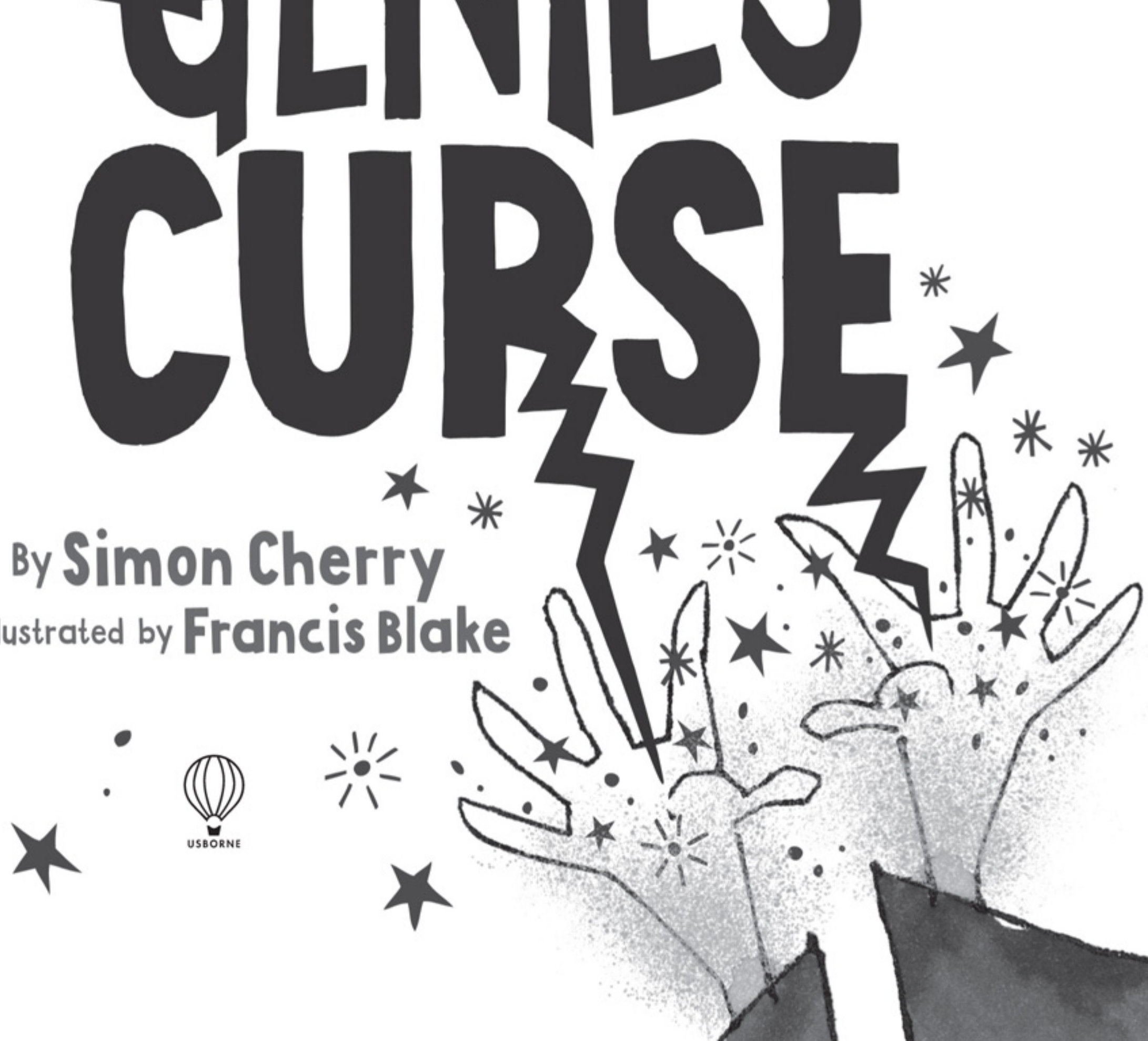
EDDY STONE AND THE MEAN GENIE'S CURSE

By **Simon Cherry**

Illustrated by **Francis Blake**



USBORNE



