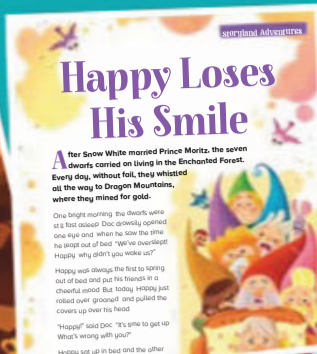


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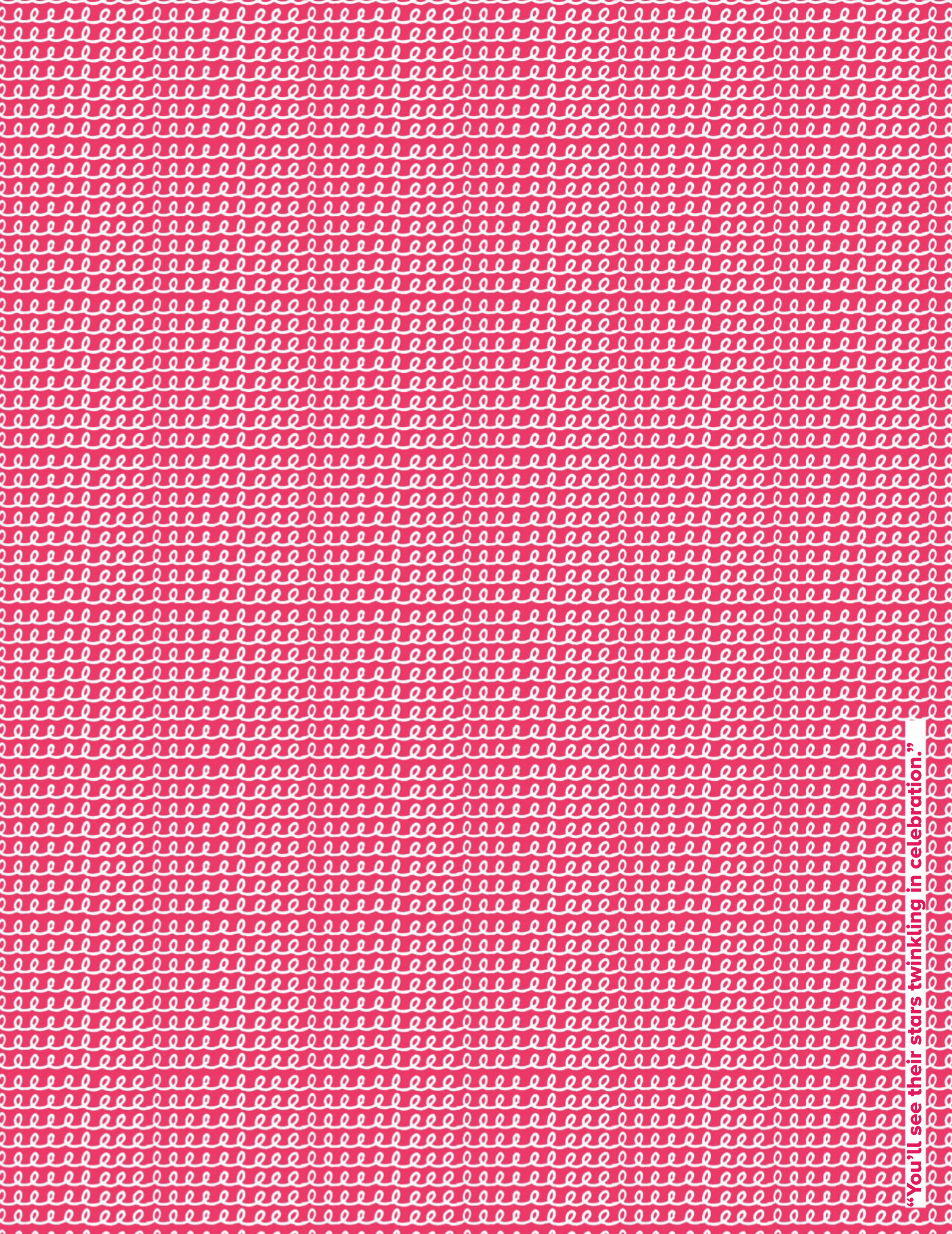


BARRY THE DUNG BEETLE
The strongest animal on Earth!



MOLLY WHUPPIE

**Silly Simon, The Giraffe and the Warthog,
Happy the Dwarf, Fairy Gold and a JOKER!**



“You’ll see their stars twinkling in celebration.”

Kids make the best heroes of all!

Want to discover fairy gold and whup a giant? Join Guto and Molly on their adventures of a lifetime. Plus play footie with the seven dwarfs!

This issue belongs to:

SPOT IT!

See if you can find me hiding in one of our story pictures!

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ILLUSTRATORS:

Nguyen Phuong Quynh The Giraffe and the Warhog

Federica Tanania Guto and the Fairies

Rodolfo Velado The Strongest Animal on Earth

Marisa Morea Silly Simon

Lucy Xue Molly Whuppie

Tel Coelho Juha the Joker

Giorgia Broseghini Happy Loses his Smile

Hahn Dung Ho The Cowherd and the Weaver Girl

READ TALES FROM WALES, CHINA, INDIA, THE MIDDLE EAST AND STORYLAND!

SEE PAGE 32 FOR MORE MINI STORIES TO DOWNLOAD!

Read happily ever after...

Famous Fables

The Giraffe and the Warthog

What's better – being tall or being small? Find out in this colourful fable from India.

6

Storyteller's Corner

Guto and the Fairies

There are fairies in the Welsh mountains, but only Guto is smart enough to make friends with them.

9

Tales from Today

The Strongest Animal on Earth

By Jim Cole. The insect circus is in town and Barry the dung beetle can't wait to see the strongman.

14

Poems and Rhymes

Silly Simon

The moral of this classic rhyme is: always make sure you have enough pennies to buy a pie!

18

Favourite Fairy Tales

Molly Whuppie

Can brave Molly outwit a giant and win amazing rewards for herself and her sisters?

21

OUR COVER STORY

Around the World Tales

Juha the Joker

Meet one of the Middle East's favourite trickster characters in a story that's rather potty.

30

Storyland Adventures

Happy Loses His Smile

Seven dwarfs become six when Happy wakes up feeling strange – and only his friends can help.

33

Myths and Legends

The Cowherd and the Weaver Girl

One of China's most famous myths for stargazers everywhere.

38

Storytime Playbox

Make a puppet theatre, play our fruity game, solve story puzzles, and design a football kit for the seven dwarfs!

