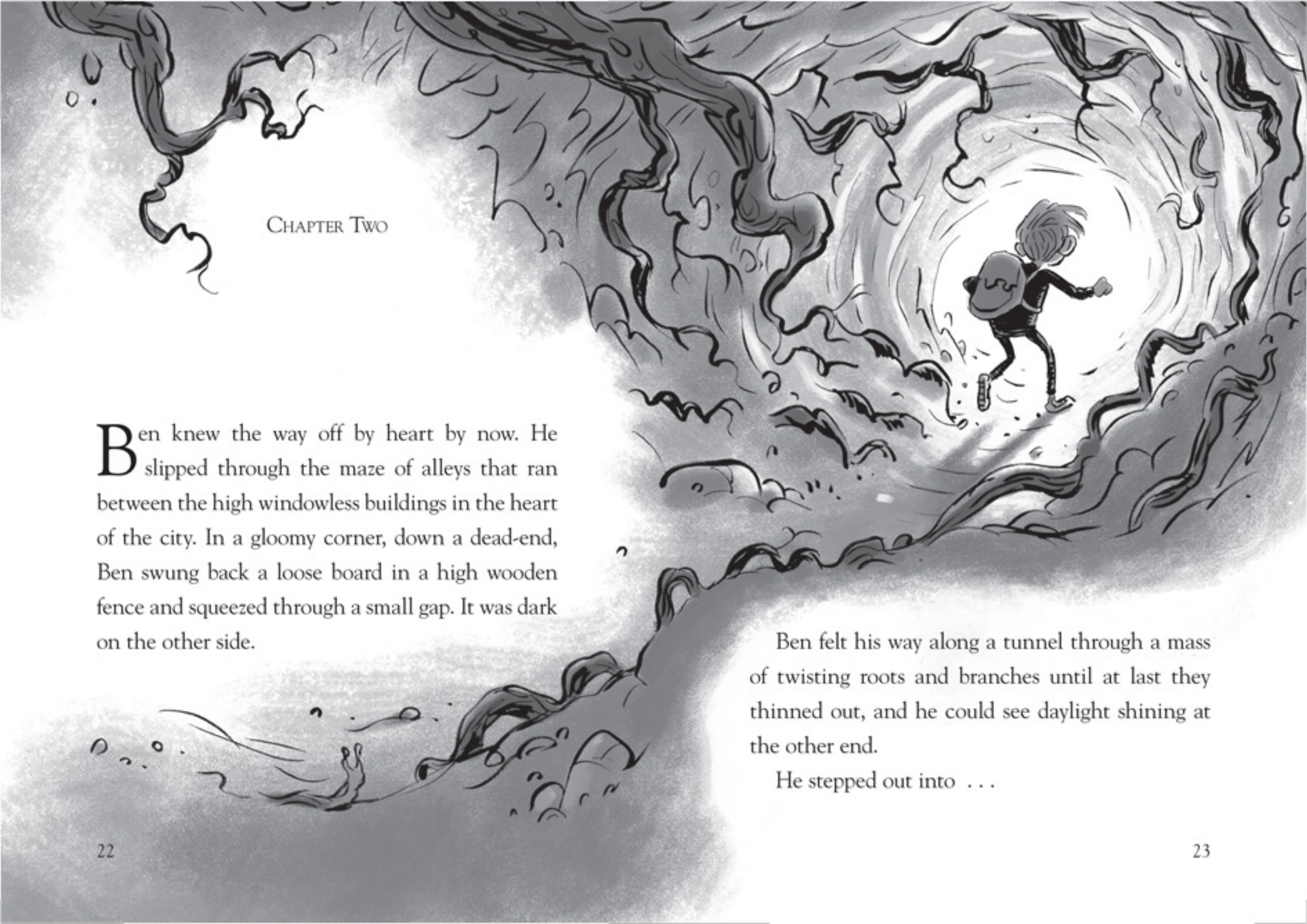


Chapter Two

Ben knew the way off by heart by now. He slipped through the maze of alleys that ran between the high windowless buildings in the heart of the city. In a gloomy corner, down a dead-end, Ben swung back a loose board in a high wooden fence and squeezed through a small gap. It was dark on the other side.

Ben felt his way along a tunnel through a mass of twisting roots and branches until at last they thinned out, and he could see daylight shining at the other end.

He stepped out into . . .


. . . Coo's magnificent woods.
COO

Not many boys had a best friend like Coo. Ben was just lucky, he supposed. I mean, a *genius* who lives with a pet wombat in a *secret wood* in the middle of the city? In a *tree house*? He had to admit, it was pretty amazing! OK, so Coo's woods might be riddled with tricky traps and bonkers contraptions that were as dangerous as they were fun, but it was here that he felt most happy.

