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Opening extract from

Cheese Galore!

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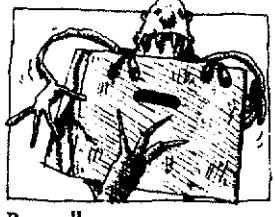
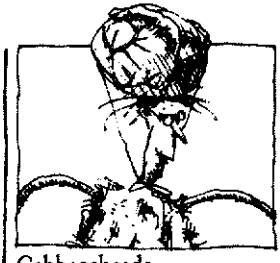
Johnson's Taxonomy
of Trolls and Creatures

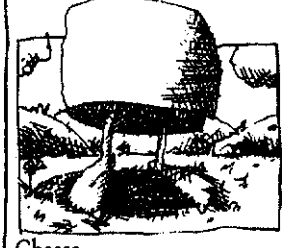
Aardvark
Aardvarks are invariably the first animals listed in any alphabetical listing of creatures. Beyond this they have few attributes relevant here.



Boxtrolls
A sub-species of the common troll, they are very shy, so live inside a box. These they gather from the backs of large shops. They are somewhat troublesome creatures–as they have a passion for everything mechanical and no understanding of the concept of ownership (they steal anything which is not bolted down, and more often than not, anything which is). It is very dangerous to leave tools lying about where they might find them.



Cabbageheads
Belief has it that cabbageheads live deep underground and are the bees of the underworld. Little else is known at this time, apart from a fondness for brassicas.



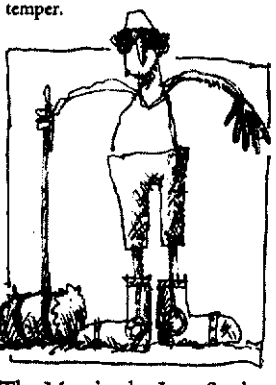
Cheese
Wild English Cheeses live in bogs. This is unlike their French cousins who live in caves. They are nervous beasties, that eat grass by night, in the meadows and woodlands. They are also of very low intelligence, and are panicked by almost anything that catches them unawares. Cheeses make easy quarry for hunters, being rather easier to catch than a dead sheep.

Crow
The crow is a very intelligent bird, capable of living in many environments. Crows are known to be considerably more honest than their cousins, magpies, and enjoy a varied diet, and good company. Usually they are charming company, but should be kept from providing the entertainment. Failure to do so may result in tedium, for while intelligent, crows seem to lack taste in the choice of music, and conversational topics.

Fresh-water Sea-cow
Distant relative of the manitou. This creature inhabits the canals, and drains of certain West Country towns. A passive creature of large size, and vegetarian habits. They are very kind to their young, and make good mothers.

Grandfather (William)

Arthur's guardian and carer. Grandfather has lived underground for many years in a cave home where he pursues his interests in engineering. All the years in a damp cave have taken their toll, and he now suffers from very bad rheumatism, and a somewhat short temper.



The Man in the Iron Socks

A mysterious shadowy figure said to be much feared by the members of the now defunct Cheese Guild. He is thought to hold a dark secret as well as a large 'Walloper'. His Walloper is the major cause of fear, but he also has a sharp tongue, and a caustic line in wit. History does not relate the reasoning behind his wearing of iron socks.

The Members

Members of the secretive Ratbridge Cheese Guild, that was thought to have died out after the 'Great Cheese Crash'. It was an evil organization that rigged the cheese market, and doctored and adulterated lactose-based food stuffs.

Rabbits

Furry, jumping mammals, with a passion for tender vegetables and raising the young. Good parents, but not very bright.

Rabbit Women

Very little is known about these mythical creatures, except that they are supposed to live with rabbits, and wear clothes spun from rabbit wool.

Rats

Rats are known to be some of the most intelligent of all rodents, and to be considerably more intelligent than many humans. They are known to have a passion for travel, and be extremely adaptable. They often live in a symbiotic relationship with humans.