44

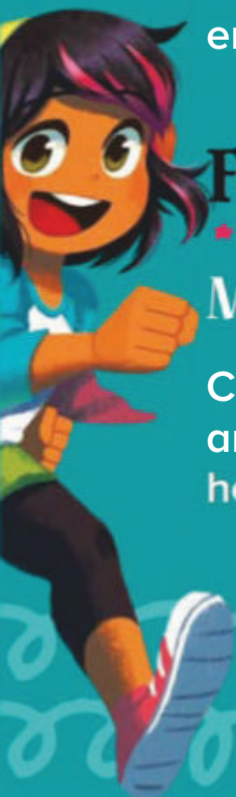
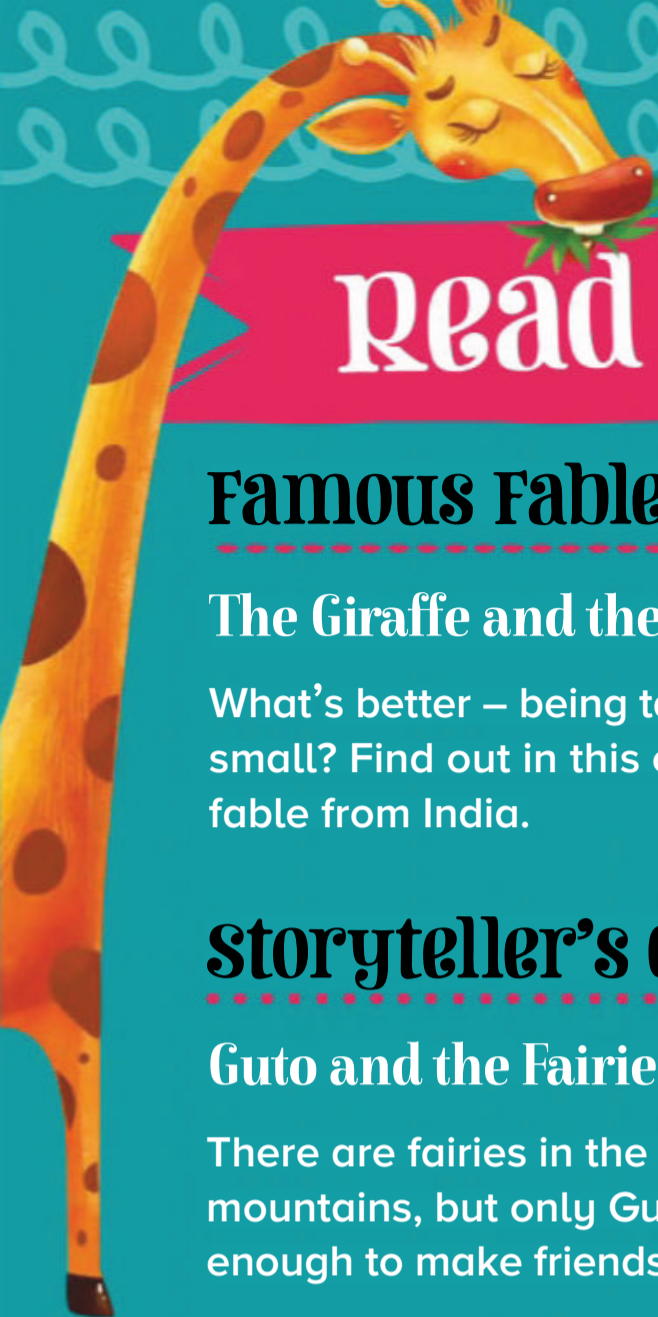
Story Magic

The best books of the month and a new Reading Buddy challenge for you. Why not give it a go?

50

READ THE WINNING ENTRY TO OUR 50-WORD STORY COMPETITION >>>

SEE PAGE 43!



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The Giraffe and the Warthog

The giraffe and the warthog were walking together one day when the giraffe stretched out her long neck and exclaimed, “Oh, how good it is to be tall!”

She looked down at the warthog and said boastfully, “Look how wonderfully long and elegant my neck is! Look how close I am to the sky and the trees! I bet you wish you were as tall as me.”

“No,” said the warthog, “I think it’s far better to be small. I don’t have to make any effort to stretch or reach as I can take what I like from the ground. Life is easier when you’re short.”

ACT IT OUT!

Act out this animal fable using our **Giraffe and Warthog Masks**. Download them for free from storytimemagazine.com/free



“I disagree,” said the giraffe, “and if I can’t prove to you that it’s better to be tall, I’ll give you my long neck.”

“Deal,” said the warthog. “And if I can’t prove to you that it’s better to be short, you can have my snout.”



The friends continued walking and soon reached a garden with a high wall around it. Hanging over the edge of the wall was a tree with lush green leaves and ripe fruits hanging from every branch.

The giraffe made a meal of the leaves and the fruit. When she was full, she said to the warthog, “I told you being tall was much better. Now, don’t you wish you could eat a fine meal like this? Would you still rather be short?”

The warthog shrugged and the two carried on walking.

They came to a gate in the wall. It was locked, but just beyond was a garden filled with juicy, fresh vegetables. →



The giraffe couldn't step over the gate, but the warthog scrambled under it.

He sniffed around the vegetable patch, using his snout to select the ripest and tastiest vegetables to eat. He enjoyed a big meal and said to the giraffe, "I told you being short was better.

Now, don't you wish you could eat a fine meal like this? Would you still rather be tall?"

They thought the matter over for a while and came to an agreement – the giraffe could keep her long neck and the warthog could keep his useful snout.

They realised that being tall and being short both had advantages and both are equally good. ★



WRITE IT!

Write a list of animal opposites like the giraffe and the warthog, such as tall and short, fat and thin, big and small, black and white, or scaly and furry. **How many animal opposites do you know?**

Guto and the Fairies

One fine day in north Wales, a young boy called Guto Bach went up the mountain to look after his family's sheep.

When he came home, he was clutching something unusual in his hands. It was a pile of gold coins – except it wasn't! They had all the details of gold coins – they even had writing on them – but, as he held them, they turned into white paper.

"These are strange," said his mother.

"Where did you get them from, son?"

"The children on the mountain gave them to me," said Guto.

"Are they children from the village?"

"Oh, no," said Guto. "But they're very nice. I've played with them before. It's funny – the coins always look real when we play together."

His mother realised the children must be fairies, because everyone knows that the Welsh mountains are full of fairy folk. ➔

His mother looked concerned. “No more going up the mountain, Guto. I don’t want you playing with children I don’t know. No good can come of it.”

Guto groaned. He liked his new friends a lot.

For a few days, Guto did as his mother said. But one afternoon, when she wasn’t looking, he slipped away. He ran up the mountain in search of his friends.

By evening, he hadn’t returned and his parents started to worry. By midnight, there was still no sign of Guto. The whole village joined in the search, but he was nowhere to be found. After a few days, they stopped looking for him.

His mother and father mourned the loss of little Guto for many months.



One morning, when two years had passed, Guto’s mother found her son sitting on the doorstep. He smiled at her guiltily. He was wearing the same clothes as the day he went missing and he hadn’t aged a day.

“Guto!” cried his mother, hugging him tightly. “We thought we’d lost you forever. Where have you been all this time?”





“But I only went to play with my friends yesterday,” said Guto, surprised. “I know I shouldn’t have gone, but they gave me these lovely clothes.”

Guto revealed a smart little suit, which was made from pure white paper. It was so well tailored, you couldn’t see a single stitch.

Guto’s mother took the suit and threw it on the fire. “Guto, you have been missing for two years. We were heartbroken. Now do you believe me that no good can come of playing with strange children?”

Guto nodded glumly, but he still didn’t quite believe it.



A few days later, his family had more bad luck. His parents had sold their sheep and spent all their money on new farm animals, which were being delivered by sea, but the ship sank in a fierce storm. Now they had no animals and no money.

