betsy crossly.

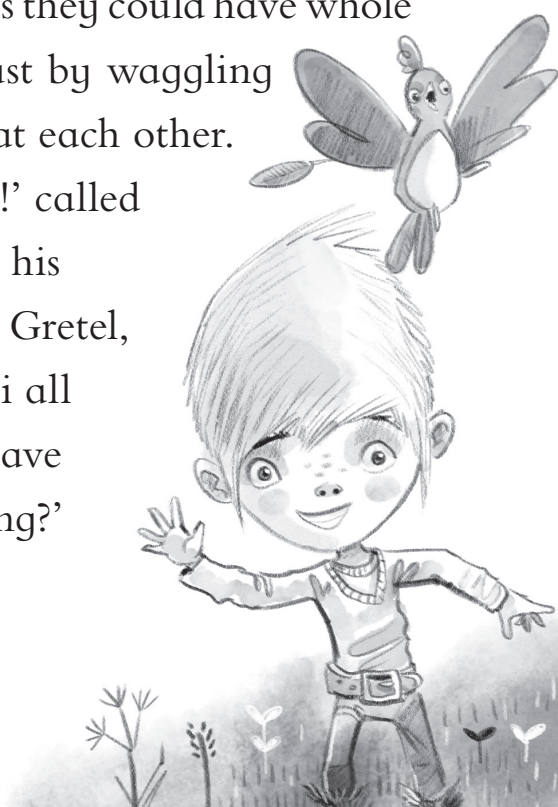
'Oh! I see . . .' said Jack. 'You're right, that *is* Sausage-Face Fitch, but you

shouldn't call him that – Mayor Fitch would go crazy if he heard you! Come on, the ceremony's about to begin!'

'Hey, Jack –'

'– there you are!' said Hansel and Gretel as Jack finally got to the front of the crowd. The twins were close – v*ery* close. Sometimes they could have whole conversations just by waggling their eyebrows at each other.

'Hi, everyone!' called Jack, waving at his friends. Hansel, Gretel, Red and Anansi all waved back. 'Have I missed anything?' he added.

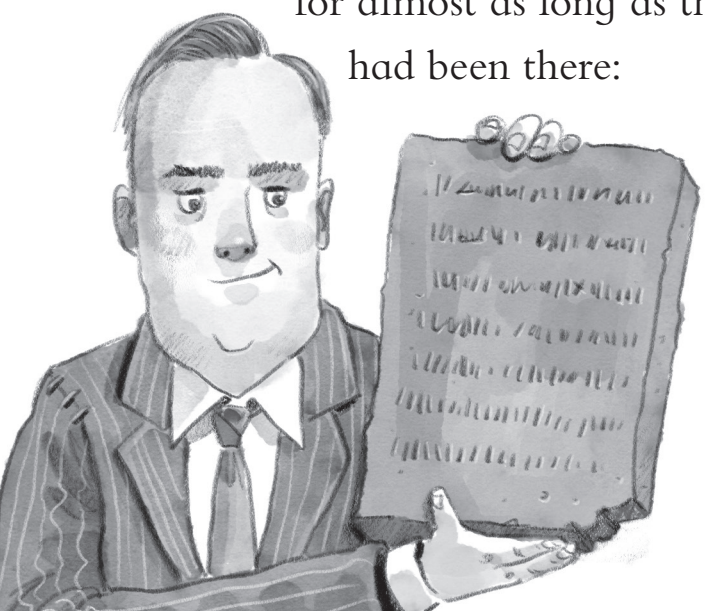


‘Not really, but –’

‘– Mayor Fitch is *still* –

‘– doing his speech!’ replied Hansel and Gretel.

The mayor was standing behind a podium, his shiny, pink face gleaming in the sunlight. He lifted up the ancient stone tablet that the poem ‘Live Long the Story Tree’ was carved into. *Everyone* in Tale Town knew the poem, which had been carved into the stone for almost as long as the town had been there:



Long ago, upon this spot the Story
Tree was born,
And with it grew up Tale Town, a
rose without a thorn.

Beware the shadows lurking in the
darkness of the night,
Who want to take away this gift and
hide from us its light.

For if this tree is damaged then
expect the unexpected,
The Story Tree is sacred and must
always be protected.

Live long the Story Tree!