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opening extract from

Titch and Mitch 3: The King of the Castle

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The King of the Castle



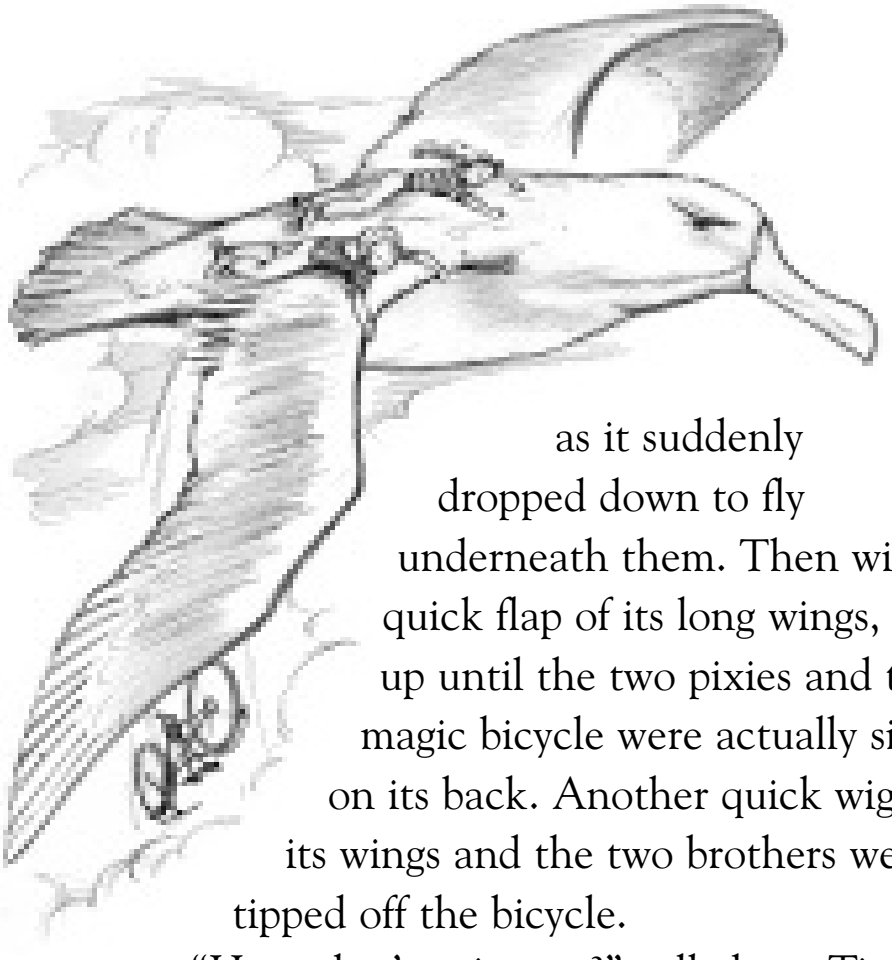
TITCH AND MITCH WERE RIDING THEIR magic bicycle home one day after a visit to see their friend Wendy. They were glad to leave the town where human people lived, and were looking forward to a rest on their island, when a large shadow suddenly covered them. Looking up, they found a huge bird flying overhead.

"What on earth is that bird?" asked a startled Titch.

"I believe it's called an albatross, one of the biggest birds in the world," replied Mitch.

"But why is it flying so close to us?"

There was no chance to call out to the large bird



as it suddenly dropped down to fly underneath them. Then with a quick flap of its long wings, it rose up until the two pixies and the magic bicycle were actually sitting on its back. Another quick wiggle of its wings and the two brothers were tipped off the bicycle.

"Hey, what's going on?" called out Titch in alarm.

Slowly the albatross rose higher and higher and before long they were flying over the island where the two pixies lived.

"That's our home down there," Mitch shouted to the bird. "Put us down please."

"We were going home anyway," said Titch emphatically. "Come on Mitch, we'll fly down to the ground ourselves."