Guto’s father had heard of a magical rock at the top of a nearby hill. People said there was a great treasure hidden beneath it, but everyone who had tried to move the rock had failed. Guto’s father was so desperate, he decided to give it a go. ➔

The next morning, with the help of his neighbours, Guto's father set off for the hill. Together, they spent the whole day and used all their strength trying to move the rock, but it was hopeless. It wouldn't budge.

That evening, when Guto saw how sad his parents were, he ran up the mountain and asked his fairy friends for help. "My parents are in trouble. Please can you spare some of your silver and gold?" he begged.

"There's plenty waiting for you under the rock on the hill, Guto," said the fairies.

"But all the people in the village couldn't move it," cried Guto.

"That's because they didn't believe," said the fairies. "You try, Guto. You'll see."

Guto ran home and told his parents what the fairies had said.



Of course, they didn't believe that a little boy could move a rock. How could he, when a whole village had failed? But they set out for the hill with him.

When they reached the rock, Guto pushed on it gently and, without any effort, it trembled and tipped and crashed to the ground with a shuddering thud!

Sure enough, beneath the rock was enough gold and silver for Guto's family to replace all the animals they had lost and to bring great wealth to everyone in their village. They all danced for joy.

"Perhaps some good can come of playing with fairies, after all," said Guto – and his mother and father had to agree. ★



MAKE IT!

Make fairy coins or tiny suits from white paper, like the ones in the story. Why do you think they turned to paper when Guto took them home?

The Strongest Animal on Earth

By Jim Cole

“Roll up! Roll up!” chirped the grasshopper ringmaster. **“The insect circus is back in town. We’ve got acrobatic fleas, stupendous spiders, brilliant butterflies and a super strongman!”**

The bees buzzed with enthusiasm and the ants were full of anticipation. The insect circus only visited once a year, so everyone was excited – especially Barry the dung beetle.

Barry loved the circus. He liked the colours, the costumes, the music, the lights – it was so different to the drab tunnel he lived in. He always got a row of seats to himself too, but that was because Barry was so smelly. It was lonely, but he was used to it by now. That was life for a dung beetle.

That evening, as the insects queued for tickets outside the circus tent, the ringmaster scurried by, wailing, “It’s a disaster! Jumbo’s made his cocoon early. We don’t have a strongman!”



Everyone groaned. The strongman was a highlight of the show.

The ringmaster turned to the insects. “I don’t suppose anyone knows a good replacement?”

“I can do it,” said a snail. “I carry my house on my back, you know.”

The ringmaster looked doubtful.

“Give me a try too,” said an ant.

The ringmaster laughed. “I hardly think you’ll be able to lift as much as Jumbo the elephant hawk-moth caterpillar. After all, nobody is as strong as an elephant!”

“You’d be surprised,” said the ant.

“Okay, come backstage, both of you,” sighed the ringmaster. “You’ll do.”



Soon the audience filed into the tent. Barry could hardly wait to sit down. As always, he had a row to himself.

The performance began spectacularly with earwigs in cowboy hats galloping around on high-speed millipedes, tightrope-walking inchworms, and a precarious pyramid of shield bugs.

The fleas reached new heights and a spider juggled something that looked suspiciously like its dinner. →



Finally, after the butterfly ballet, it was time for the strongman.

“Now, without further ado, we have not one strongman, but two!” cried the ringmaster. “Let’s go wild for Hercules the Snail and Goliath the Ant!”

Barry couldn’t help noticing how anxious the ringmaster looked.

Hercules the Snail slithered forward but, because he was so slimy, he couldn’t get a grip on the barbell. “Maybe if you put it on my back, I can carry it?” he suggested, but the ringmaster couldn’t lift the weight either. The audience fell silent.

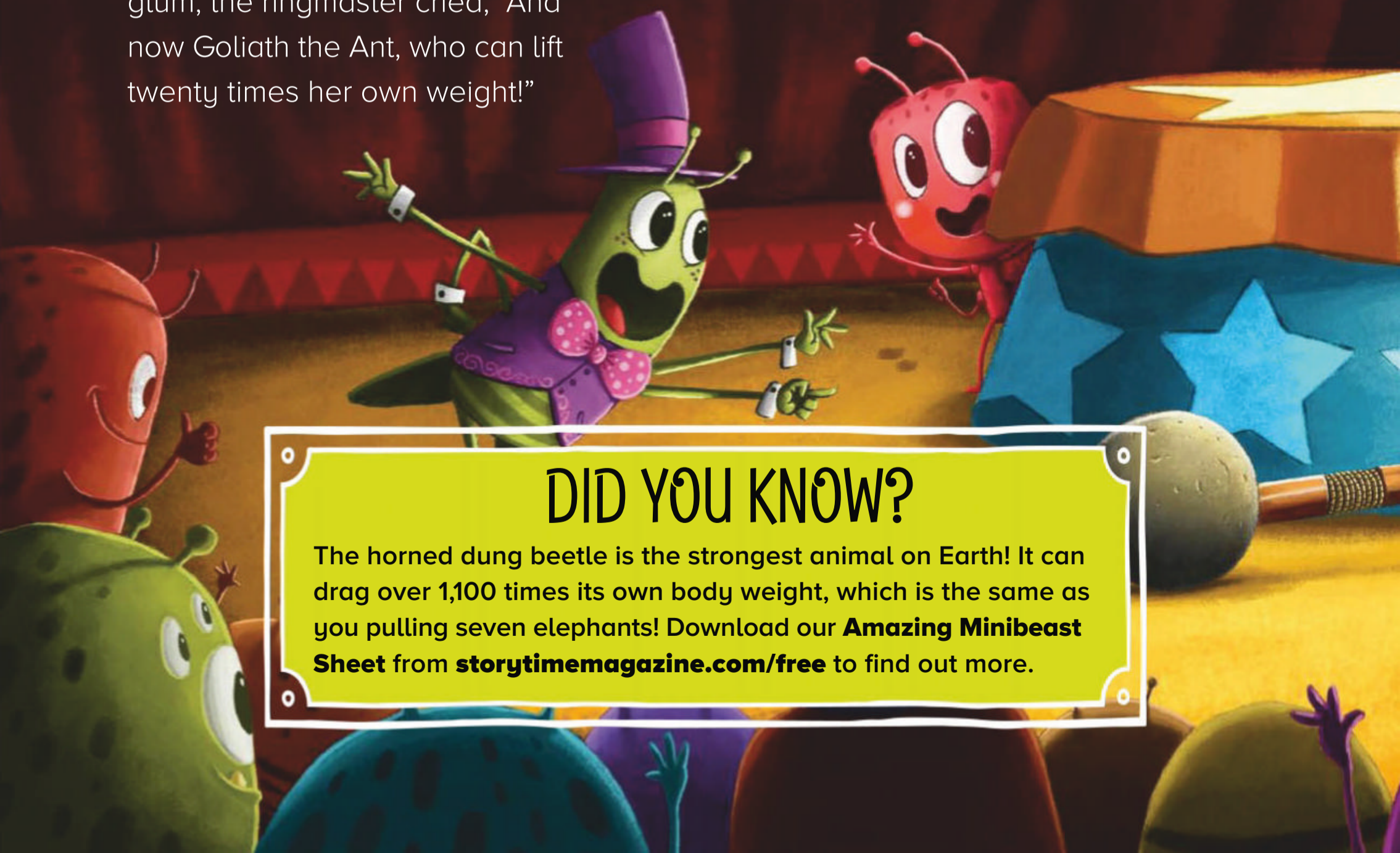
As Hercules glided away looking glum, the ringmaster cried, “And now Goliath the Ant, who can lift twenty times her own weight!”

