



From publisher

T

his book was sent to us in a match box with the following note:

I found this little book inside a water lily
in a pond with a phantom. I found all kinds
of other stuff in that water lily before
and so I always look in there when I'm
playing in the park. But I can't read
this little book becu'z it's so small.

Please print it normal and
send it to ME.

Unfortunately, there was no return address. And the book truly was so tiny that if we were to reproduce it at its actual size, the reader would have trouble spotting it on a bookstore shelf and might even accidentally brush it away while dusting – it's only about the size of calendula. We had to enlarge the book under a microscope and reprint a few places that were completely illegible but nothing else in the book has been changed.

This is a book about humans that was written by gnomes, fairies, elves, and other magical creatures from the Glimmering Land of Maar. This country's residents don't believe in people though a few of them have somehow happened to come to our world through various mysterious means. These accidental travelers then became the authors of this book, which gathers their observations and stories about the life of humans. Much of what they report is inaccurate, preposterous, and, put bluntly, absurd. Their reports are, of course, incomplete and incidental, describing only what these unusual authors happened to see or find interesting.

Nevertheless, we're leaving these notes "as is," with all their delusions about human reality: What's valuable here isn't credibility but rather the authors' astounded view of things that seem routine and everyday to us.



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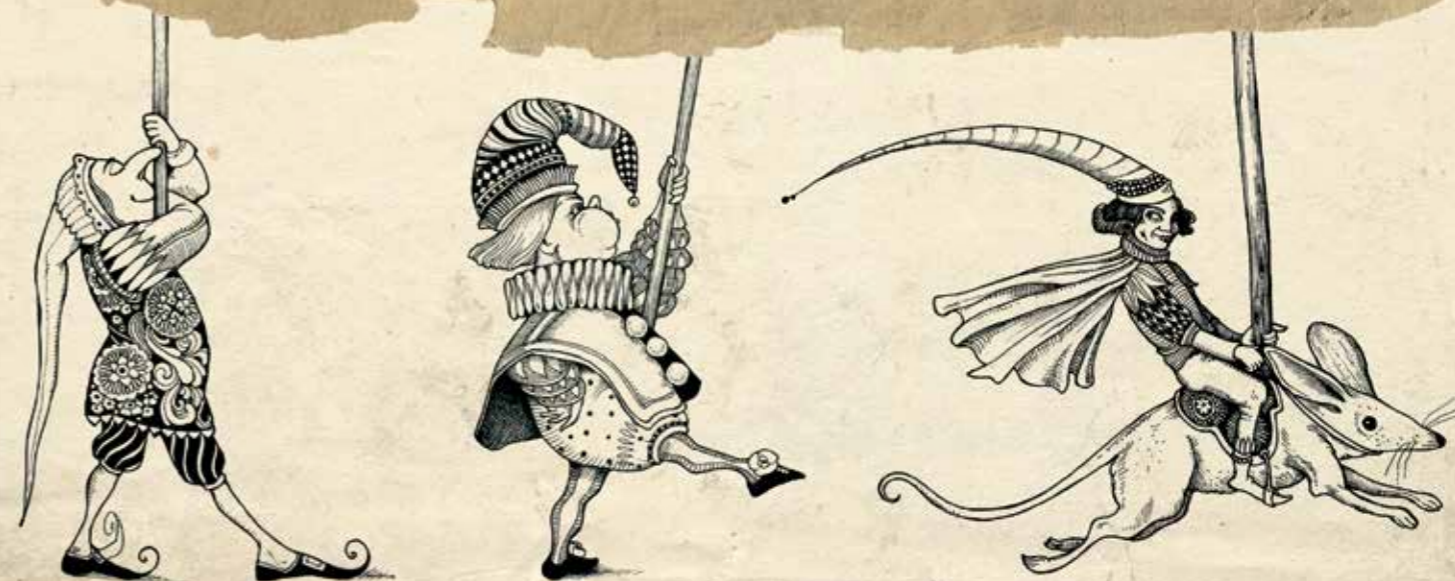
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This book doesn't purport to be scholarly or credible. I simply hope that my effort will help other gnomes, fairies, and elves who might end up in the same sort of scrape as I did.

I stopped believing my mother's horror stories ("If you don't go to sleep right now, a Human will come and take you away!") long ago and thought the world of humans was just an idle figment of someone's imagination. Then again, like all little gnomes, I adored tales about fairies and elves who'd been kidnapped by humans and taken away to their Land of Stone Flowers.

My attitude toward those tales changed a few springs ago, when I got distracted watching some blue dragonflies play over a water lily after my lunch and dozed off. I woke up in such a strange world that I'll need this whole book to describe it.