But before they could climb onto the bicycle, the albatross tilted its wings and tipped itself sideways. Titch and Mitch squealed with shock and grabbed handfuls of feathers to stop themselves from falling off. Unfortunately, the magic bicycle slid off the back of the albatross and went tumbling to the ground below.

"Why did you do that?" called out Titch in a very angry tone.

The albatross turned its head slightly and spoke with a very deep voice, "You two are coming with me."

"Why?" Mitch shouted back.



"The King of the Castle wants a pixie."

"What for?" Titch had never heard of the King of the Castle.

"I don't know," rumbled the big bird. "He just said he wanted a pixie and he has paid me very well to get one."

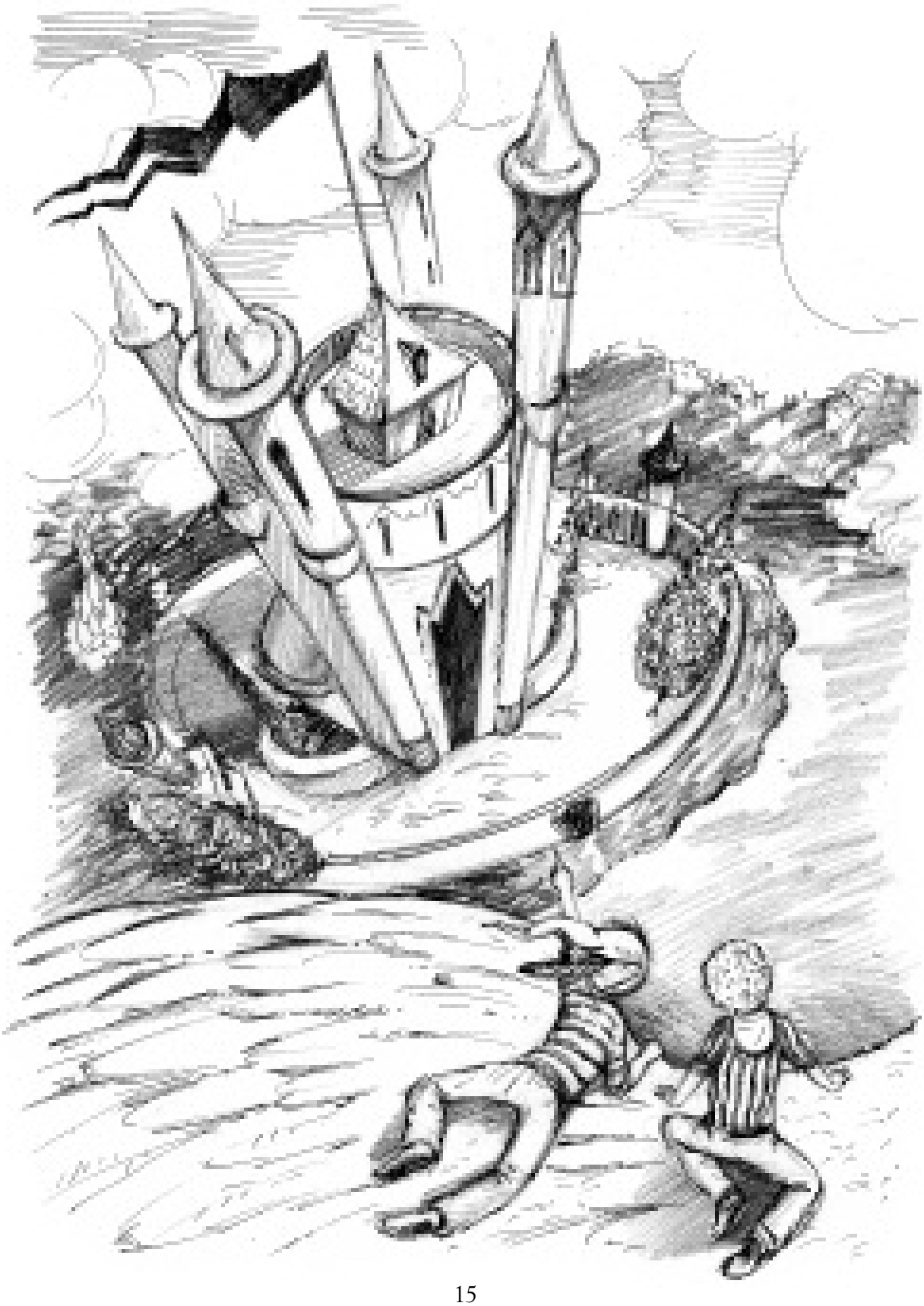
"We demand to be put down. We are not going to this King fellow." Titch was very angry at losing the magic bicycle and being kidnapped by a big bird.

