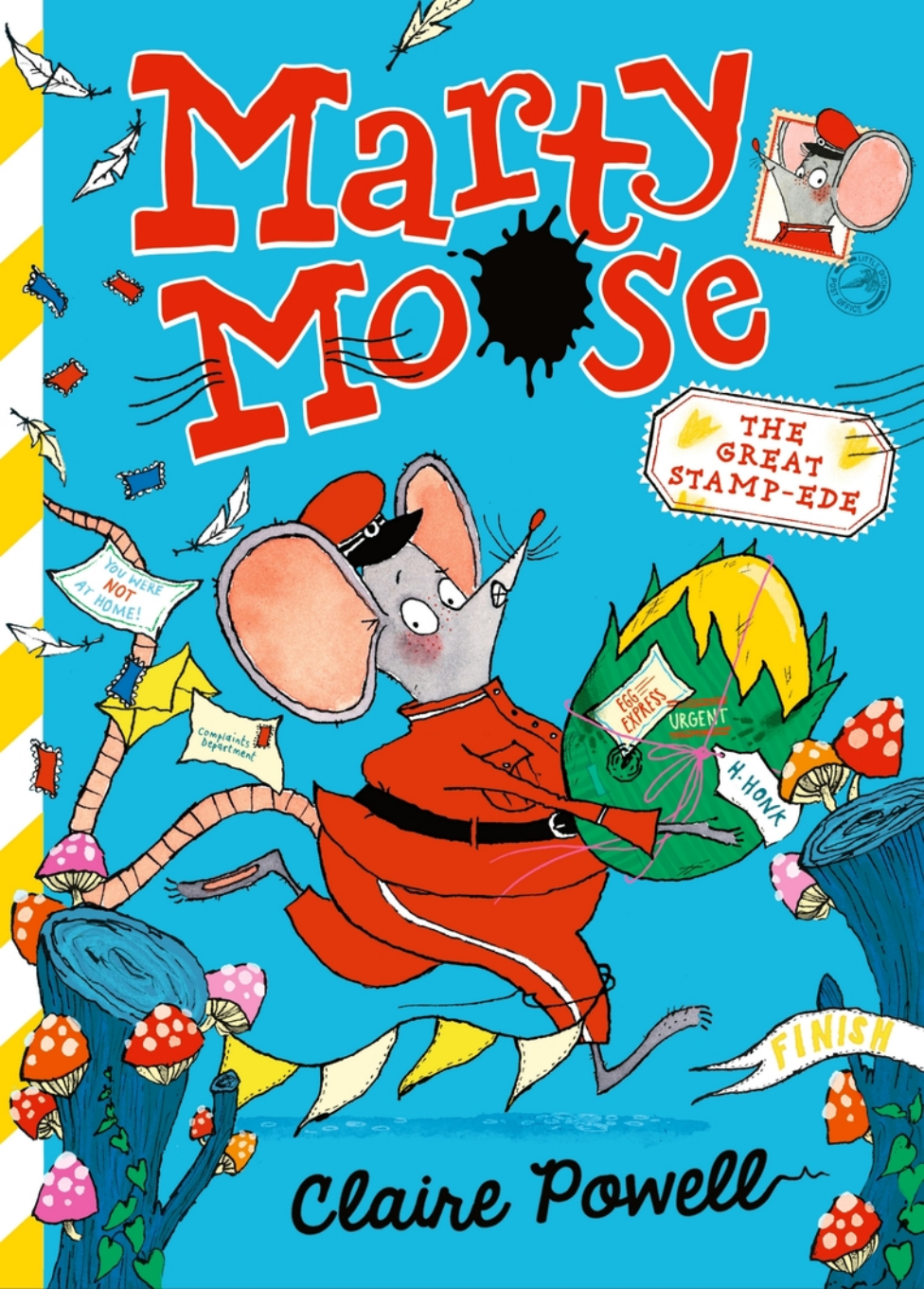
Marty Mouse



Claire Powell

POST OFFICE
LITTLE DITCH
This Book Belongs To:

For everyone who helped me get this book to the finish line... you rock!