Goliath gulped when she saw the size of the barbell. She was used to carrying leaves, but nothing as big as this. She tried hard to lift it, but all she managed was a gentle nudge.

But before the audience could boo, the barbell rolled forward, gaining speed as it zoomed down the sloping plinth. Goliath gasped as it bowled towards a stand of bigger, heavier barbells, right next to the front row of the audience!

“It’s a catastrophe!” screamed the ringmaster. “My audience is going to get squished.”

That’s when Barry the dung beetle sprang into action.



DID YOU KNOW?

The horned dung beetle is the strongest animal on Earth! It can drag over 1,100 times its own body weight, which is the same as you pulling seven elephants! Download our **Amazing Minibeast Sheet** from storytimemagazine.com/free to find out more.

He scuttled down the steps, reaching the ring just as the first barbell collided with the stand. Before a giant barbell could crash down and crush his fellow insects, he grabbed it and pushed it towards the plinth. He did the same with another and another until he was heaving the biggest, heaviest barbell of all. It was just like rolling dung balls, which he did several times a day.

When the weights were safely out of the way, Barry realised that the audience was on their feet whooping and cheering for him. Hercules the Snail and Goliath the Ant joined in.

“What’s your name, lad?” asked the ringmaster. “Want a job?”

“Barry... and yes please!”

“Introducing our new star attraction... Barry, the strongest animal on Earth!” exclaimed the ringmaster.

Then the audience went wild. They rushed into the ring to thank Barry for saving their lives. They hugged him and patted him on the back. Nobody seemed to care about the pong.

Barry the strongman flexed his biceps proudly. Life was about to get a lot more exciting. ★



Silly Simon

Silly Simon met a pieman,
Going to the fair.
Says Silly Simon to the pieman,
“Let me taste your ware.”

Says the pieman to Silly Simon,
“Show me first your penny.”
Says Silly Simon to the pieman,
“Indeed I have not any.”

Silly Simon went a-fishing
For to catch a whale.
All the water he had got
Was in his mother’s pail.



COUNT IT!

How many pies have cherries on top? Write your answer here and see if you got it right on the next page.



Silly Simon went to look
If plums grew on a thistle.
He pricked his fingers very much,
Which made poor Simon whistle.

He went for water in a sieve
But soon it all fell through.
And now poor Silly Simon
Bids you all "Adieu!"

WORD WISE!

Adieu (pronounced 'ad-yur')
is a French word which
means 'goodbye'.

Answer: 9 pies have cherries on top.

Molly Whuppie

Once upon a time, a poor couple had too many children to feed, so their three daughters set off to make their own way in the world.

The girls were called Molly, Caitlin and Shona Whuppie. Molly was the youngest and the cleverest of the trio, so she led her sisters through the woods to look for shelter.

After a while, she spotted a light and followed it to a large house with a grand door. Molly rang the bell.

A tall woman answered and Molly said, "Please let us in and give us a bite to eat. Our parents can't feed us."

"I can't!" cried the woman. "My husband is a giant and he'll eat you all up."

"Please," begged the girls.

"We promise to leave before he gets back."

As the woman had three daughters of her own, she took pity on them and invited them in for bread and milk.



However, sooner than expected, she heard her husband's heavy footsteps. He came thudding into the room and boomed, "Who have we got here?"

"Three poor girls with nowhere to go," said his wife. "Now, let them be and don't touch a hair on their heads."

"I'll do better than that," said the giant. "They can stay the night and share a bed with our three daughters."

His wife was surprised, but she led the girls to her daughters' room.

When they were tucked up in bed, the giant hung a gold necklace around each sister's neck. "These will bring you luck," he said.

But Molly knew better than to trust a big old giant.

When her sisters fell asleep, Molly took off the necklaces and put them on the giant's daughters.

In the middle of the night, the giant came into their dark room. He felt for the necklaces around the girls' necks, lifted up his own lassies, put them in a sack and carried them away.

Molly shook her sisters to wake them. "The giant was planning to eat us and he'll be so angry when he finds his daughters in a sack tomorrow. We must run away before he realises."

So they tiptoed out of the house and ran and ran. They didn't stop until they reached the king's palace.



Molly told her story to a palace guard, who told the king, who asked to meet Molly and her sisters.



“Molly, you’re clearly a clever young lady,” said the king. “I need someone smart like you to teach this giant a lesson. If you can steal the magic sword that hangs by his bed, I will give your eldest sister a splendid house and all the money she needs.”

Of course, Molly wanted her eldest sister, Shona, to be happy, so she agreed to the task.



The following day, Molly set off for the giant’s house again. When she arrived, she sneaked inside and crawled under his bed.

Molly waited patiently until darkness fell and the giant came to bed.

When he began to snore, she crept out of her hiding place, leant over the giant and took the magic sword. However, just as she reached the bedroom door, the sword rattled loudly. The giant jumped out of bed.

Molly ran through the door and out of the house, but the giant chased her. She ran and ran until she reached a bridge so thin and narrow, it was known as the ‘Bridge of One Hair’.

Molly bounded across the bridge, but it wouldn’t take the giant’s weight, so he was stuck on the other side.

