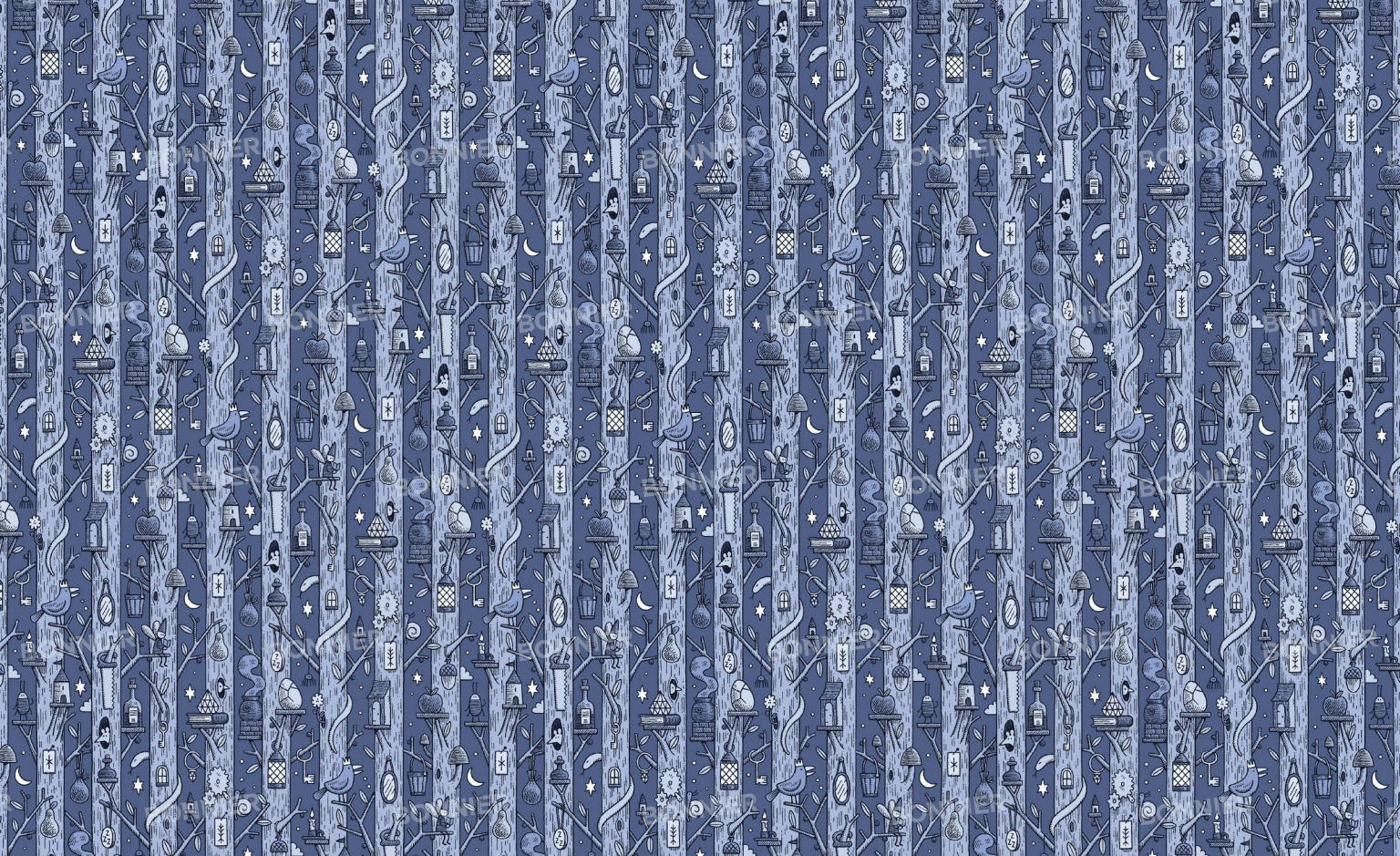


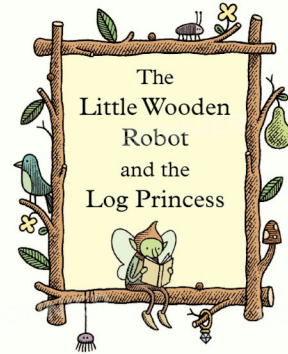
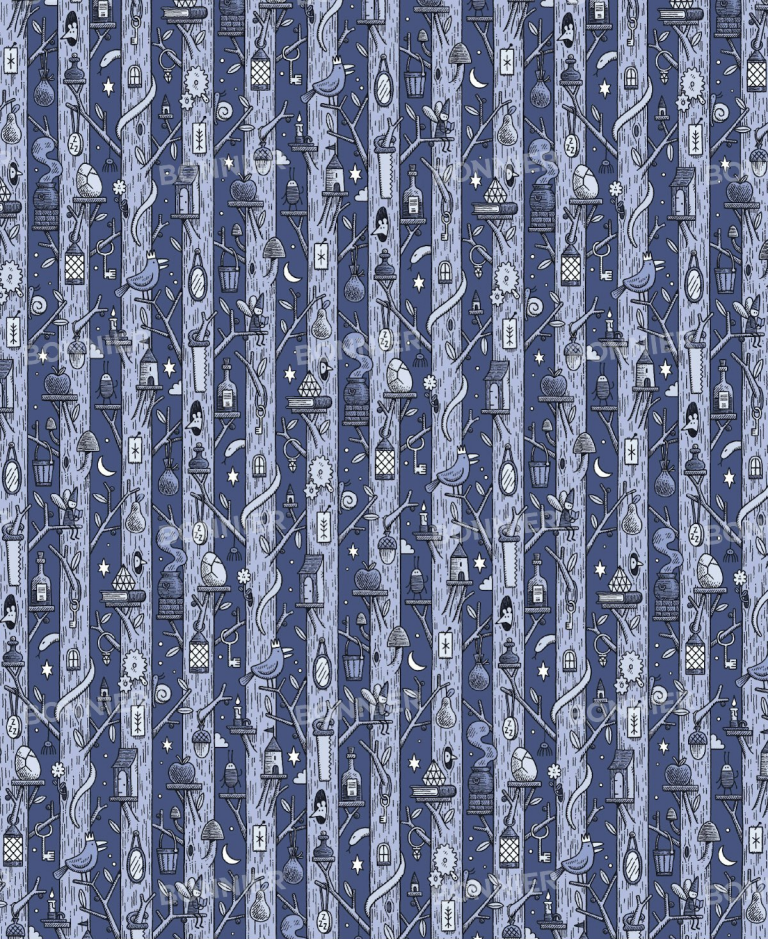
The
**LITTLE WOODEN
ROBOT**
and the
LOG PRINCESS



TOM GAULD







The LITTLE WOODEN ROBOT and the LOG PRINCESS

For Ben and Jack

Thank you to Matthew Forsythe, Daphne Gauld,
Iris Gauld, Billy Kiosoglou, and Jo Taylor.