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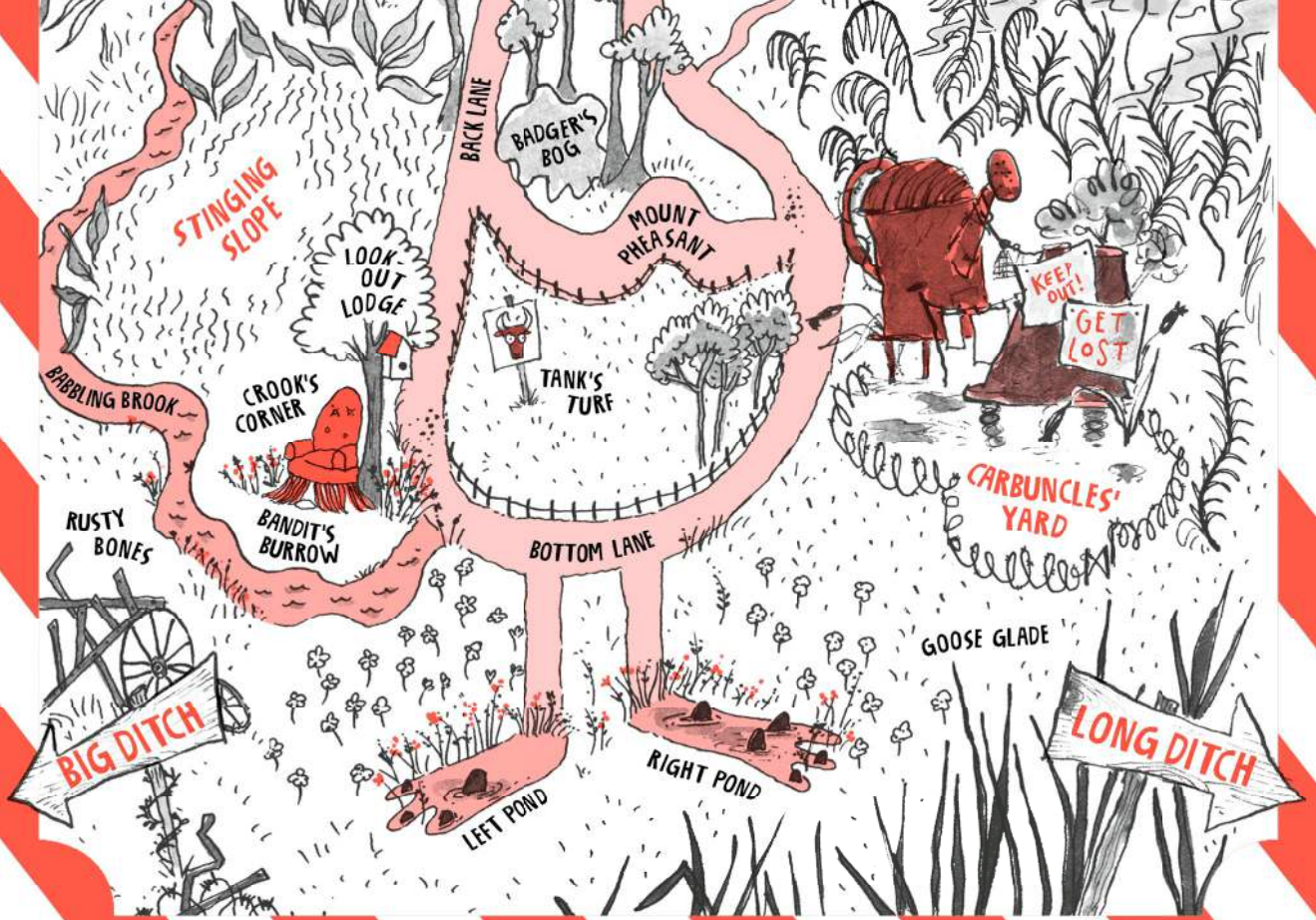
Marty Mouse

THE GREAT STAMP-EDE

With Love,
Claire Powell

WALKER BOOKS

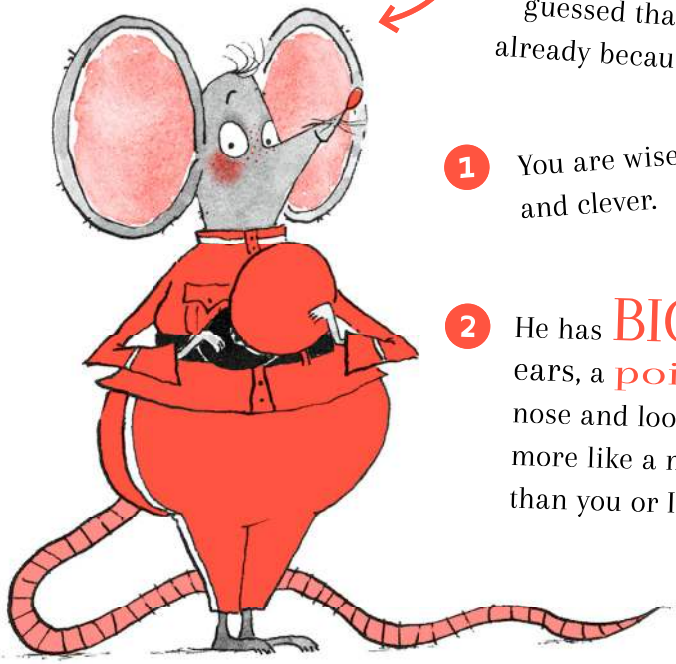
Welcome to
LITTLE DITCH
Turn Your Book!
STUMPY HOLLOWS
THE ROCKIES
ROUND-THE-BEND
THE POST OFFICE
WHISKER WARRENS
ROTTENWOOD
FOGGY FOREST
MUDI POOL
THORNY THICKETT
LITTLE EYE
CREEPY WILLOW
MISTY OAK
TAIL END
DOVECOTE MANOR


STINGING SLOPE
BACK LANE
BADGER'S BOG
MOUNT PHEASANT
LOOK-OUT LODGE
TANK'S TURF
KEEP OUT!
GET LOST
BABBLING BROOK
CROOK'S CORNER
BANDIT'S BURROW
CARBUNCLES' YARD
RUSTY BONES
BOTTOM LANE
GOOSE GLADE
BIG DITCH
LONG DITCH
RIGHT POND
LEFT POND

Marty Moose **ISN'T** a moose.

He is quite clearly a **mouse.**

But you probably guessed that already because:

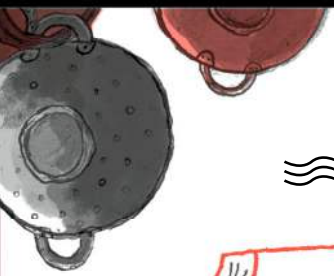


1. You are wise and clever.

2. He has BIG ears, a pointy nose and looks no more like a moose than you or I do.

ACORN INK
When Marty's name was being written on his
BIRTH CERTIFICATE
an unfortunate blob of ink fell from the end of the clerk's pen and splodged – in a perfect circle – where the 'u' should have been.
This document was
VERY IMPORTANT AND LEGALLY BINDING
and it could not be changed.
So Marty has, from that day forth, been known not as Marty Mouse but as...
NAME: Marty Mouse

don't forget tricks!
Best Hiding places
A Golden Egg!
Disguises
Hats
DAYS to GO!
Get-Away route



PROLOGUE

AN EGGCELLENT PLAN

Dawn was breaking in Little Ditch and, as the light crept its way across Goose Glade, all seemed quiet.

But if you listened carefully, deep underground, *something* could be heard.

Two shadows – with beady little eyes – were whispering. They plotted and schemed until...

A dastardly plan began to take shape.