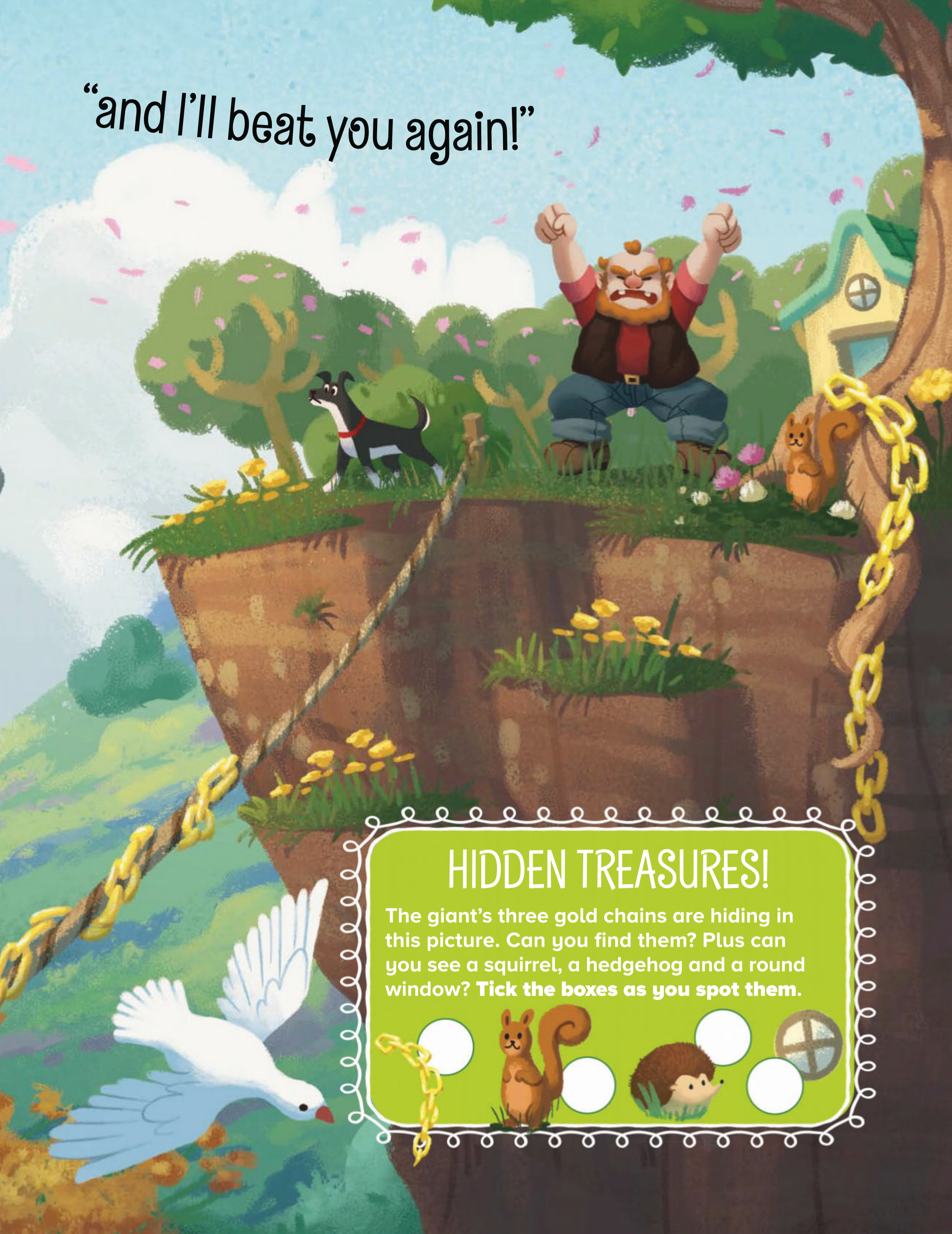
“There’ll be trouble if you ever come my way again, Molly Whuppie,” bellowed the giant, red in the face with rage. →



“That’s twice I’ve beaten you,” called Molly,



“and I’ll beat you again!”



HIDDEN TREASURES!

The giant’s three gold chains are hiding in this picture. Can you find them? Plus can you see a squirrel, a hedgehog and a round window? **Tick the boxes as you spot them.**



Molly sprinted all the way to the palace, where she presented the magic sword to the king.

He was delighted and, that very day, he rewarded her eldest sister, Shona, with a wonderful home and a casket filled with jewels and gold.

“You’ve done well, Molly,” said the king, “but I’ll also give your middle sister a splendid house and all the money she needs if you’re brave enough to steal the giant’s magic purse from under his pillow.”

Of course, Molly wished the best for her middle sister, Caitlin, just as she did for Shona, so she agreed to the king’s second challenge.



The next morning, she set off for the giant’s house again. Once inside, she crept under his bed and waited.

At last, the giant came to bed. When he started snoring, she slipped her hand under his pillow, snatched the magic purse and tiptoed out of his room. But just as she reached the door, the purse jangled loudly. The giant jumped out of bed.



Molly ran and ran as fast as she could with the giant close behind her. When she reached the 'Bridge of One Hair', she raced across it at top speed.

As before, the enormous giant could go no further. He howled across to her, "There'll be trouble if you ever come my way again, Molly Whuppie!"

"That's three times I've beaten you and I'll beat you again!" cried Molly.

She took the purse to the king, who gave her middle sister, Caitlin, a fine home and a casket of jewels and gold.

The king said, "You are even braver than I imagined, Molly. Now, if you can steal the magic ring from the giant's finger, I will give you a castle and all the riches you could ever wish for."

Of course, Molly agreed!



That day, she set off for the giant's house and crawled under his bed. She waited until he was snoring, then she sneaked out and reached for his hand. Carefully, she removed the magic ring and hid it in her pocket. →



But the giant woke up and grabbed Molly by the hand.

“Now I’ve got you, Molly Whuppie! If I had caused you as much trouble as you have caused me, tell me, how would you punish me?”

Molly said, “I’d put you in a sack with a cat, a dog, a needle, a thread and some shears, and I’d hang you from the wall. Then I’d find a branch to beat you with – but I’d swing you around first to make you dizzy.”

“Then that’s exactly what I’ll do to you, Molly Whuppie!” said the giant.

Early the next morning, he put Molly in a sack with his cat and his dog, a needle and thread, and some shears.

Next, he hung the sack from the wall and asked his wife to keep an eye on it. Then he set off to look for a branch.

As soon as he left, Molly cried, “Oh, if you could only see what I see in here!”

“What do you see in there, Molly?” asked the giant’s wife.

But Molly just gasped and kept saying, “If you could only see what I see!”

The giant’s wife begged to see inside the sack, so Molly cut a hole in it with the shears, helped the giant’s wife to climb inside and sewed up the sack again with the needle and thread.

Once the giant’s wife was inside, she realised that Molly had tricked her. “Let me out!” she cried. But Molly just hid behind the door.

When the giant returned with a branch, he took the sack and started to swing it round his head.



“Stop swinging!” shouted the giant’s wife. “It’s me – your wife!”

But the cat was meowing and the dog was barking so loudly, the giant didn’t hear her. Molly took her chance and leapt out from behind the door, then she ran as fast as she could.

The giant let go of the sack and ran after Molly, waving his branch angrily.

In no time, Molly reached the ‘Bridge of One Hair’ and dashed across it.

Stuck on the other side again, the giant roared, “There’ll be trouble if you ever come my way again, Molly Whuppie!”

Molly laughed and replied, “That’s four times I’ve beaten you, but don’t worry – you’ll never see me again!”

She took the magic ring to the king, who gave Molly a huge castle and all the riches she could ever want or need. After that, Molly Whuppie never troubled the giant again. ★

IMAGINE IT!

What special powers do you think the giant’s magic sword, purse and ring have? Write a sentence about each item, describing its powers.



Juha the Joker

One day, Juha decided to impress his friends by cooking a delicious feast of lamb stuffed with rice and apricots.

Unfortunately, he didn't own a pot large enough to cook the lamb, so he asked his neighbour if he could borrow a pot. Now, Juha had a reputation for borrowing things from his friends and neighbours and never returning them, so his neighbour was reluctant to hand over her best cooking pot.

"Do you promise you will return it in the morning?" she asked.

"I promise!" said Juha. "My word is as good as my long beard."

So the neighbour gave the pot to Juha and he set off home to prepare a delicious stew. He worked hard and the feast was a success. His guests complimented Juha's cooking and helped themselves to more.

The next morning, as promised, Juha returned the big cooking pot to his neighbour. As he handed it over, she cried, "What is this?"



She pulled a small cooking pot out of the large one.

“Oh, I forgot to tell you,” said Juha. “Congratulations – it is a blessing from Allah! Your large pot gave birth to a smaller pot last night. I thought it was cruel to separate them, so I am returning them both to you.”