Ben couldn't wait to see Coo and Herbert again, but this time he was determined to reach Coo's tree house without stumbling into one of her traps. So, instead of running along the path like normal, Ben moved slowly and carefully, peering at the ground with every step.





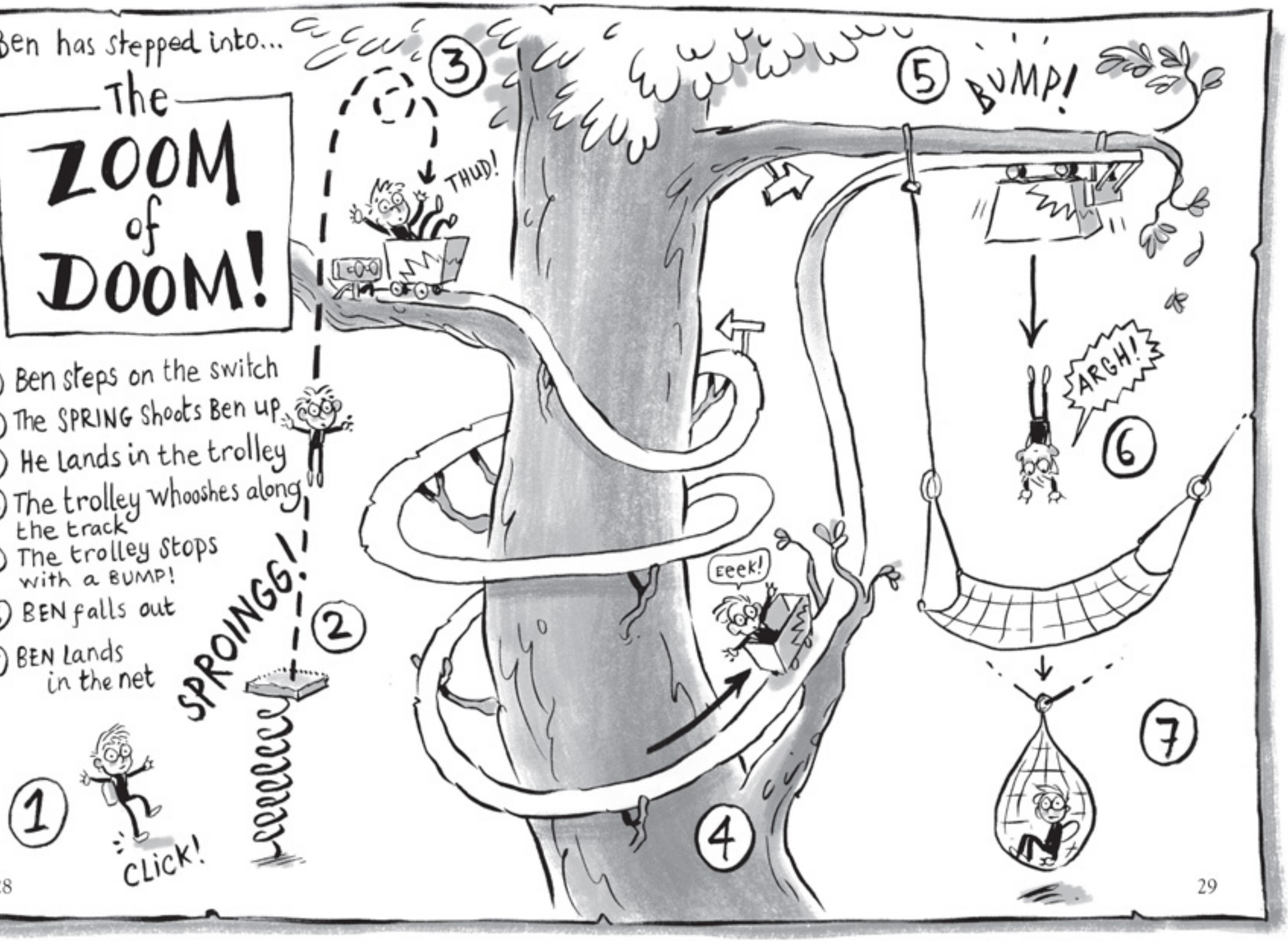
And it worked, too. There, stretched across the path, he spotted a tripwire. Ben grinned and jumped over it.