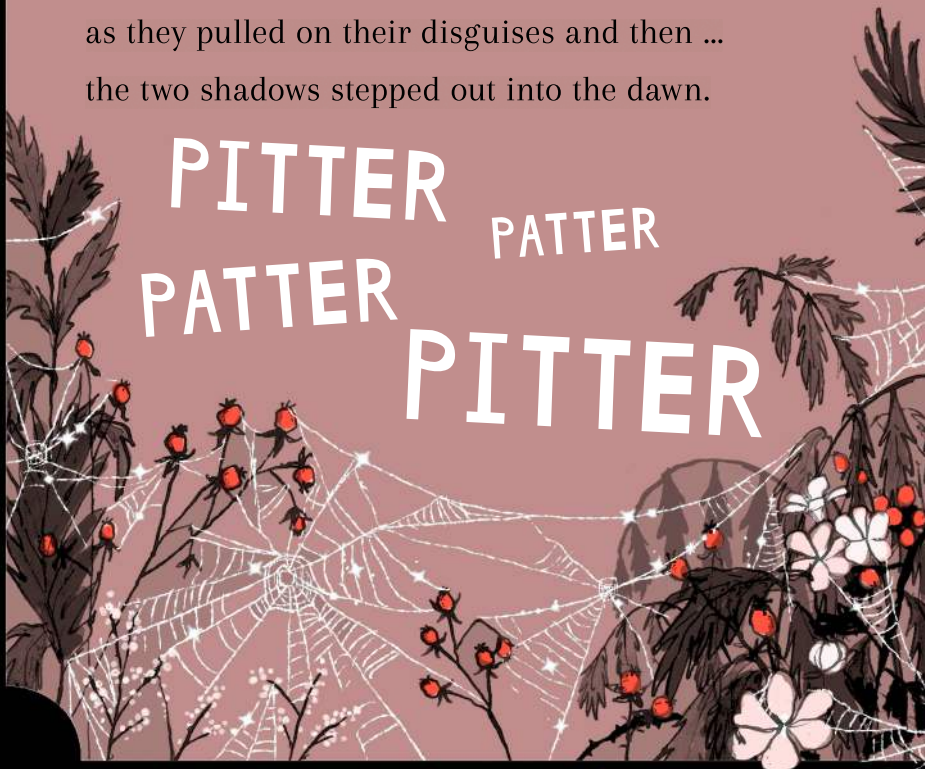
Then the shadows were on the move.

Their feet

PIT PAT PIT PATTED

down dimly lit corridors to a room filled with secrets and surprises. Their beady eyes glinted with mischief as they pulled on their disguises and then ... the two shadows stepped out into the dawn.

PITTER PATTER PATTER PITTER



They ducked under drooping nettles and sneaked past cobwebs that glistened with the morning dew.

They **PIT PAT PITTER PATTERED** over leaves and twigs to the place where they would wait, hidden among the brambles and the thorns, until it was time...

An EGGCELLENT plan had just been hatched.

CHAPTER ONE

NOT A NORMAL DAY

Marty was *still* number 11...

He only wanted to wash breakfast jam off his whiskers, but he'd been standing in this bathroom queue for ages (17 minutes, to be precise). That was the most bothersome thing about a family of this size: the bathroom was almost always *occupied*.

Right now, it was occupied by Marty's elder sister, Muriel. She was a bathroom hogger.

"Scurry up, love!" Marty's dad urged from position number 3 in the queue. "We haven't got all day."

"Perfection can't be rushed!" Muriel replied from behind the door.

There was a collective groan from all 27 mice in the queue.

Dawdling dandelions, Marty thought, looking up from *The Little Ditch Postal Handbook*, which he was reading to pass the time.

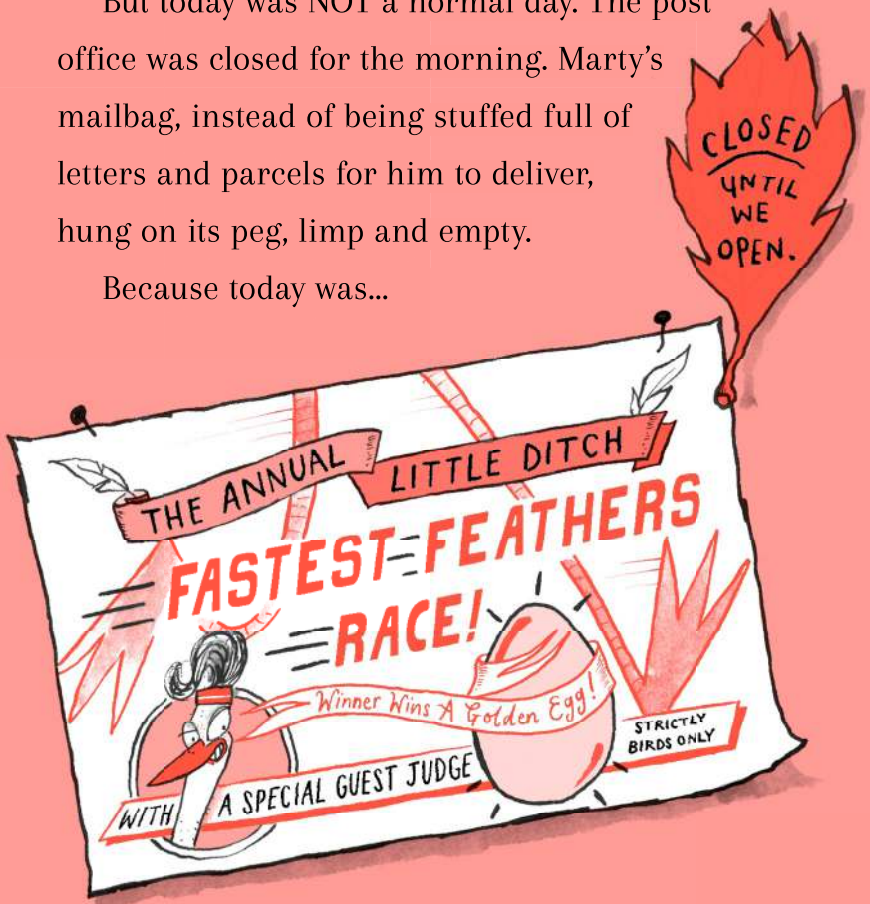
Marty normally escaped the morning rush for the bathroom, scampering out of the house while most of his family were still fast asleep and snoring. *Normally*, he'd be at the post office on Thorny Thickett by now, weaving his way through precarious piles of post in the sorting

room and swapping cheerful *good mornings* with his colleagues Dave, Sheila and Margery.