His neighbour looked confused, but she was delighted to have a shiny new pot, so she gladly accepted it.



A few weeks later, Juha decided to host another feast, so he asked his neighbour if he could borrow her big cooking pot again. This time, she willingly gave the pot to Juha.

“Of course you can,” she said. “Don’t rush to bring it back in the morning.”

Juha used the pot to prepare another sumptuous feast and his guests ate until they could eat no more.

Juha was sure that his success was all thanks to the pot, so he decided to keep it for a while. The next day he didn’t return the pot. A whole week came and went and he didn’t take the pot back. Two weeks passed and the pot was still in his kitchen.

One day, his neighbour grew tired of waiting, so she knocked at his door, hoping for more good luck from Allah.

“Good morning!” she said brightly.

“I’ve come to collect my cooking pot.” ➔



Juha wore a troubled expression. “Oh, I’m so sorry. I should have told you sooner, but I have been in mourning. You see, your pot died on the very night you lent it to me. May Allah have mercy on its soul.”

“Died? Don’t be ridiculous! Pots can’t die!” cried his neighbour.

“Well, you believed that it had a child, so why can’t you believe that it died?” asked Juha with a cunning smile.

His neighbour stormed off in a terrible temper, vowing never to trust Juha the joker again! ★

DID YOU KNOW?

Juha (also known as Goha) is a famous character in the Middle East. There are many stories about him – some just a few lines long. We’ve put our favourites in **Juha the Joker’s Mini Stories Pack**. Get it from: storytimemagazine.com/free



Happy Loses His Smile

After Snow White married Prince Moritz, the seven dwarfs carried on living in the Enchanted Forest. Every day, without fail, they whistled all the way to Dragon Mountains, where they mined for gold.

One bright morning, the dwarfs were still fast asleep. Doc drowsily opened one eye and, when he saw the time, he leapt out of bed. “We’ve overslept! Happy, why didn’t you wake us?”

Happy was always the first to spring out of bed and put his friends in a cheerful mood. But today, Happy just rolled over, groaned, and pulled the covers up over his head.

“Happy!” said Doc. “It’s time to get up. What’s wrong with you?”

Happy sat up in bed and the other dwarfs gasped. His mouth looked all wrong. Instead of curving up at the corners as usual, it turned down! →



Doc strode over and took Happy's temperature. "Are you feeling sick?"

"No," mumbled Happy glumly.

"Then why aren't you getting up?"

Happy shrugged and flopped onto his pillow. "I don't feel like it."

"But you always get up first," said Grumpy in a grumbly way.

"Happy must be coming down with something," said Doc. "Let's make him some breakfast."

The six dwarfs took a bowl of fruit to Happy, but he was buried under a blanket and wouldn't come out.

That day, when the dwarfs set off for work, nobody whistled because it was always Happy who led the whistling. When they struck gold, they didn't sing, because it was always Happy who started the singing. They didn't even manage a "Heigh ho!". That night, they trudged home in silence.

Back at the cottage, Happy was still in bed – and he was scowling.

"We don't like to see you this way, Happy. What's wrong? Tell us."

"I think I feel... *unhappy*," said Happy. The dwarfs were stunned.

"But you're always happy!" they cried.



“If you’re not happy, how will we get up in the morning, and dig, dig, dig the whole day through?”

Happy slumped back. “I’m not always happy,” he admitted. “Sometimes I fake a smile and it turns into a real one. It’s exhausting keeping you all entertained, day in, day out.”

Suddenly, the dwarfs realised just how much they relied on their friend to keep up their spirits.

“You need a holiday!” said Doc. “Take tomorrow off. I have an idea.”

The six dwarfs huddled together and came up with a plan.

The next morning, they left Happy to have a big lie-in. When he eventually got out of bed, he went to the kitchen and found a warm pot of tea and a basket of croissants from Ginger’s Bakery waiting for him. A message read, *‘We got you these because we thought they looked like smiles.’*

Happy’s frown straightened out a bit.



As he ate the delicious pastries, there was a knock on the door. He found a large gift box on the doorstep and ripped it open to find a golden ball inside. A second message read, *‘Frederick the Frog Prince loaned it to us. Fancy a game of footie?’* ➔



As Happy read directions to Far Far Away Fields, his frown straightened out a bit more. He decided to go.

When he reached the fields, his friends were so pleased to see him.

“It’s our turn to give you some fun,” said Bashful shyly.

“But we’ve only got seven players here,” said Happy.

“No, we haven’t,” said Doc. The dwarfs whistled in union and Prince Frederick, Prince Charming and Prince Moritz ran onto the pitch, followed by Hansel and Gretel and Jack and Jill.

“We can play seven-a-side,” said Sneezzy, ignoring a tickle in his nose.

“But who’ll be the ref?” asked Happy.

“I will! After all, I am the fairest of them all,” said a familiar voice.

Happy spun round to see one last surprise – Snow White was holding a whistle. At last, his frown turned into a proper smile. Snow White gave Happy a big, friendly hug.

“That’s more like it,” she said. “Doc told you me you haven’t been feeling your normal happy self.”

“I feel a lot better now I’ve seen you,” said Happy. “I’ve missed you lots.”

“Well, you’ll have to come for tea at the castle every week,” said Snow White. “I’ve missed you too.”



The match kicked off and Happy grinned the whole way through. It was the most fun he had had in ages – especially as Dopey kept tripping over his own feet.

By the end of the game, the dwarfs had won 3-2, even though Sleepy kept taking sneaky naps by the goal posts.

“That was brilliant!” Happy beamed. “It was just what I needed.”

The dwarfs lifted Happy in the air and Snow White patted him on the back.

“From now on, we’ve decided to take a day off every week to do whatever we like. Doc’s orders!” said Doc.

So that is how Happy found his smile again – through a game of footie with good friends. ★

THINK ABOUT IT!

What makes you happy?
Make a list and try to spend
some time doing it this week
with your friends or family!



*Next time: Little Red Riding Hood
faces her enemy, the Big Bad Wolf!*

The Cowherd and the Weaver Girl

Long ago in China, there was a young cowherd called Niulang. When his parents died, he became homeless and had only an old ox to keep him company.

The cowherd was an honest and hard-working fellow, so he soon saved enough money to buy land and build a small house. Life was better but, with only an ox to talk to, Niulang felt lonely.

One day, as he sat gazing at the clouds in the sky, he said, “How is it that the clouds change colour so often?”



To his surprise, his ox answered. “That is the work of a fairy called Zhinu – the weaver girl. She is the seventh daughter of the Heavenly Empress and she weaves colourful clouds using her magical silk.”

Niulang was amazed that his ox could talk, and even more surprised that fairies truly existed.

“If you want to meet her, she bathes in a lake not far from here with her sisters,” said the ox. “Take away her red cloak while she is bathing and she will speak to you.”

The next day, Niulang hid behind a tree and waited for Zhinu and her sisters to arrive. Eventually, a shimmer of colour descended from the clouds. It slowly took on the shape of seven fairies. When they landed, they shook off their cloaks and stepped into the clear water of the lake.

The fairy with the red cloak, Zhinu, was the most graceful and elegant of them all, and Niulang fell in love with her instantly. He sneaked out and grabbed her red cloak.