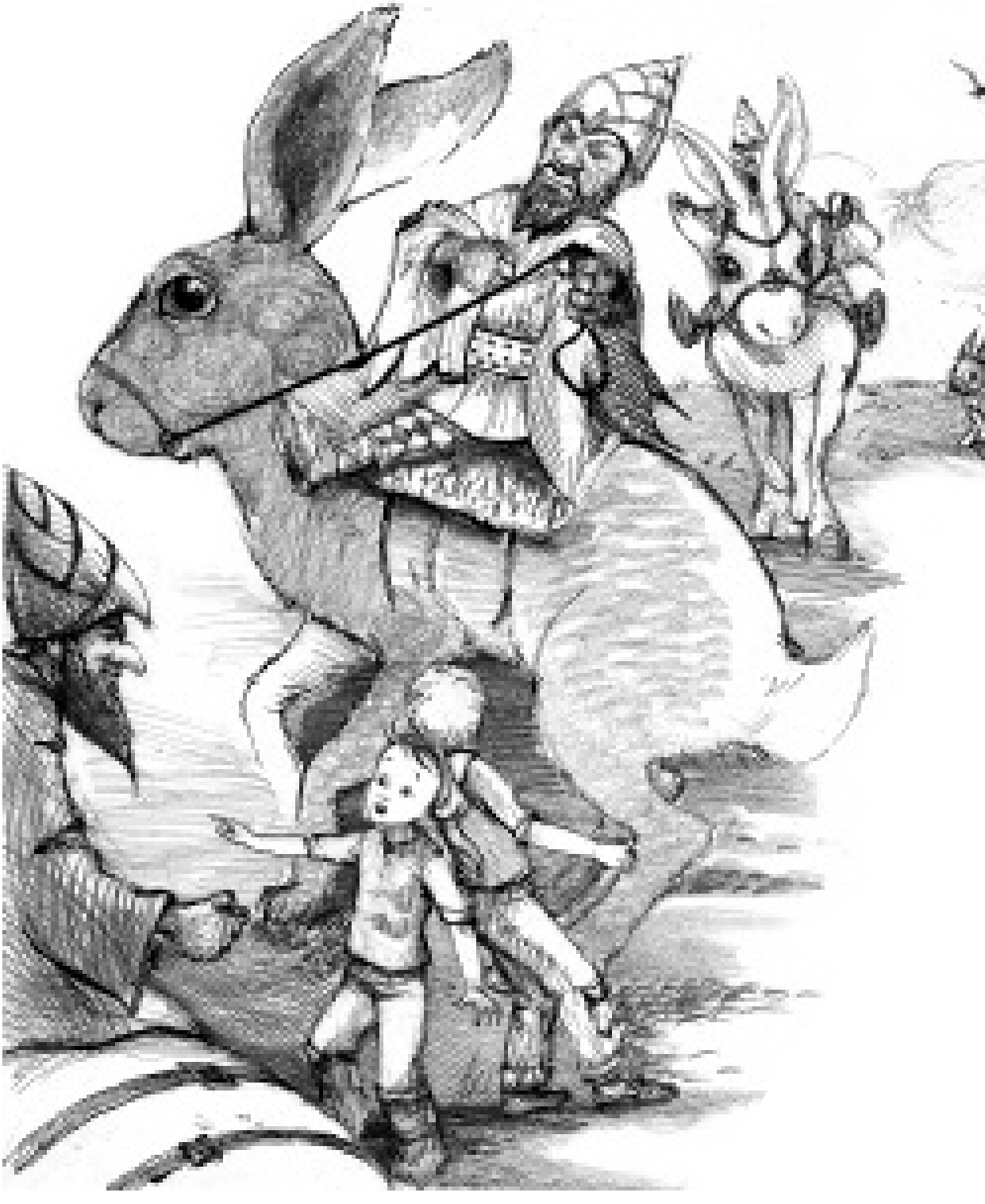
The albatross rumbled again, "Please be quiet, we've got a long way to go."