Normally, right about now, he'd be swinging his bulging mailbag onto his shoulder, ready to begin his round as Postmouse of Little Ditch.

But today was NOT a normal day. The post office was closed for the morning. Marty's mailbag, instead of being stuffed full of letters and parcels for him to deliver, hung on its peg, limp and empty.

Because today was...



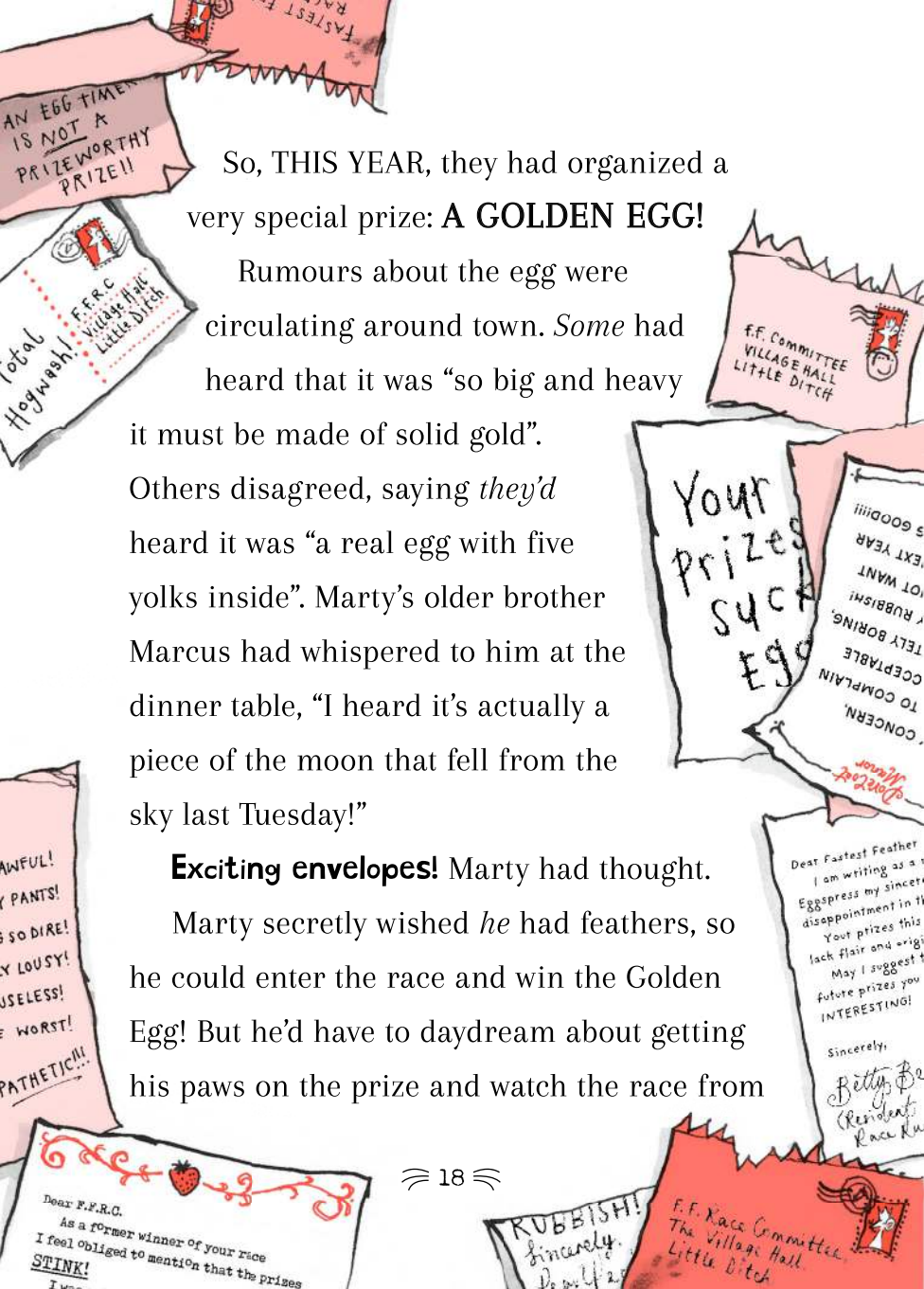
The competition took place every year and it was strictly for *BIRDS ONLY: No fur, no snouts and no whiskers allowed!* It had started as a bet between a duck called Wink Waddles and a goose called Elvis Geesley to see who could run the fastest lap around Little Ditch. (Elvis won, and the ducks had been trying to steal the geese's crown ever since.)

The race soon became a Little Ditch tradition, and after two dozen hens protested outside the village hall three winters ago, other birds were now allowed to enter, too.

Marty looked forward to watching the race every year. He loved cheering the birds on as they raced around Little Ditch, not knowing until the very last moment whose beak would get over the finish line first, to be crowned the *Fastest Feather* and win a prize.

Although, up until now, the prizes had been *somewhat* underwhelming...

Last year's *Fastest Feather* won a set of three and a half egg cups (one got damaged in a scuffle that broke out during the prize-giving ceremony). The year before *that*, the winner received a miniature egg timer. The prizes had been so disappointing that the race committee had started receiving letters of complaint.



So, THIS YEAR, they had organized a very special prize: **A GOLDEN EGG!**

Rumours about the egg were circulating around town. *Some* had heard that it was "so big and heavy it must be made of solid gold". Others disagreed, saying *they'd* heard it was "a real egg with five yolks inside". Marty's older brother Marcus had whispered to him at the dinner table, "I heard it's actually a piece of the moon that fell from the sky last Tuesday!"