CENSORED

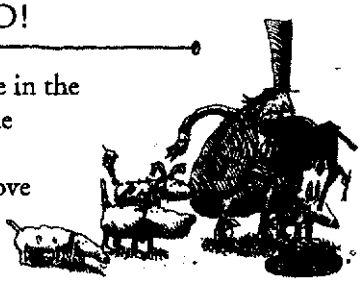
Trotting Badgers

Trotting badgers are some of the nastiest creatures to be found anywhere. With their foul temper, rapid speed, and razor-sharp teeth, it cannot be stressed just how unpleasant and dangerous these creatures are. It is only their disgusting stench that gives warning of their proximity, and when smelt it is often too late.

THE STORY SO FAR . . .

TRAPPED!

ARTHUR has lived all his life in the Underworld, deep below the streets of Ratbridge, with his grandfather, and only comes above ground occasionally. But now Arthur is trapped above ground, thanks to the dastardly Archibald Snatcher and his men, who have stolen his mechanical wings and sealed all the entrances into the Underworld.



Snatcher, surrounded by hounds, stood by the drain cover

Arthur joined Willbury and the group of creatures

HERE BE MONSTERS!

ARTHUR takes refuge with Willbury Nibble in his disused pet shop. There he meets boxtrolls and a cabbagehead, who quickly become his firm friends.

SOME RATHER SMALL CREATURES

A sinister visitor, Mr Gristle, comes to the pet shop and sells Willbury a miniature boxtroll, cabbagehead, and sea-cow. Later, in the market, Arthur and Willbury see more mysterious tiny creatures, sold by the bizarre Madame Froufrou.

Madame Froufrou passed the tiny boxtroll down to the lady

MARJORIE

A very upset Marjorie

HOPING that Willbury's friend Marjorie can help them find Arthur's wings, Arthur and Willbury go to find her at the patent hall. She is extremely upset as she has invented something wonderful—too secret to tell them about—and her invention has been stolen by an unscrupulous father and son, Louis and Edward Trout.

GONE!

TOGETHER the friends return home, but find that a disaster awaits them. While they were out, the pet shop has been ransacked—and all the big creatures have been stolen! As they stand wondering what to do, a sailor called Kipper and a rat called Tom arrive, from the Ratbridge Nautical Laundry.

'Good morning! Need any washing done?'

'Something has got to be done!'

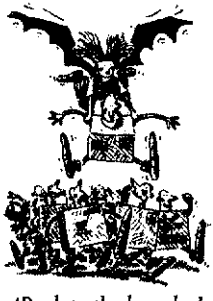
SKULDUGGERY!

TOM and Kipper tell them that some rats have gone missing from the Laundry, too—and they suspect that some shady characters from the Cheese Hall are responsible—including Snatcher and Gristle! Everyone decides they must work together to find out what is going on, and to get their friends back, and so they set off for the Nautical Laundry to make a plan . . .

CABBAGEHEADS

MEANWHILE, we discover that the Underworld has started to flood. A colony of cabbageheads is forced to move to look for drier ground. But they stumble into a terrible trap . . .

Caught in a net and collected by a group of men wearing tall hats



'Back to the laundry! Follow us!'

INTO THE CHEESE HALL

ARTHUR, Willbury, Marjorie and the sailors and rats go to stake out the Cheese Hall. Arthur, defying Willbury's instructions, manages to sneak inside. There, in a deep dungeon, he finds the creatures imprisoned. After much danger, Arthur finds his wings, and manages to escape with the creatures.

THE DASTARDLY PLAN

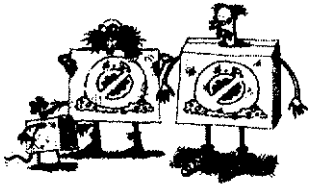
BACK at the laundry, some policemen arrive. Clearly in the thrall of Snatcher, they arrest Arthur and send him back to the Cheese Hall. There, Snatcher reveals to Arthur that he and his men are using Marjorie's invention—a shrinking machine!—to steal the size from big creatures and turn them into miniature ones. What the reason is he will not say . . .

Arthur alone in the dungeon

THE MAN IN THE IRON SOCKS

'So if I cause any trouble . . . they just turn the magnet on . . . boink!'

IN the dungeon, Arthur makes the acquaintance of the man in the next cell. His name is Herbert and he has been there for many years. He has been given iron socks so that Snatcher's men can control him by turning on a powerful magnet in the roof of his cell.