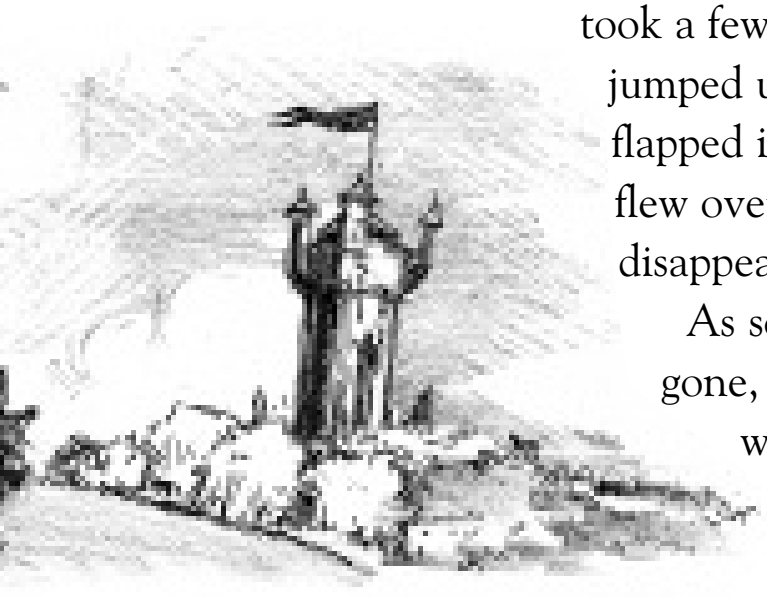
No matter how much the pixies protested, the albatross ignored them and flew steadily on, leaving their island far behind and heading out to sea.

After what seemed like an age, the bird started to lose height. Peeping over its shoulder, the pixies saw a strange and unfamiliar island looming in the distance. As they got nearer, they could see a large castle right in the middle of the island, with four tall towers stretching high into the sky. When they reached the castle, the albatross floated gently down over the walls and landed in the central courtyard. As the big bird folded its wings, the two brothers tumbled to the ground. The bird looked around.

"Ah, here they come," it rumbled. "I probably won't see you two again, so goodbye." The albatross







took a few steps forward and jumped up into the air. It flapped its wings vigorously, flew over the walls and disappeared out to sea.

As soon as he was gone, six large rabbits, with soldiers sitting on their backs and riding them like horses, came bounding up. The soldiers wore red tunics and pointed helmets. They were about the same size as the pixies with spiky black beards, which made them look very fierce. They surrounded the two pixies. Titch and Mitch looked around for an escape route, but there was nowhere to run.