Exciting envelopes! Marty had thought.

Marty secretly wished *he* had feathers, so he could enter the race and win the Golden Egg! But he'd have to daydream about getting his paws on the prize and watch the race from

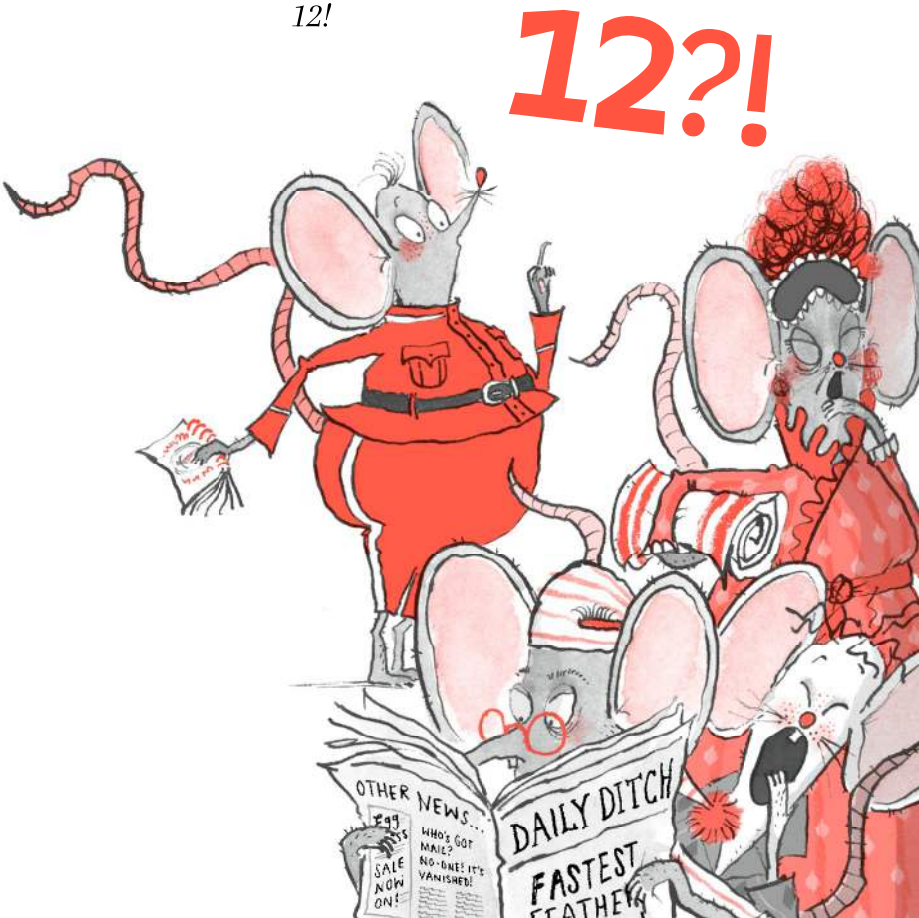
the sidelines instead. *If* he could ever get to the front of this bathroom queue.

He stood on his tiptoes and counted:

8,

9 ...

12!



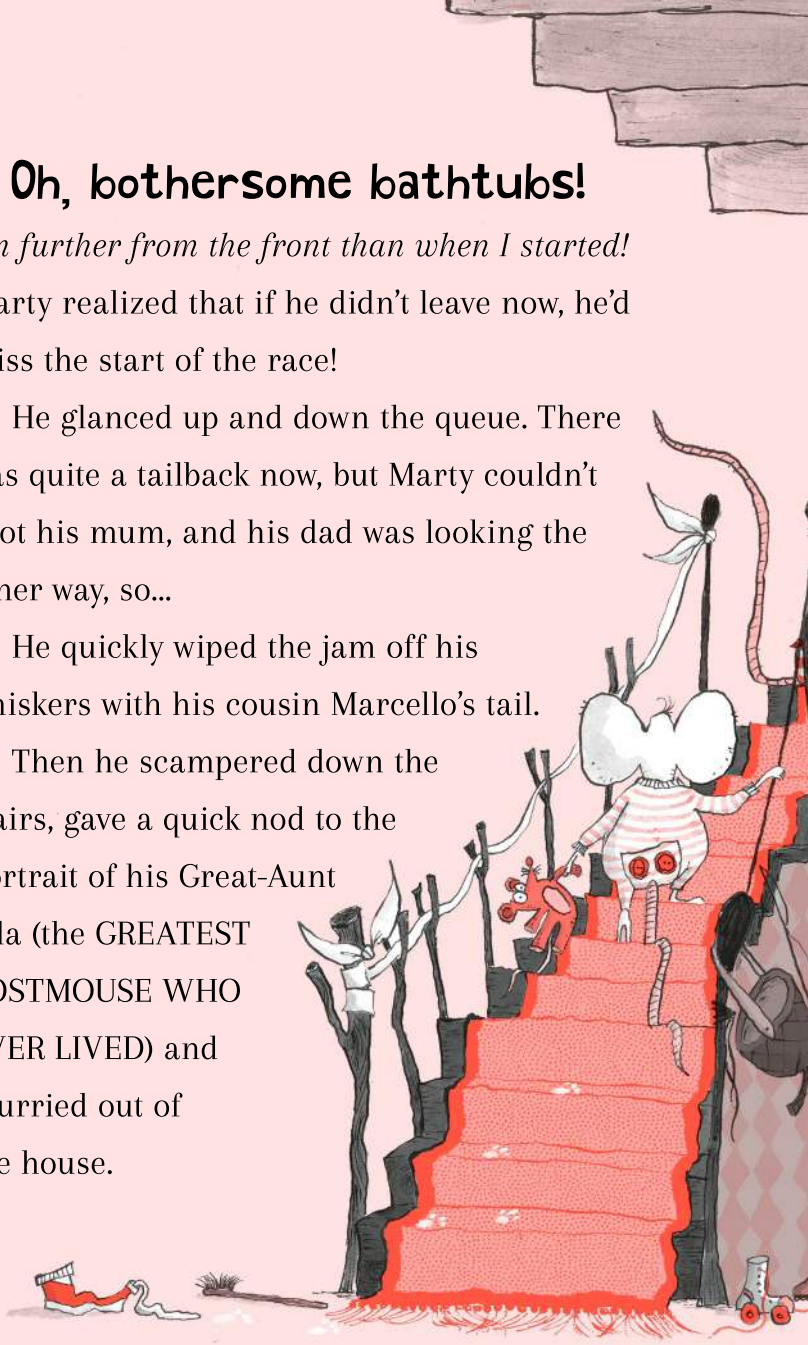
Oh, bothersome bathtubs!