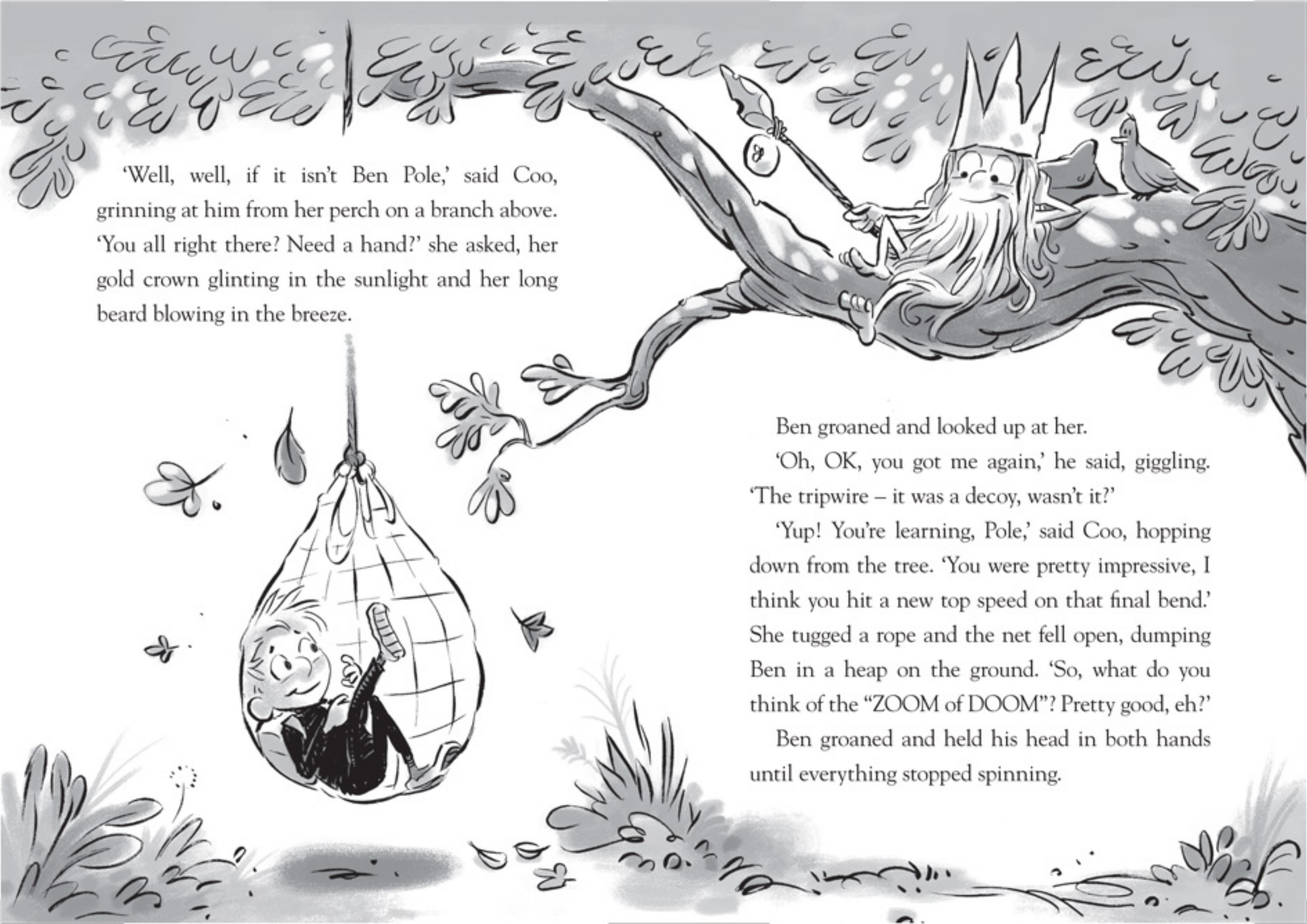


Ben has stepped into...

The ZOOM of DOOM!

1. Ben steps on the switch
2. The SPRING shoots Ben up
3. He lands in the trolley
4. The trolley whooshes along the track
5. The trolley stops with a BUMP!
6. BEN falls out
7. BEN lands in the net





'Well, well, if it isn't Ben Pole,' said Coo, grinning at him from her perch on a branch above. 'You all right there? Need a hand?' she asked, her gold crown glinting in the sunlight and her long beard blowing in the breeze.

Ben groaned and looked up at her.

'Oh, OK, you got me again,' he said, giggling. 'The tripwire – it was a decoy, wasn't it?'

'Yup! You're learning, Pole,' said Coo, hopping down from the tree. 'You were pretty impressive, I think you hit a new top speed on that final bend.' She tugged a rope and the net fell open, dumping Ben in a heap on the ground. 'So, what do you think of the "ZOOM of DOOM"? Pretty good, eh?'

Ben groaned and held his head in both hands until everything stopped spinning.



'And you've turned up just in time,' Coo said, grabbing Ben and sitting him on a log. She fumbled about in her bag and pulled out a pair of odd-looking boots. 'Here, put these on.'

'Er, OK,' said Ben nervously. Coo's inventions had a nasty habit of being dangerous, so you can imagine how Ben felt, being a boy who thought mixing two flavours of ice cream was pretty risky.

'Hmm, not a bad fit,' Coo said, tightening the buckles of the strange boots.

'Right, follow me!'