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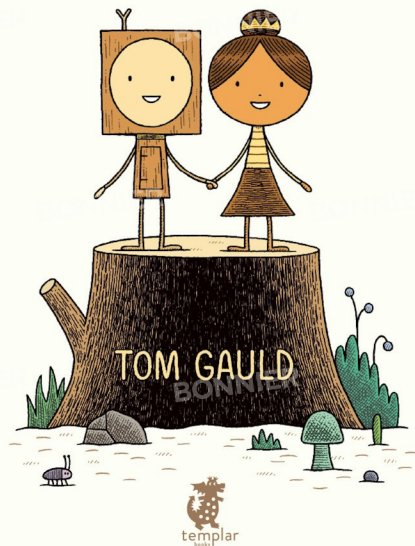
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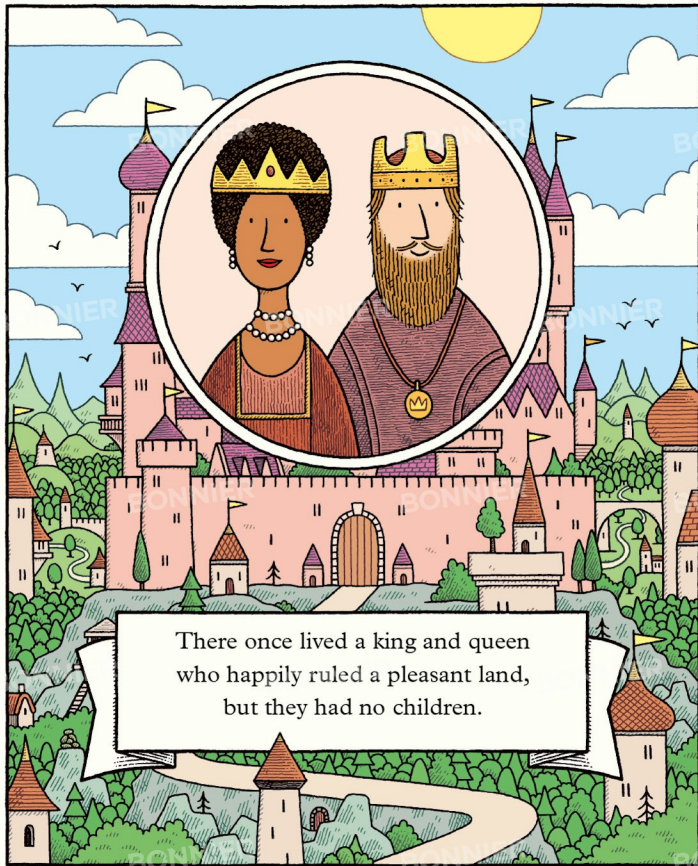
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So one night the king went to see the royal inventor, and the queen went to see a clever old witch who lived in the woods.