I'm further from the front than when I started! Marty realized that if he didn't leave now, he'd miss the start of the race!

He glanced up and down the queue. There was quite a tailback now, but Marty couldn't spot his mum, and his dad was looking the other way, so...

He quickly wiped the jam off his whiskers with his cousin Marcello's tail.

Then he scampered down the stairs, gave a quick nod to the portrait of his Great-Aunt Ada (the GREATEST POSTMOUSE WHO EVER LIVED) and scurried out of the house.

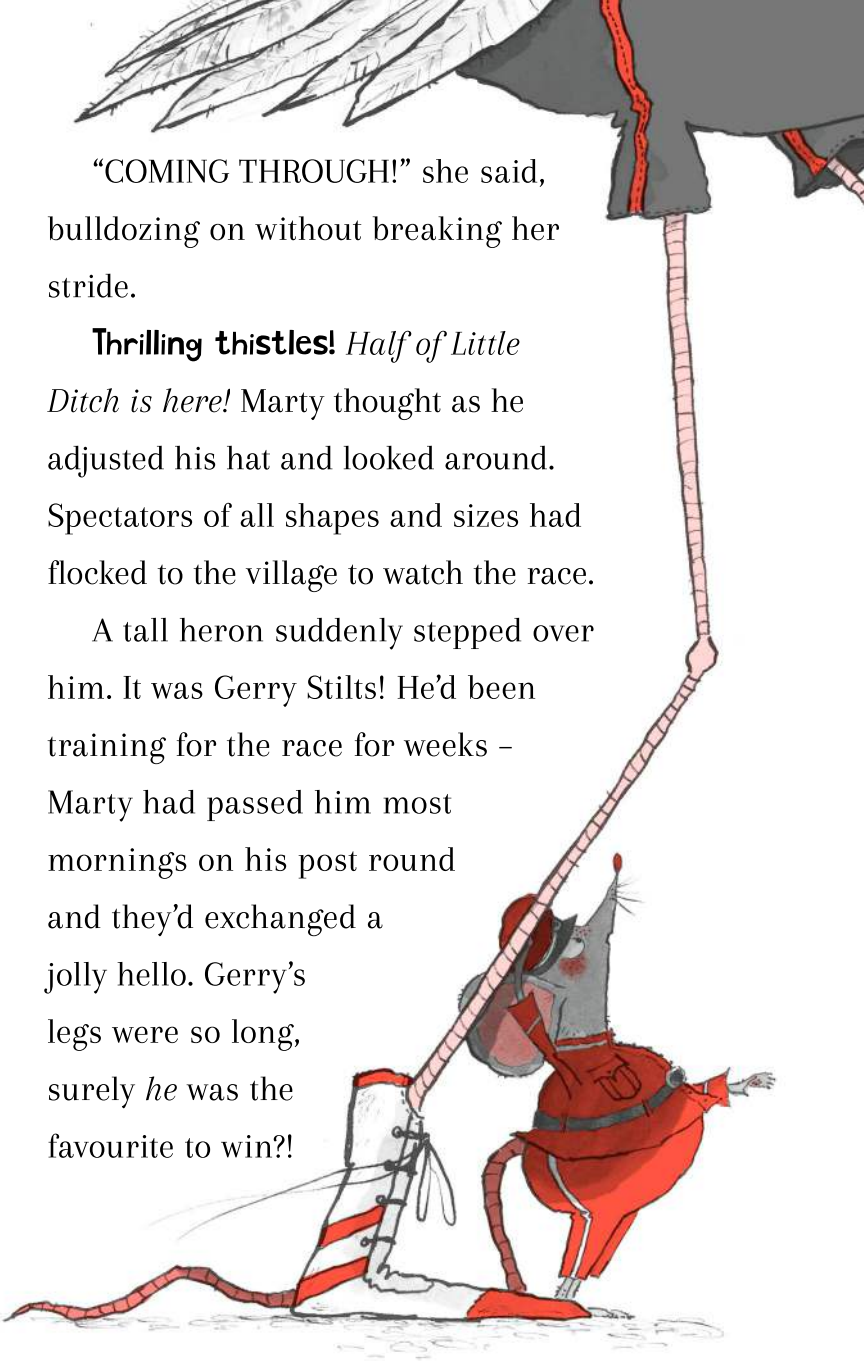


Muriel, I'm counting to three and then you're grounded!
DAD! Otto's pushing in!
Who hid my toothbrush?
Ed stood on my tail!

CHAPTER TWO

A WONKY BAGEL

Marty scampered around the corner – BUMPF! – straight into Betty Beaker, the favourite to win today's race. She was speed walking at an impressive pace.



"COMING THROUGH!" she said, bulldozing on without breaking her stride.

Thrilling thistles! *Half of Little Ditch is here!* Marty thought as he adjusted his hat and looked around. Spectators of all shapes and sizes had flocked to the village to watch the race.

A tall heron suddenly stepped over him. It was Gerry Stilts! He'd been training for the race for weeks – Marty had passed him most mornings on his post round and they'd exchanged a jolly hello. Gerry's legs were so long, surely *he* was the favourite to win?!

“Good luck, Gerry!” Marty waved cheerfully after him.