A HEAD AND SOME TALES

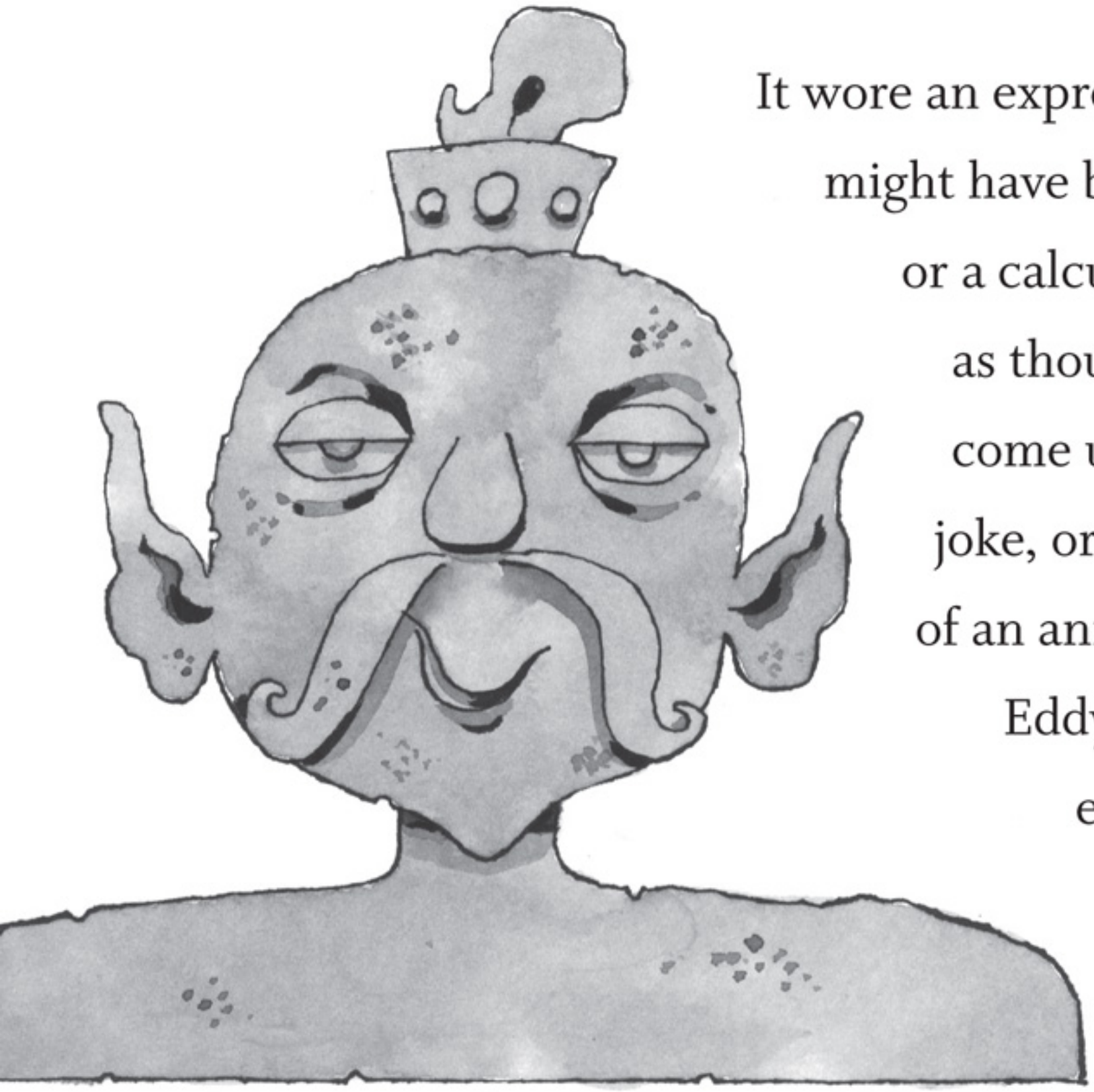
"What an ugly face!" The man's voice sounded behind Eddy Stone's right ear.