They both asked for the same thing: a child.



The inventor set to work straight away. She used her finest tools and her most ingenious designs and she built a wonderful, intricate little wooden robot.



The witch took a log from the basket by her fire and used her deepest magic to bring the wood to life in the form of a perfect little log princess.

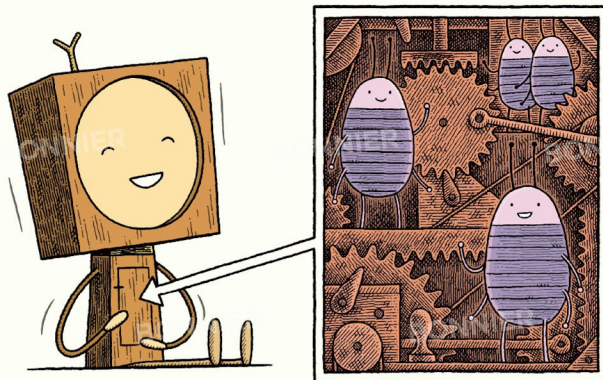


The king and the queen and the princess
and the robot all loved each other instantly.

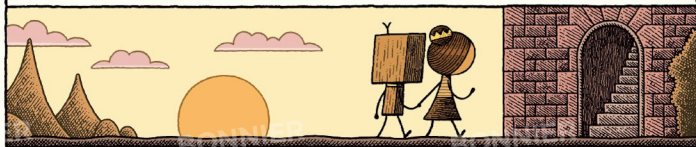


The log princess was bold and clever,
but she had a secret: each night when she fell asleep,
she turned back into a log and would stay like that
until she was woken by the magic words,
“Awake, little log, awake.”

The little wooden robot was brave and kind.
So kind, in fact, that he let a family of beetles nest
in his workings, even though it tickled sometimes.

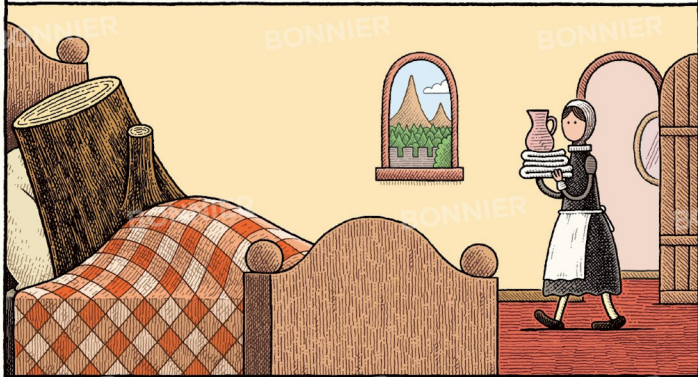


Every day, the robot would wake his log-sister and they
would play in the castle and the gardens until the sun
went down and they were tired out.





However, one morning, a travelling circus came to visit and the robot rushed down to the courtyard without waking his sister. On the stairs he passed a maid going up to tidy the princess's bedroom.

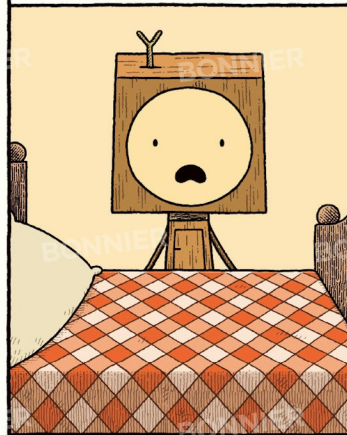
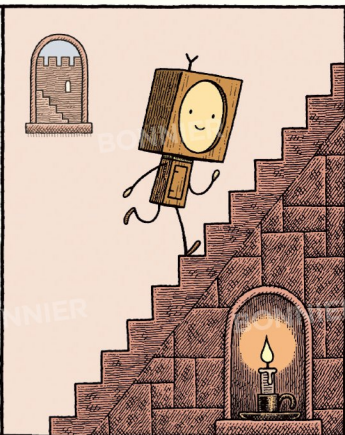


When the maid saw the log she said, "Oh dear! A plain old log, lying in the princess's bed! What a disgrace!" And threw it out of the window.