'They won't bother us if we're dressed as boxtrolls'

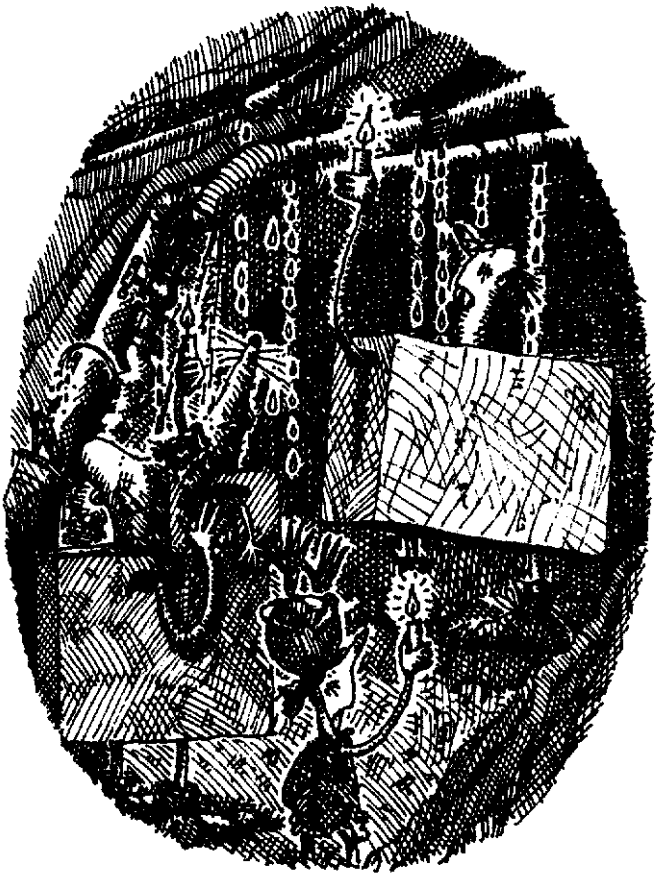
THE RESCUE PARTY

MEANWHILE, Willbury and co. finally find a way into the Underworld, by dressing up as boxtrolls to outwit Snatcher's men, and set out to try to rescue Arthur by tunnelling up from below the Cheese Hall. The Underworld is flooding fast and all the underlings—and Grandfather—are in grave danger.

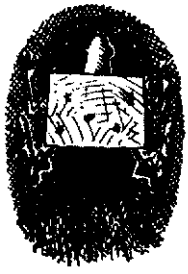
THE TRUTH AT LAST

BACK in the dungeon, Arthur manages to use his special doll to communicate with Grandfather—and discovers that Grandfather and Herbert are very old friends, and that Herbert has something to do with the reason that Arthur and Grandfather live underground. At last Grandfather is ready to tell Arthur the truth . . .

'It's time you heard the truth about why we live underground'



Something was wrong



Fish and the other real boxtrolls had a way of walking with their feet a few inches up either wall to avoid the water

Chapter 1

WET!

Several inches of water ran down the tunnels as the procession made its way under the town. Fish and the other real boxtrolls had a way of walking with their feet a few inches up either wall to avoid the water, but even so it dripped down from the ceiling onto their boxes. Willbury and the others were getting very, very wet, and the rats were complaining as the water came up well over the bottom of their boxes.

Tom came to a stop and took out his teeth. 'It's not the water that I hate,' said Tom. 'It's the feeling of the soggy cardboard rubbing on my legs. It feels really horrid, like old wellies.'

'It's the feeling of the soggy cardboard rubbing on my legs'

Rats with dripping boxes were lifted, and carried aloft

'We can do something about that,' said Willbury, taking out his teeth. Then he shouted the order: 'Large boxtrolls please pick up small boxtrolls and carry them till it gets drier. And you can remove your teeth till further notice.'

All down the line teeth were removed and rats with dripping boxes were lifted and carried aloft.

'Thanks!' said Tom to Willbury.

The tunnels slowly rose up towards the town, but remained very wet. The real boxtrolls were now in familiar territory, and they didn't need their candles. Fish kept rushing ahead into the darkness and returning excitedly. After a few of these forays he seemed to grow pensive.

'Have you noticed pipes up on the roof?' asked Tom.

Willbury held up his candle to look. There were pipes . . . and most of them were leaking. Something was wrong.