It was that face that started it all. None of the mess that followed would have happened if it hadn't caught Eddy Stone's eye on that Saturday afternoon.

"Imagine having to look at someone so hideous every day," the man continued.

"Yes," said his wife, sadly. "Just imagine."

Eddy was staring at the face in question. He didn't think "ugly" was the right word for it. Unusual, yes. Striking, certainly. It was a life-sized sculpture of a head made of red clay. It had a short curved nose and a long curled moustache, sharp eyes and a pointed chin.



It wore an expression that might have been a sly smile or a calculating frown – as though it had just come up with a clever joke, or a plan to get rid of an annoying insect.

Eddy had been enjoying a sunny day with no school by riding his bike round the little seaside town of Tidemark Bay, where he lived with his mum and dad. Spring had sprung, and down by the harbour the shops and cafes were sprucing themselves up for the start of the tourist season. He had been watching the owners dusting floors and washing windows and touching up paintwork, when he had noticed a stream of people heading for the Community Centre and had gone to see what they were all doing.

There was a sign outside.

AUCTION SALE TODAY.

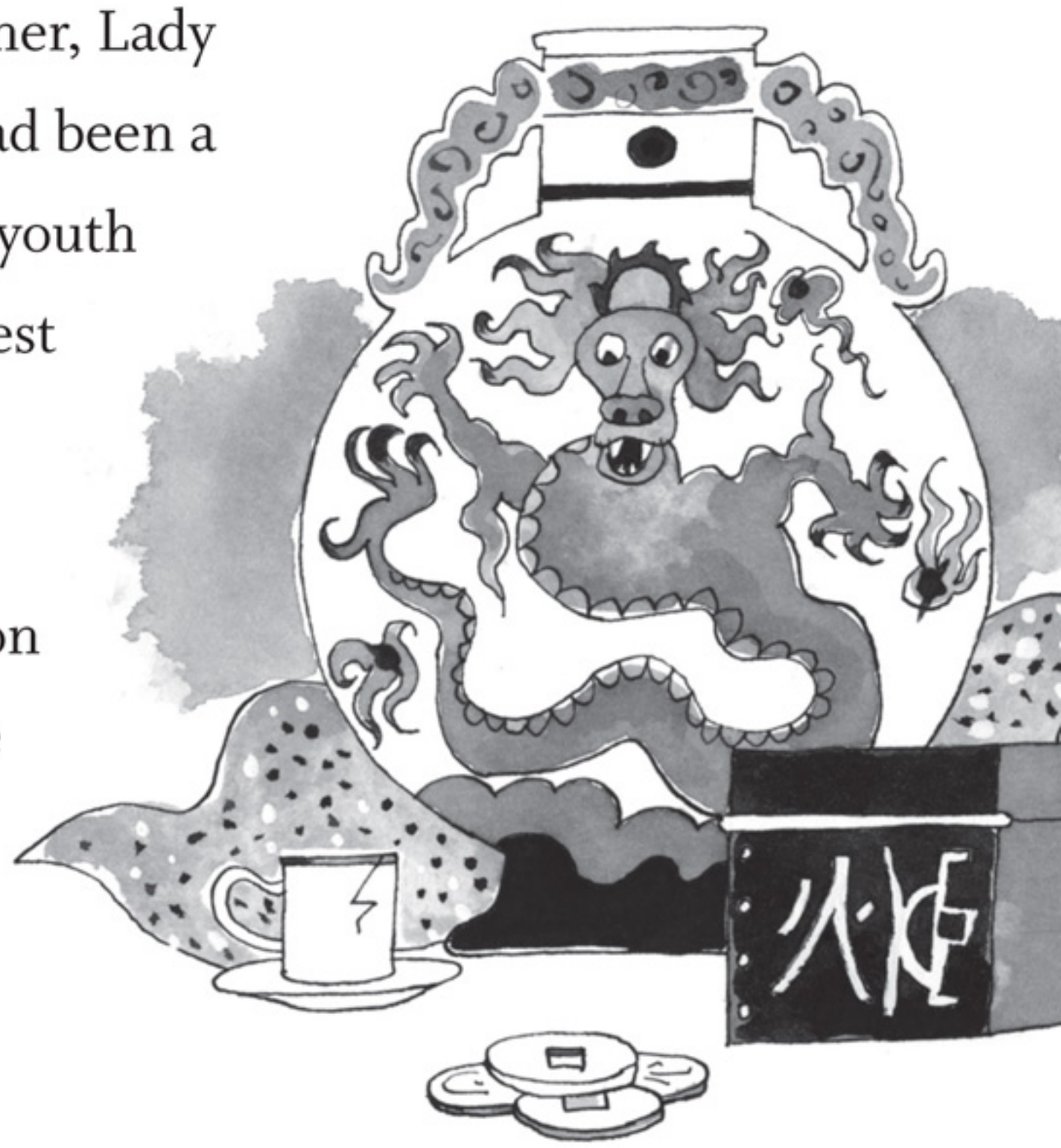
CONTENTS OF TIDEMARK MANOR.