At that very moment, the little robot thought of his sister.

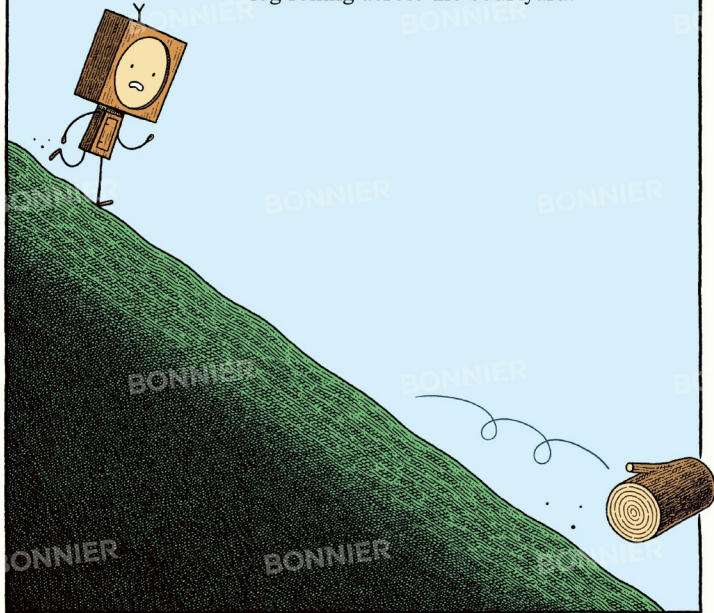
"How selfish of me!" he said to himself. "She's missing out on all these wonderful things." And he ran to her bedroom to wake her up.



He looked at the empty bed in horror. "Where's the log?" he cried.

"Oh, *that*," said the maid. "I threw it out of the window."

The robot looked out and spied the log rolling across the courtyard.



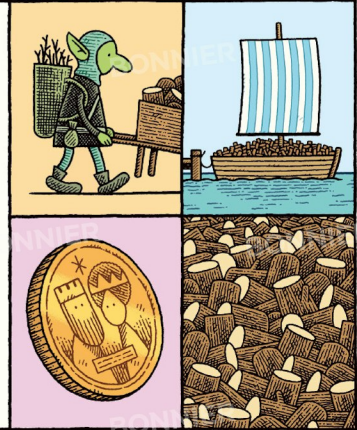
He raced down, but the castle was atop a steep hill, and the log had rolled through the gate, over the drawbridge, and down towards the village.



A goblin was pushing a barrow of logs through the village and the princess-log rolled right up to him.

“What a lucky day!” he said. “Another fine log for my load.”

The goblin took the logs to the river, where a barge was tied up. The captain paid him a copper coin and his barrow-load was tipped into the barge with hundreds and hundreds of other logs.



The robot ran to the barge.
“Please, sir,” he said to the captain.
“My special log is in your barge. May I come aboard and search for it?”



“You may,” said the captain.
“But we must set sail straight
away, while the wind is right.”