Upon my return, I spent several years roaming our Glimmering Land of Maar, collecting accounts from other travelers who had been in the world of humans. I gathered everything that sheds light on the nature of humans, recording travelers' stories, whether they were fleeting thoughts or the fruits of long reflection, observations or incidents. I painstakingly gathered illustrations, notes, and letters in an effort to help others understand and imagine this magical world for themselves. I know what people say about my time among humans: that it was all a dream that came to me because pixie Tabaco laced my pipe with toadstools that muddled my head! And that all the material I gathered is just the ravings of lost and crazy dreamers who, like me, lack for miracles in our everyday world.

I understand the snide remarks because I used to make them, too. Besides, stories about human life are so outlandish that it's hard for the average elf or fairy to believe in the existence of such a ridiculous, nonsensical, and truly unusual world.

There is a great deal of proof that humans exist. The evidence is too indisputable to be disregarded as casually as we turn a deaf ear to news about the sect of the strawberry toads or a conspiracy of the fireflies of the thorn and rose.

Unfortunately—or, perhaps, happily—there is no permanent entrance into the world of humans. If there were, it would be possible to instantly change the thinking of narrow-minded, spiteful individuals who continue to regard humans as characters in ancient folktales.

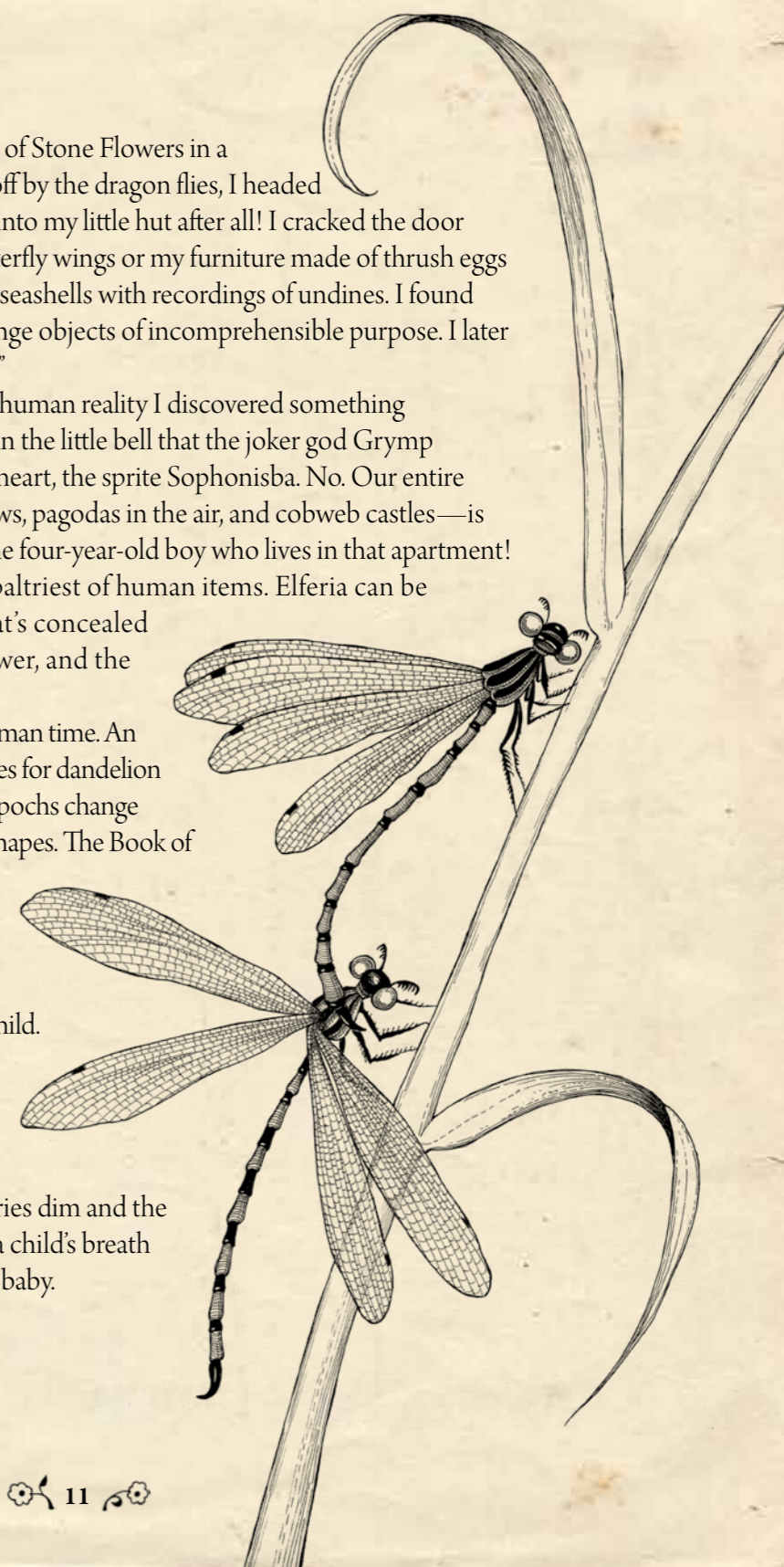
Each "lucky one" of us ends up in the Land of Stone Flowers in a unique way. When I woke up after being lulled off by the dragon flies, I headed home only to discover that my door didn't lead into my little hut after all! I cracked the door open but I didn't see my walls papered with butterfly wings or my furniture made of thrush eggs or my beloved cabinet holding my collection of seashells with recordings of undines. I found myself instead in a huge place with heaps of strange objects of incomprehensible purpose. I later found out that this place is called an "apartment."