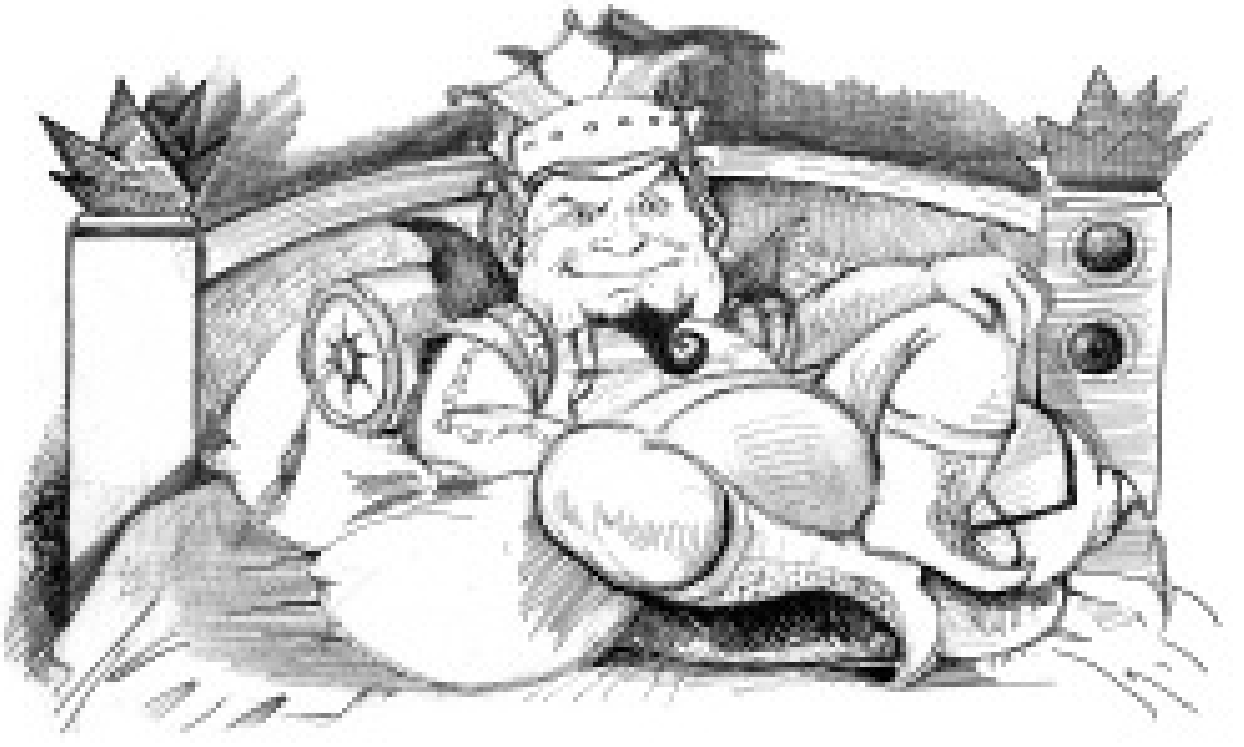
"You will come with us," said one of the soldiers.

"Where are you taking us?" asked Mitch.

"To meet the king."

"Why?"

But there was no response. Nudging the pixies roughly, the rabbits and the soldiers escorted them across the courtyard, up some wide stone steps, and into a grand hall where the king waited. He was seated on a large cushion and had a very fat tummy.



On his head there was a golden crown, which covered most of his forehead. Two little eyes peered out over chubby cheeks and, like the guards, he had a black, spiky beard that bobbed up and down when he spoke.

"AT LAST," he said in a very loud voice. "A REAL PIXIE HAS ARRIVED. MY WITCH WILL BE EVER SO PLEASED TO SEE YOU."

"WHAT DO YOU WANT WITH US?" Titch shouted back, angry at being spoken to so rudely.

"SILENCE!" roared the king. "YOU ARE NOT ALLOWED TO SPEAK TO A KING! YOU ARE ONLY A PIXIE. TAKE THEM TO WITCH HAZEL

IMMEDIATELY."

Another set of guards marched them through an archway and up some more steps, which were narrow and winding and led to the top floor of the castle. There, at the start of a long corridor was another guard, standing to attention, outside a strong, wooden door.

"Open the door," demanded the leading guard.

The door creaked as it opened and the two



brothers were pushed inside.

It was gloomy inside the room, but they could make out a hunched figure, dressed in a black robe, sitting in the corner by a window. The witch had a pointed hat with a wide brim, a big nose shaped like a hook, and black eyes that peered at the pixies.

The two brothers shrank into a corner as far from the witch as they could get and clutched each other in fright. The room was cold. The stone walls were damp and slimy. They were locked up in a prison with a witch and there seemed to be no escape.

For a while, they stared in horror at the witch,