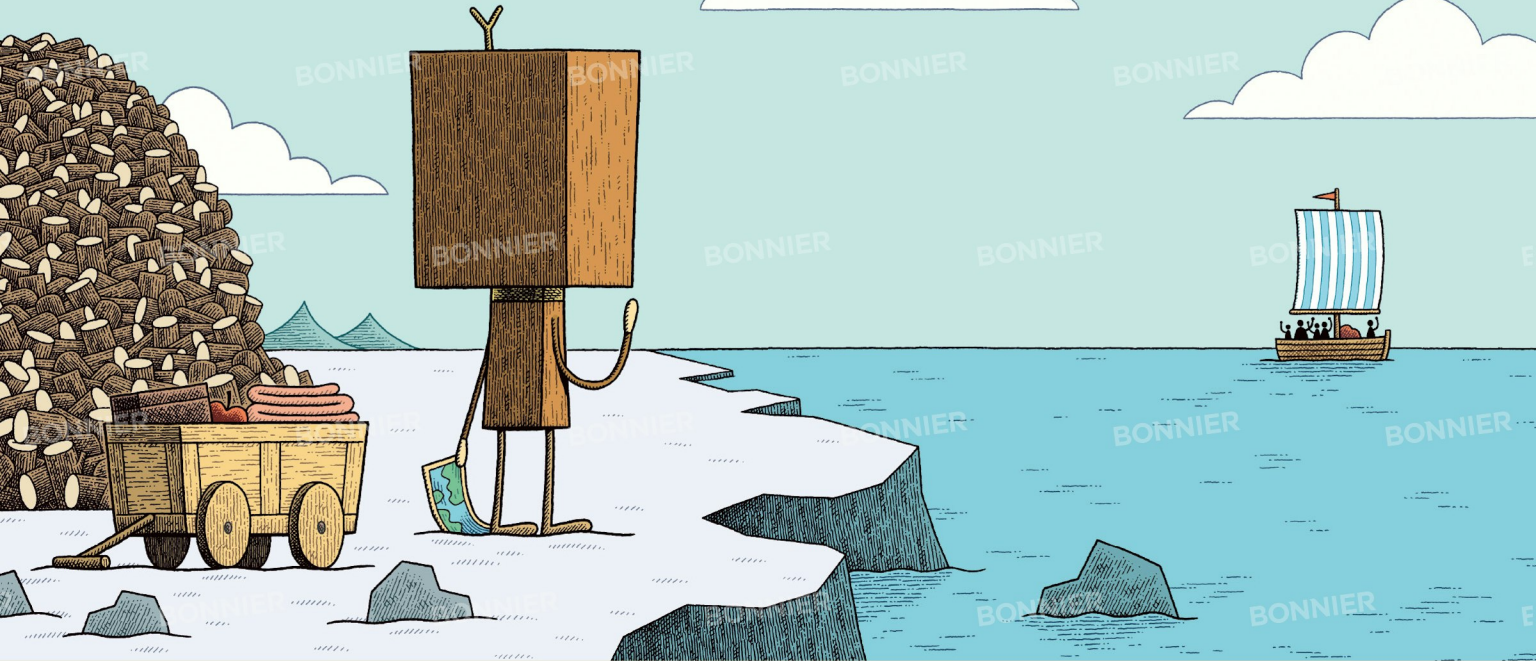
So the robot clambered on,
and the barge set off for the
frozen North. They sailed
for days, but there were so
very many logs that, even
with the help of the crew,
the little wooden robot could
not find the right one.