But if Gerry replied, Marty never heard. Something large barged into him, and Marty found himself high-speed rolling – ears over tail – along the ground.

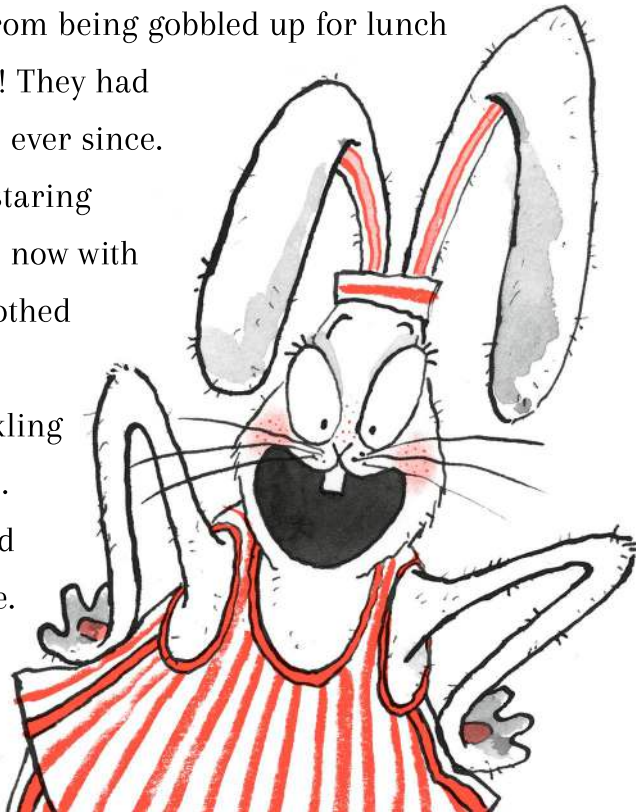
He stopped eventually, flat on his back outside the post office. He stared up at the sky, wondering what had happened and trying to catch his breath.

Oh, calamitous cottontails!

Marty should have guessed: it was Nibbles Frizzby.

He had met Nibbles on his eventful first day as Postmouse. She had helped him when he got lost in the underground labyrinth of Whisker Warren where she lived *AND* she'd saved him from being gobbled up for lunch by two toads! They had been friends ever since.

She was staring down at him now with a big one-toothed smile, her whiskers tickling Marty's nose. He tried hard not to sneeze.



"PARTY!" she said happily, mispronouncing

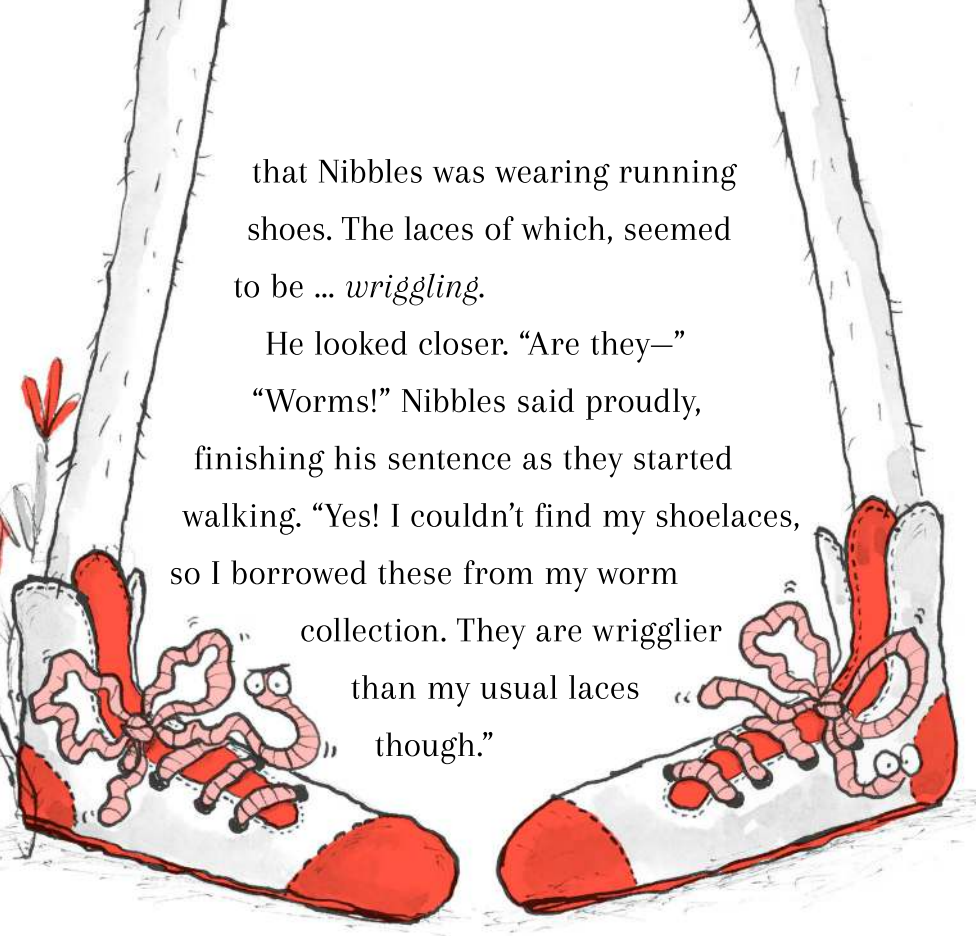
his name as usual. "I was practising running backwards when I crashed into something, but look – it's vanished! POOF!" Nibbles pointed to where the *something* used to be, then added, "That's when I saw you on the ground doing roly-polies."

"The *something* you ran into," Marty replied, still a little winded, "was *me*!"

"Oh, silly Moosie Moo!" Nibbles chortled. "How could I have run into *you*?! YOU were on the floor rolling around like a wonky bagel!"

With that, she extended her paw and helped him up.

Marty dusted himself off. As he bent down to pick up his belongings, he noticed



that Nibbles was wearing running shoes. The laces of which, seemed to be ... *wriggling*.