When the fairy sisters had finished bathing, Niulang plucked up his courage to step out and present the cloak to Zhinu. Her sisters were so shocked to see a mortal, they flew back to the heavens, leaving Niulang and Zhinu alone. ➡



“Forgive me for startling you,” said Niulang. “I only wanted to meet you and now I am in awe of your beauty.”

Zhinu was charmed by Niulang. She had never met a mortal before and she found him beautiful too, so she stayed to talk to him. When the time came to go home, she didn’t want to leave – Zhinu had also fallen in love.

“Will you stay here and be my wife?” asked Niulang. Zhinu happily agreed.



They lived in Niulang’s humble home. He worked as a cowherd and she became famous for her weaving.

In time, they had a little boy and a little girl and their happiness was complete. However, a few weeks later, Niulang’s ox fell ill.

“My time has come, master,” said the ox. “When I die, remove my hide and keep it. It will help you one day.”

The next day, the ox died. Niulang wept as he removed its hide. He kept it, but he hoped he would never need to use it.





This legend is so famous in China, it inspired the Qixi Festival (pronounced 'key-she'), which has been celebrated for over 2,000 years. On this day, couples give each other romantic gifts. It's similar to Valentine's Day in the West.

All this time, the Heavenly Empress had been searching for her seventh daughter. When she discovered that Zhinu had married a poor mortal, she was enraged.

Storm clouds gathered above Niulang and Zhinu's home and lightning bolts cracked violently on their land. With each noisy crack, a heavenly soldier appeared, surrounding their house.

"My mother's guards have come to take me home," said Zhinu sadly. "I have no choice. If I don't return, my mother will punish us severely."

Niulang begged Zhinu to stay and their children wept, but the guards took Zhinu by the arm and forced her to fly back to the heavens with them.

As Niulang watched her leave, he remembered the ox's hide. Carrying their children in a basket, he hurriedly wrapped it around his shoulders. ➔

All at once, he soared into the air, following Zhinu and the heavenly soldiers. As he got closer, Niulang cried, "Wait!", but the soldiers were too fast.

As they neared heaven's gates, the Empress removed her hairpin. She swished it through the sky, creating a vast silver river to separate Zhinu from Niulang.

No matter how hard he tried, Niulang couldn't cross the river, but he also couldn't bear to give up. He stood on the riverbank, weeping bitterly for his true love.

The Heavenly Empress was so moved by Zhinu and Niulang's cries, she took pity on them. She let them stay in the sky as stars and they meet once a year. On that day, magpies fly up to the heavens and form a bridge across the great silver river, so that Niulang, Zhinu and their children can be reunited.

If you look to the skies, you'll see their stars twinkling in celebration. ★

SPOT IT!

The silver river in this story is what we call the Milky Way. Zhinu becomes Vega (the Weaver Girl star), which faces Altair (the Cowherd star). Altair is next to two smaller stars, which legend says are Niulang and Zhinu's children. Can you spot them in the sky?



storytime playbox

Open the playbox for fun activities and puzzles linked to the stories in this issue, plus a cool craft and a board game!

1 MYSTICAL MAGPIES

How many birds are going to make a bridge between the Cowherd and the Weaver Girl?

Write your answer in the box.



2 quick quiz

Which ingredients did Juha the Joker use to make a feast for his friends?

- A.** Lamb and apricots
- B.** Hummus and pitta bread
- C.** Baba ghanoush

3 SPOT IT!

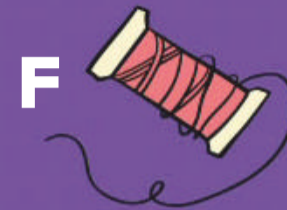
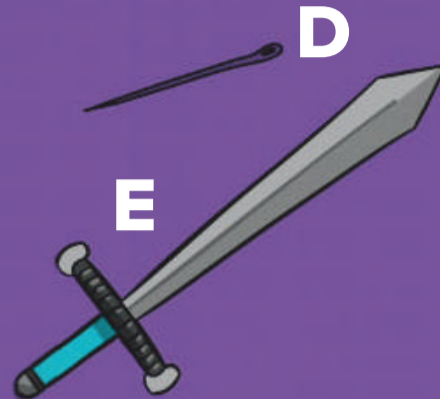
Find ten fairy coins hiding on these pages. **Tick the box when you spot them!**



4 MOLLY'S SACK

Which items didn't go into the giant's sack with Molly?

Circle them!



5 MAKE AN INSECT CIRCUS THEATRE!

Bring Barry the dung beetle's circus to life with a cool craft!

- Take an old shoebox or cut away the front of a cereal box and paint the outside and inside of the remaining box in circus colours or cover them with coloured paper.
- Cut two curtain shapes and a triangle roof out of white card. Paint on red stripes and, when dry, glue them to your box.
- Stick a toothpick to the apex of the roof and glue or tape on a triangle of coloured paper to make a flag.
- Download and print out our **Insect Circus Characters** from storytimemagazine.com/free. Cut them out.
- Cut out one small rectangle of card for each character. Fold it across the middle to make an L-shape and glue one L to the back of each character to help it stand up.
- Now use the characters as mini puppets to retell **The Strongest Animal on Earth** story in this issue!

ASK A GROWN UP!

a mini insect circus theatre or a room using the characters from our **Strongest Animal on Earth** in Storytime Issue 54.