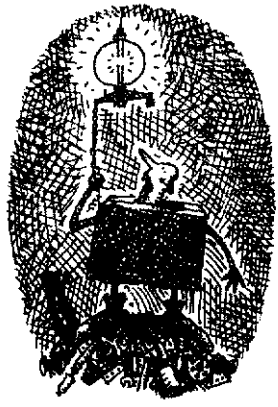
The tunnel levelled out, and Fish led them to an area of what looked like very old cellars. They went in and turned a corner to see an iron ladder fixed to a wall in front of them. The ladder disappeared up into darkness. Fish signalled to them to stop, then went up the ladder followed by the other

real boxtrolls. After a few minutes a distressed-looking Fish returned alone.

Willbury spoke. 'What is it, Fish?'

Fish signalled to them to follow him up the ladder.

The group silently followed Fish and after a short climb they came up through a hole on to a dry floor. Wherever they were it was big, as the light from their candles faded into darkness around them. There was a loud click, and above them a light came on. Shoe was standing on top of a huge pile of nuts and bolts, and holding a chain fixed to some kind of glass ball. The light from the ball flooded the cavern. Everywhere there were machine tools, half built pumps, broken bicycles, bits of wire, tools, and pieces of metal of every shape, colour, and description. The place was an Aladdin's cave of engineering scrap.



Shoe was standing on top of a huge pile of nuts and bolts, and holding a chain fixed to some kind of glass ball

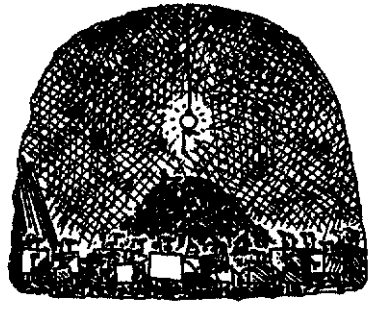
'This is the boxtrolls' nest!' exclaimed Willbury.

The boxtrolls nodded.

Marjorie was staring up at the glowing glass ball. 'They've got electric light! Fancy that. I thought it might be possible one day.'

Willbury looked about. 'Where are the other boxtrolls?'

The real boxtrolls looked very sad and unhappy.



The place was an Aladdin's cave of engineering scrap.

Kipper looked at them and whispered, ' . . . I think Snatcher has taken them . . . '

Willbury took this in, then replied. 'That may be it. But it would mean that he must have been capturing them somehow . . . and down here!'

Fish turned to the boxtrolls that Arthur had freed. They just nodded.

Willbury spoke to them very gently. 'You were captured down here?'

The boxtrolls nodded again, pointed back down the hole, and started burbling.

'Could you show us the way up to the Cheese Hall?'

They shook their heads and mumbled.

Titus whispered to Willbury, then Willbury turned to the others. 'Snatcher and his mob put them in sacks after they were captured. But they think he has some sort of mechanical elevator, with an entrance down here somewhere. They say it shot them up to the Cheese Hall as fast as a rocket.'

'They say it shot them up to the Cheese Hall as fast as a rocket'

'Do you think we could find it?' asked Tom.

The boxtrolls looked unsure, and Titus whispered again to Willbury.

'Titus says that this place is such a warren that the elevator could be hidden anywhere.'

Everybody looked very glum.

Then Willbury spoke again. 'I think we should split up and search for the elevator. It shouldn't take long with so many of us. We'll meet up here in an hour?'

It was agreed, and they split up into small groups and set off. Willbury stayed with Fish, Titus, Tom, and Kipper, while Marjorie teamed up with Shoe, Egg, and some other boxtrolls. As they waited for their turn to descend the ladder, Willbury spoke to his group.

'There is something else I want to do before we start looking for the elevator. I've got to find Arthur's grandfather. I am very concerned, as he must be running out of food.'

Fish perked up and raised a hand.

'Do you know where he lives?' asked Willbury. Fish burbled something and Titus whispered something to Willbury.

'You say you have heard that there are some humans living in a cave off one of the large caverns?'

Fish nodded.

'Do you think you can lead us there?' Fish looked a little unsure, then nodded again.

'Well, let's try that!' said Willbury. And off they set back down the ladder.

And off they set back down the ladder

The Evil Crime