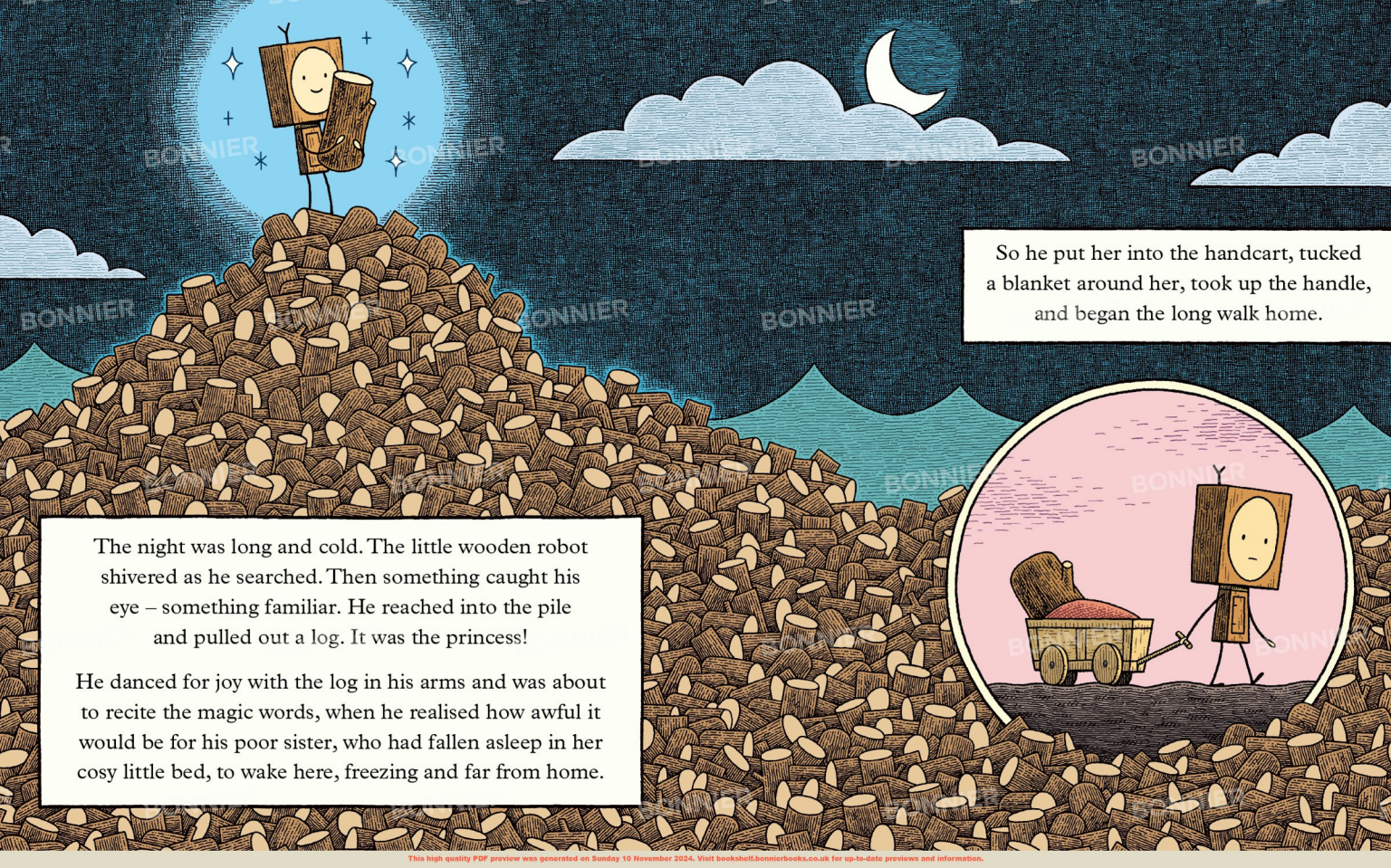


They arrived and unloaded the cargo.
“Come back with us,” said the captain. “The North is a dangerous place and we can easily find you another log when we get home.”

“I can’t,” said the robot. “That log is the most precious thing in the world to me. I won’t leave without it.”

So the crew gave him a map, some supplies, and a handcart and sailed back to the pleasant land where our story began.



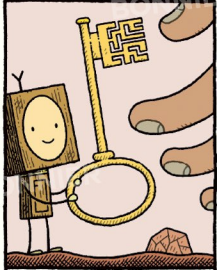


The night was long and cold. The little wooden robot shivered as he searched. Then something caught his eye – something familiar. He reached into the pile and pulled out a log. It was the princess!

He danced for joy with the log in his arms and was about to recite the magic words, when he realised how awful it would be for his poor sister, who had fallen asleep in her cosy little bed, to wake here, freezing and far from home.

So he put her into the handcart, tucked a blanket around her, took up the handle, and began the long walk home.

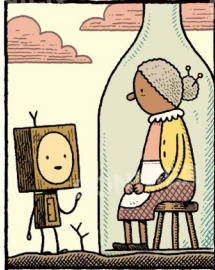
Along the way he had too many adventures
to recount here:



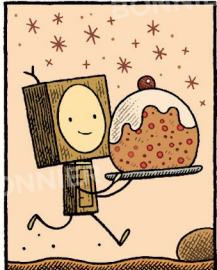
The
Giant's Key



The Family
of Robbers



The Old Lady
in a Bottle



The Magic
Pudding

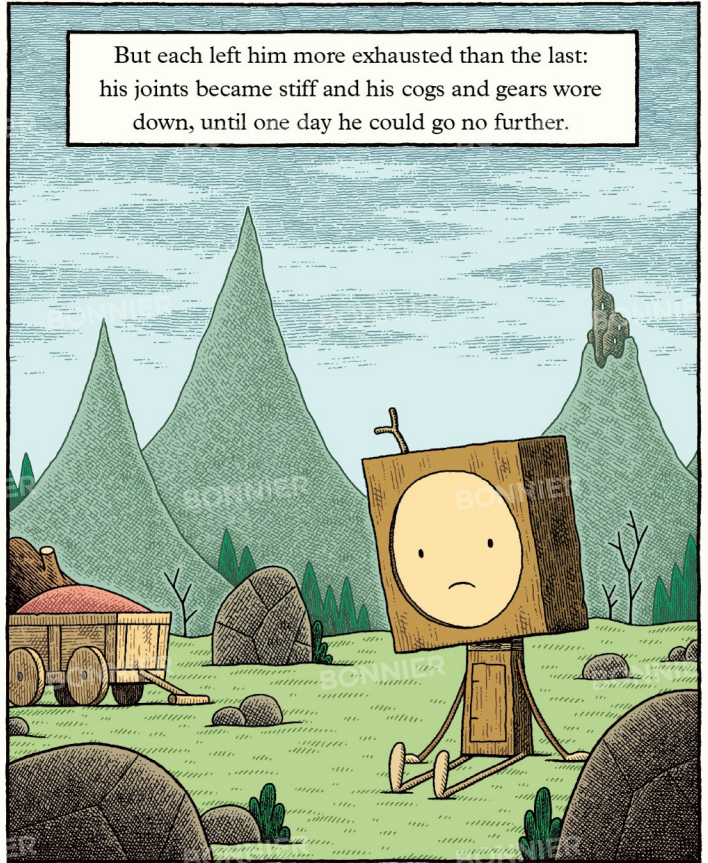


The Lonely
Bear



The Queen of
the Mushrooms

But each left him more exhausted than the last:
his joints became stiff and his cogs and gears wore
down, until one day he could go no further.



With the last of his strength he said the magic words, woke the princess and told her what had happened – how it was all his fault, and that he understood that she would probably never forgive him.



“Oh, Brother,” she said, “how silly of you to keep all these worries to yourself. Of course I forgive you!”

She helped him into the handcart, where he fell into a deep sleep. She took the map and the handle of the cart and continued the walk home.

She too had many adventures:



The Mischievous Pixies



The Dragon's Egg



The Feuding Hunters



The Haunted Well



The Enormous Blackbird



The Baby in a Rosebush

The princess knew that whatever happened, however tired she felt, she must not fall asleep.

But one night, as she was trudging through a dark forest – which she was sure couldn't be *that* far from home – she began to yawn. And then she yawned some more. And her eyes felt heavy. And her legs felt tired. And she thought of her cosy little bed in the castle.

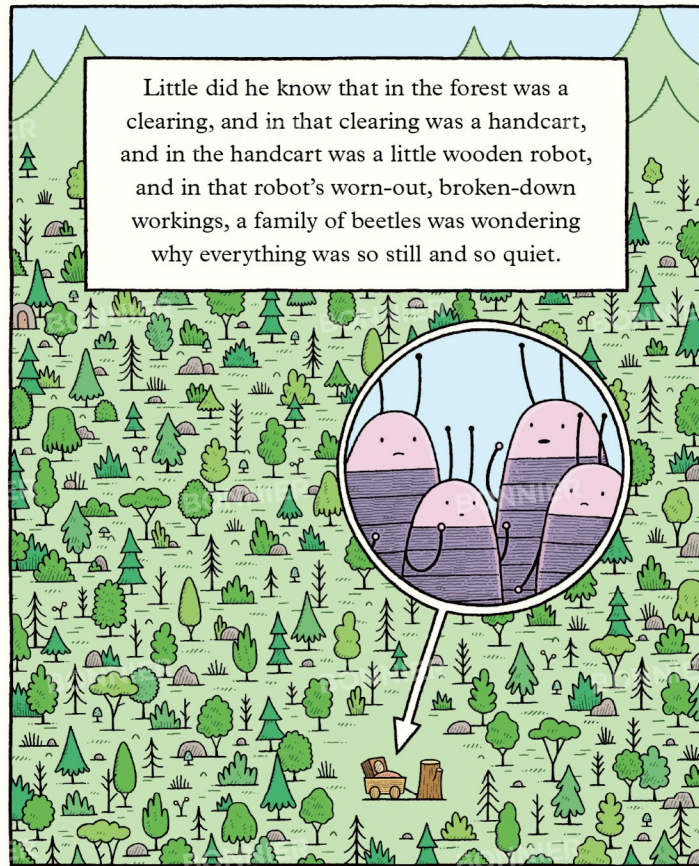
“Perhaps I shall close my eyes, just for a moment,” she said. And with that, she fell asleep and – pop! – turned into a log.





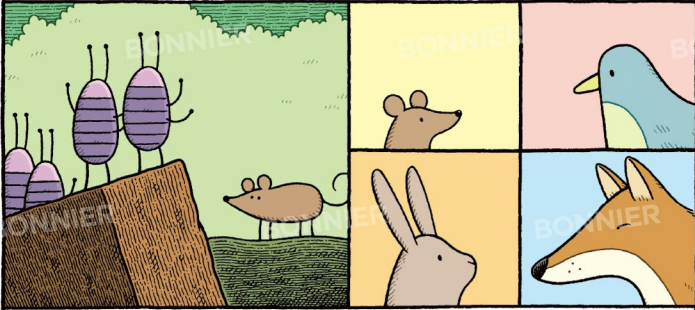
The king and queen missed their children terribly. Soldiers had been sent searching in every direction and a huge reward had been offered, but it was no good.