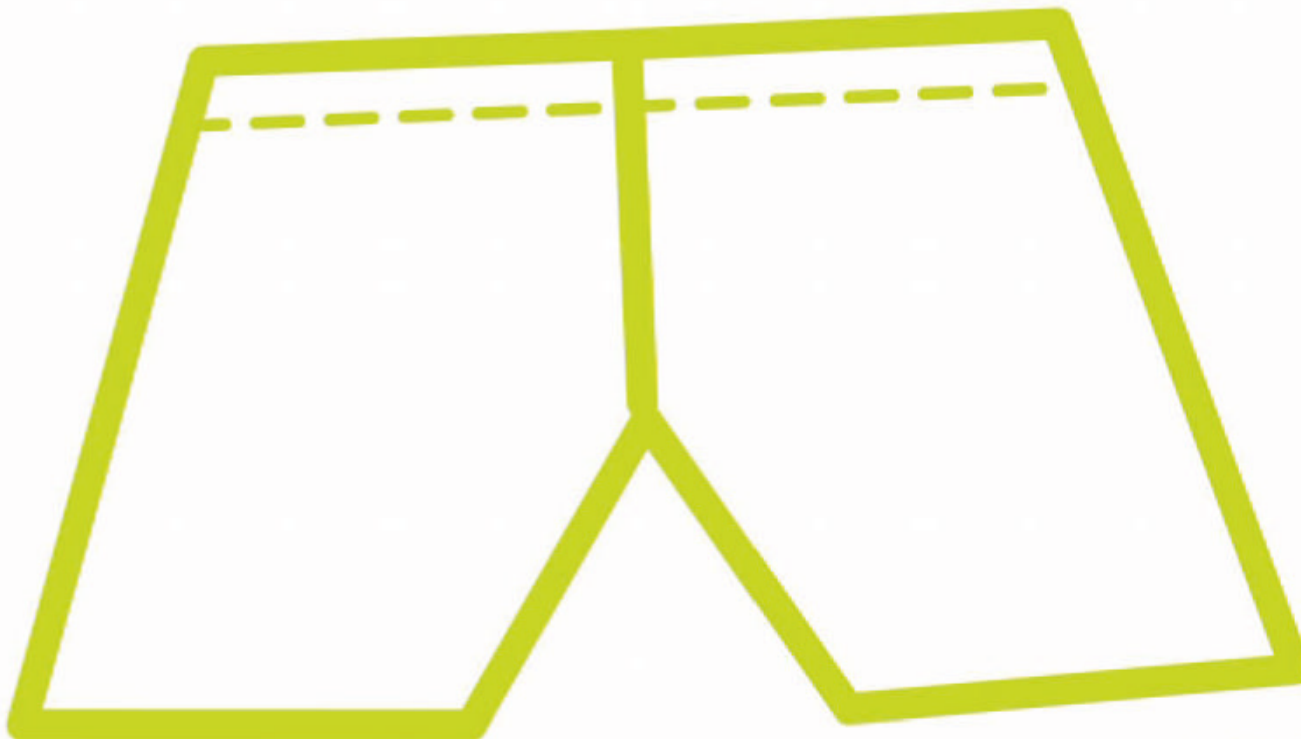


TIP!

Turn it into a scene by **gluing some characters to the background** and **some to the stage**. Now put it on display!

6 FAIRY-TALE FOOTIE!

Design a football kit for Happy and the dwarfs to wear in their next big match!



7

MAGIC MINUTES



In **Guto and the Fairies**, one day in Fairyland is two years in the real world. **How long are these Fairyland times in the real world?**

A. 1/2 day

B. 2 days

C. 4 days

D. 1 week

8

TRY A PIE

Silly Simon has saved up his pennies and wants to buy a pie, but the signs have got scrambled. **Can you work out what the flavours are?**



PALEP



LUMP



HERCRY



CAPHE

ANSWERS: 1. Mystical Magpies – 13 birds; 2. Quick Quiz – A; 4. Molly's Sack – B, C, E and G; 7. Magic Minutes – A 1 year, B. 4 years, C. 8 years, D. 14 years; 8. Try A Pie – 1. Apple, 2. Plum, 3. Cherry, 4. Peach.

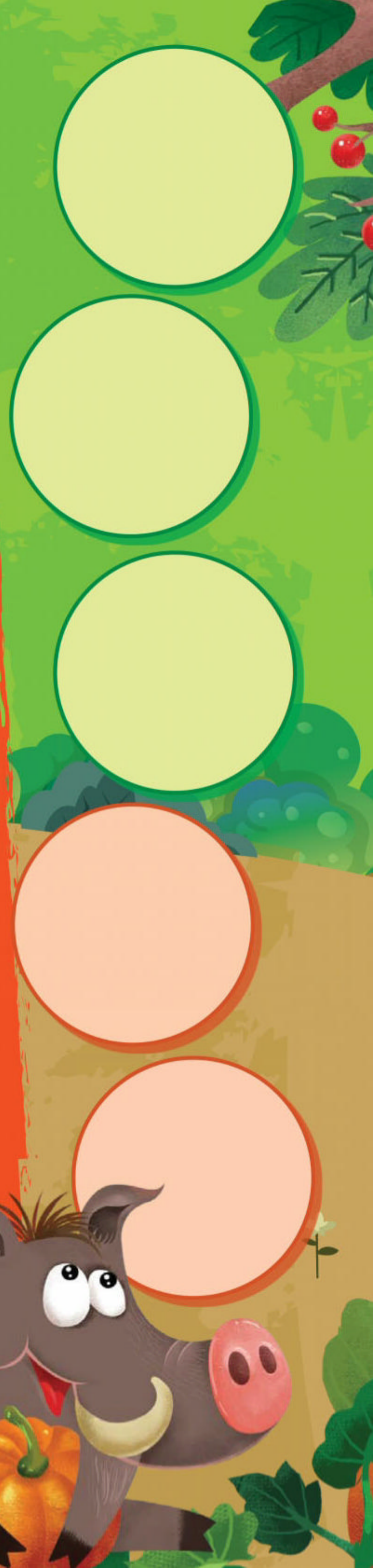
GIRAFFE VS WARTHOG

The giraffe likes being tall and the warthog prefers being small. Is one better than the other and who will win the most food? Let's find out!

How to Play

To play, you need one dice and two players. Roll your way to a full belly by being the first to fill up your blank spaces with fruit if you're Giraffe or vegetables if you're Warthog. Print out our **Fruit and Veg Counters** at storytimemagazine.com/free.

- ★ Roll the dice. The person with the highest score is Giraffe and the other player is Warthog.
- ★ Divide the printed counters into a fruit pile and a veg pile. There should be 12 counters in each pile at the start.
- ★ The top half of the board – in green – belongs to Giraffe. The bottom half with orange circles is owned by Warthog.
- ★ Player one rolls the dice. Take turns, following the instructions:
 - If Giraffe rolls **4, 5** or **6**, well done! Pick up a fruit counter and put it on a blank space on your half of the board.
 - If Giraffe rolls **1, 2** or **3**, bad luck! Give Warthog a fruit counter from one of your spaces. If you don't have one on a space, Warthog can take a counter from the fruit pile.
 - If Warthog rolls **1, 2** or **3**, well done! Pop a veg counter on one of your blank spaces.
 - If Warthog rolls **4, 5** or **6**, bad luck! Give a veg counter to Giraffe. If you don't have one on a space, Giraffe can take one from the veg counter pile.
- ★ The first player to fill up their 12 blank spaces is the dinner winner!





STORY MAGIC

Don't miss our favourite new picture books, plus earn badges and certificates with our free Storytime Reading Buddies Scheme.

BOOKS OF THE MONTH!

PIP AND THE BAMBOO PATH by Jesse Hodgson (Flying Eye Books) follows Pip, a little red panda, and her mother who are forced to leave their home when humans cut down too many trees. Their search for the bamboo path that will lead to a new home takes them from the Himalayas to the big city, where Pip must find true courage. A beautiful plea to care for our environment.

CHATTERBOX BEAR by Pippa Curnick (Hodder Children's Books) follows Gary the bear on a voyage to find friends who are as talkative as he is, but when he ends up on an island of birds they have to find a whole new way to communicate. The solution is laugh-out-loud funny, and we love that Pippa previously illustrated for **Storytime** too!

SHHH! I'M READING by John Kelly and Elina Ellis (Little Tiger Press) is a book that celebrates reading, so naturally we fell in love with it. All Bella wants to do is finish her favourite book, but with pesky pirates, aliens and dancing penguins trying to tempt her with adventures, it's not easy! Fabulous fun and bursting with imagination.



READING BUDDIES!

Have you joined our Reading Buddies Scheme yet? We're encouraging kids everywhere to read to each other and every free Reading Buddies Pack has cool rewards and activities too! Visit:

storytimeforschools.com/readingbuddies

SEE WHAT I GET UP TO IN THE NEXT ISSUE!



WIN!

For a chance to win our Books of the Month, enter our competition:

storytimemagazine.com/win