- EVERYTHING MUST GO -

BY ORDER OF THE NEW OWNER.

Tidemark Manor was a grand old house that stood proud on a hill above the bay. For the last few years it had stood proud and empty, and many people from the town had peered through the bars of the great iron gates at the end of its long tree-lined drive, wondering what was inside its walls. So there was quite a crowd in the Community Centre taking this opportunity to find out.

The Manor's last owner, Lady Madeleine Montagu, had been a famous traveller in her youth – which was now the best part of a hundred years ago. Souvenirs of her journeys were stacked on tables all around. There were dragon-shaped vases from China and



tribal masks from Africa and delicate tea sets from Japan and rich silks from India and a large pink plastic prawn waving a flag with the words "A Present From The British Seaside" on it.

Lady Madeleine Montagu hadn't just been a famous traveller, she'd been a famously eccentric one. No challenge was too bold for her, no plan too wild. Not for nothing had her chums called her Mad Monty. Eddy spotted a stack of old books in tattered covers. These were the tales of some of her wackiest journeys – *Through Russia by Rollerskate*, *A Madagascan Monocycle*, *Pedalo on the Limpopo* and *A Pogo Stick in Peru*.



Eddy flicked open the last one. There was a brown and white photo: in front of a tangle of plants a young woman on a spring-loaded contraption, hair and skirt flying, was bouncing out of the side of the picture in a blur.

Eddy would have liked to buy the books. He would have liked to buy loads of other stuff, too. But the one thing he really craved, more than any other, was the red clay head.

It was as though it was talking to him.

"Come on. You know you want me."

It would look great sitting on the shelf in his bedroom, Eddy thought. He wondered if he would be able to afford it. All he had was this week's pocket money.

He saw a man in a smart blazer with a badge on his lapel standing nearby. He must be something to do with the sale.

"Excuse me," he asked the man. "Can you tell me the price of this head?"

"Not yet, I can't," said the man. "This is an auction sale. It will be sold to the person who puts in the highest bid. You see the number on the card in front of it?"



Eddy did – 49.

"That means it is lot number 49. You'll have to wait till we've sold the first 48 lots, and then you can try to buy it. Though if I were you, I'd have a look round for something that's not quite as ugly."

"I won't change my mind," said Eddy. "That's the one for me."

"Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen." A man in a grey suit was standing behind a tall desk. His voice cut through the chatter in the room. "Welcome to this sale of the contents of Tidemark Manor. We'll begin with Lot 1 – a fine example of an antique mahogany pogo stick. Who will start the bidding? Do I have two hundred?"

He did. Someone raised their hand and the auction began. Lot by lot, paintings and pottery and paraphernalia were snapped up by eager buyers. And then, at last, the auctioneer cried out, "Lot 49. Any offers?"

If only Eddy had known what Lot 49 really was.

Then he would have realized how much trouble it was going to cause.

Then he would have decided he did not want to take it home with him after all.

Then he would not have raised his hand to bid.

But he didn't.

So he didn't.

So he didn't.

So he did.