The queen would not leave her bed and the king sat alone in a tower, staring out at the deep, dark forest.

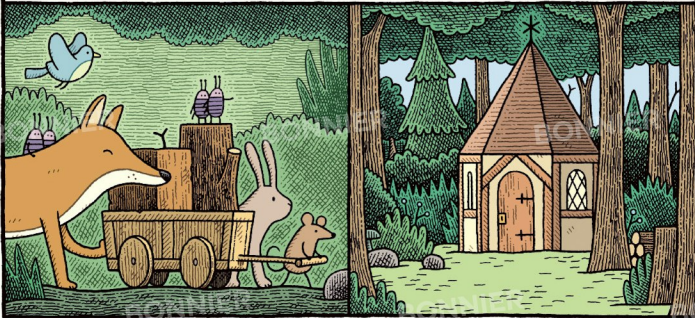


Little did he know that in the forest was a clearing, and in that clearing was a handcart, and in the handcart was a little wooden robot, and in that robot's worn-out, broken-down workings, a family of beetles was wondering why everything was so still and so quiet.

They climbed out and looked at the log and the robot and knew that they must do something.

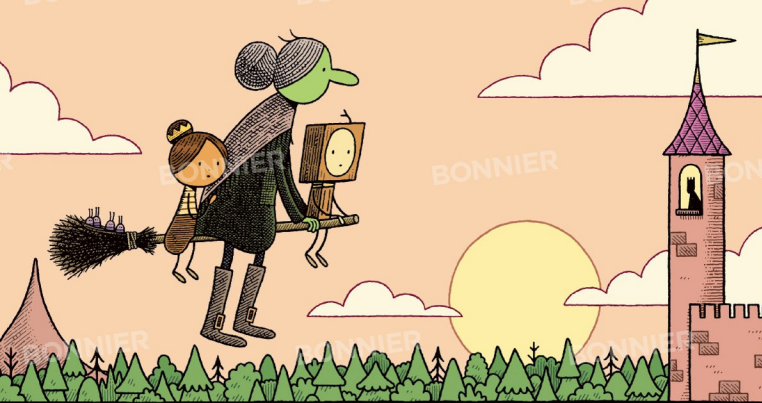


So they stopped a passing mouse and asked her for help, and she asked a bird, who asked a rabbit, who asked a fox. And they all worked together to take the princess and the robot to the nearest house: the home of a clever old witch.

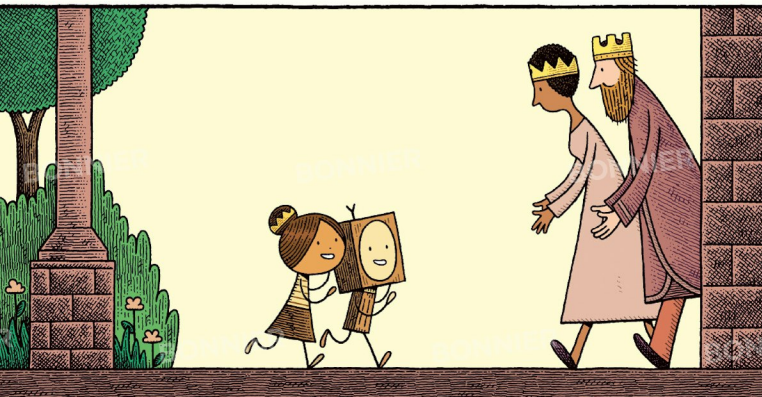


The witch recognised the pair immediately.



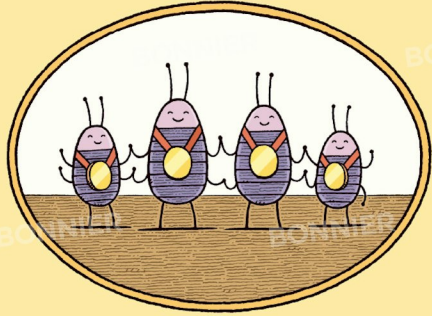


The king could hardly believe his eyes as he watched the little group, all crowded onto a broomstick, fly over the forest and set down in the castle courtyard.



The robot and the princess and the queen and the king all hugged and laughed and cried.

The witch was thanked, the month was declared a holiday for the whole kingdom, the beetles were each given a tiny golden medal...



and they all lived happily ever after.