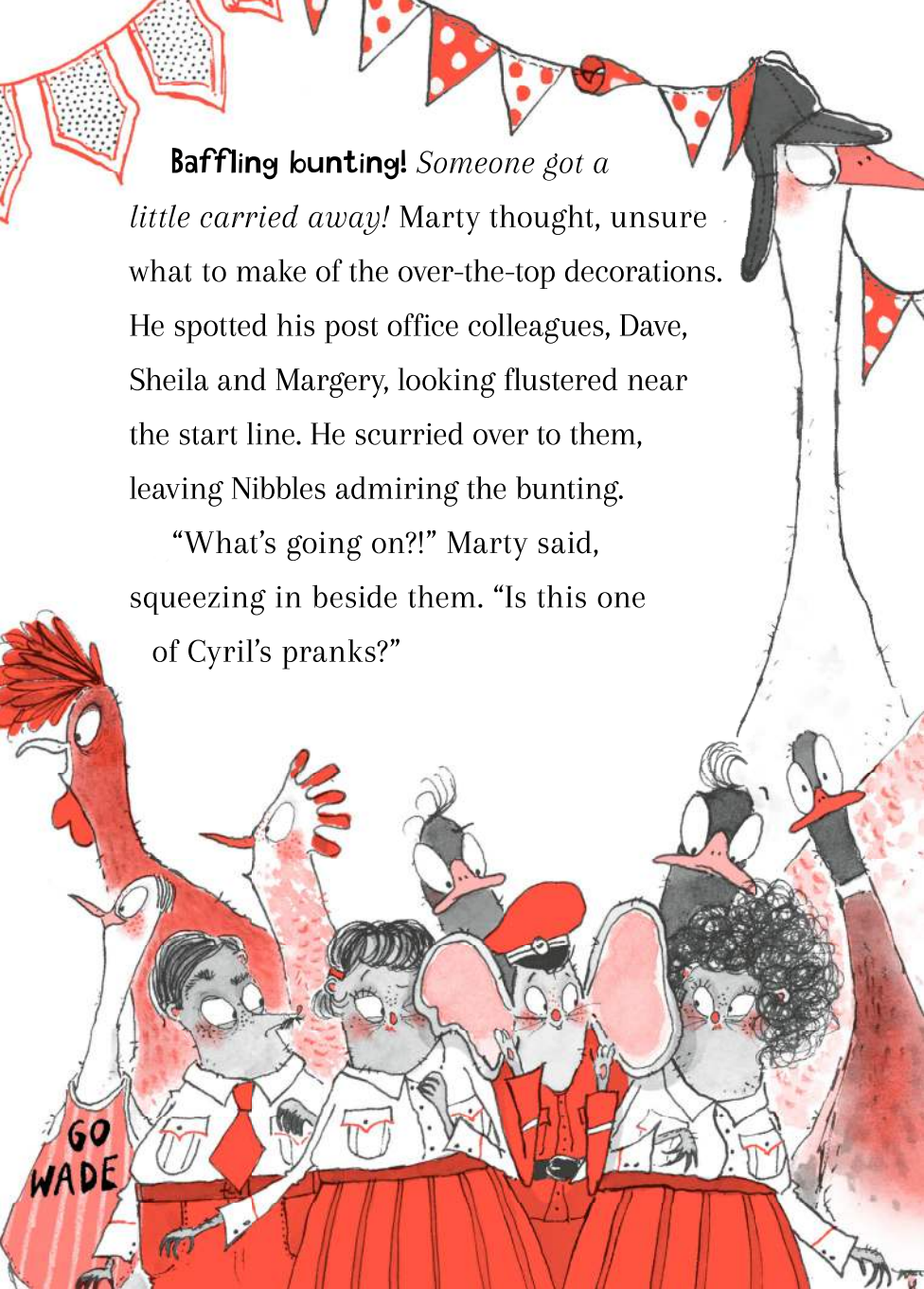
He looked closer. "Are they—"

"Worms!" Nibbles said proudly, finishing his sentence as they started walking. "Yes! I couldn't find my shoelaces, so I borrowed these from my worm collection. They are wrigglier than my usual laces though."

Marty thought about saying, *shoelaces don't usually wriggle because USUALLY they aren't alive*, but he didn't get the chance, as just then they turned the corner and saw...

I Love You Honk
Marry Me Honk
WADE TO WIN
DALLAS TO WIN!
GERRY TO WIN!

Team Tilda
~~Terry~~
~~Dallas~~
WADE!
TEAM TILDA
GO WADE
RAT 2



Baffling bunting! *Someone got a little carried away!* Marty thought, unsure what to make of the over-the-top decorations. He spotted his post office colleagues, Dave, Sheila and Margery, looking flustered near the start line. He scurried over to them, leaving Nibbles admiring the bunting.

"What's going on?!" Marty said, squeezing in beside them. "Is this one of Cyril's pranks?"

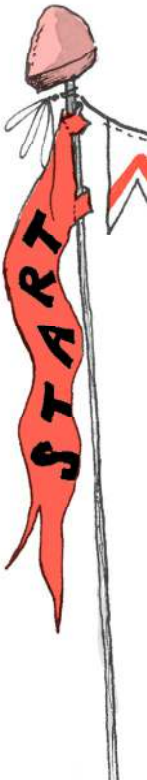
Cyril was their co-worker who used to play mean pranks on them. That is, until Marty played a prank of his own! Cyril had been on his best behaviour ever since.

"Why? What *else* has vanished?!" Sheila said as all three looked at him nervously.

"Huh?" Marty said, raising as eyebrow. "I was talking about this OTT bunting... What are YOU talking about?"

Dave, Sheila and Margery rolled their eyes in disappointed unison.

"It's happened *again*," Sheila confided to Marty.

"*Stamps* this time!" Dave chipped in, shaking his head.

"And *three* rolls of Margery's favourite string," Sheila added, placing a compassionate paw on Margery's shoulder.