During those three human years I spent in human reality I discovered something astonishing. Our world is definitely not located in the little bell that the joker god Grymp allegedly exchanged for a button from his sweetheart, the sprite Sophonisba. No. Our entire Glimmering Land of Maar—with all its meadows, pagodas in the air, and cobweb castles—is nestled between the pinkie and ring fingers of the four-year-old boy who lives in that apartment!

Our largest countries are located in the paltriest of human items. Elferia can be nestled inside a small nail hole on the wall that's concealed by a painting, the sinister Dhollandia in a drawer, and the teeming Grimoiria in a pearl earring.

Our time, as I've already said, differs from human time. An instant for us is years for humans. In the time it takes for dandelion fluff to float in our world, whole generations and epochs change in the human world and continents take on new shapes. The Book of Dreams teaches that we have an earthquake every millennium when Grymp laughs in his sleep because he's dreaming of Sofonisba dancing the turtle twist. Forgive me my sacrilege, but that's not how it is. The earthquake is, well, a change of the child.

The issue here is that human children stop believing in folktales, magic, fairies, and elves when they grow up. In other words, they stop believing in us. And then one morning the child wakes up, older and wiser, and our luminaries dim and the lands shudder until winged dragons spun from a child's breath transfer the Glimmering Land of Maar to a new baby.



VONTEUFEL BEZALEL

Compounder of potions, binder of royal cookbooks,
sorehead, mystic, and master of pantaloonish matters.



Where humans
Come from

Vonteuful Bezelel's comprehensive research



T

here are several well-known classic variations on the theme of the origin of humans.

The Dholls believe that wizards mold humans from wax, soil, or clay and then use them as assistants for their sorcery. The wizard places a note with a task in the mouth of each human. Although the task would be a routine one-day assignment for a wizard, for the human it is called "the meaning of life." The wizard ties a thread to each human before sending them off into the Stone Forest; this is so they can return after carrying out directives.

A human may live their entire life in the human world without ever knowing what was in the note. This doesn't mean the wizard's mission hasn't been fulfilled: the human may simply not have understood it. If a human produced by the wizard turns out to be flawed and isn't capable of carrying out the assignment outlined in the note, the wizard cuts the thread that ties the human to his house, and the person dies in the land of humans. A few humans see this, which is why paintings often depict a mystical hand with scissors that emerges from a cloud to clip a thread.

The Kobolds believe humans are stone trolls who've arisen from their graves and are governed by those very same notes from wizards. According to fairy beliefs, a human is born in the storybook world whenever a beautiful fairy laughs. In some kingdoms there's a superstition saying humans come from the wind on which the chimney fairy works as musician, or that humans seep into the moonlit, storybook world as rain drops from puddles where fairies have danced. Gnomes have a popular belief that humans are fallen elves.



Wizard cuts the thread.

HUMAN ANATOMY

Invisible crown. Located on the human's head. Humans are very afraid of looking silly and awkward and always check to be sure their crowns are in place, though nobody else sees them.

There is a **heart** in the human's chest. It is "all-seeing" and winged because it can escape from the chest. The heart is made of ruby, thus it can be "broken." Humans have composed many poems and songs about this.

Inner world. May be rich or meager, different for each human but not one has ever been seen. Humans keep the inner world in a special box and don't show anyone.

A heart has a **king or a queen**, depending on whether a human being is a man or a woman.

Frog. When a human's stomach is empty, it quacks and a "growling" sound comes out. This is controlled by a complex mechanism of water, sand, and pinions.

Natural urges. This is something that causes humans

to awkwardly push each other with their stomachs, scream, and lose their minds in all sorts of ways.

Goosebumps. Geese gently breathe on the human's back and arms when the human hears favorite music or experiences a very pleasant sensation.

Eyes are the mirror of the soul. A complex engineering construct..

Soul. An intricate construct, unique for each human. According to one account, the soul is located somewhere next to the heart; according to another, it permeates the entire body.

Hiding place for breathing, where a human "holds his breath" when afraid to frighten off the perfection of a certain moment.

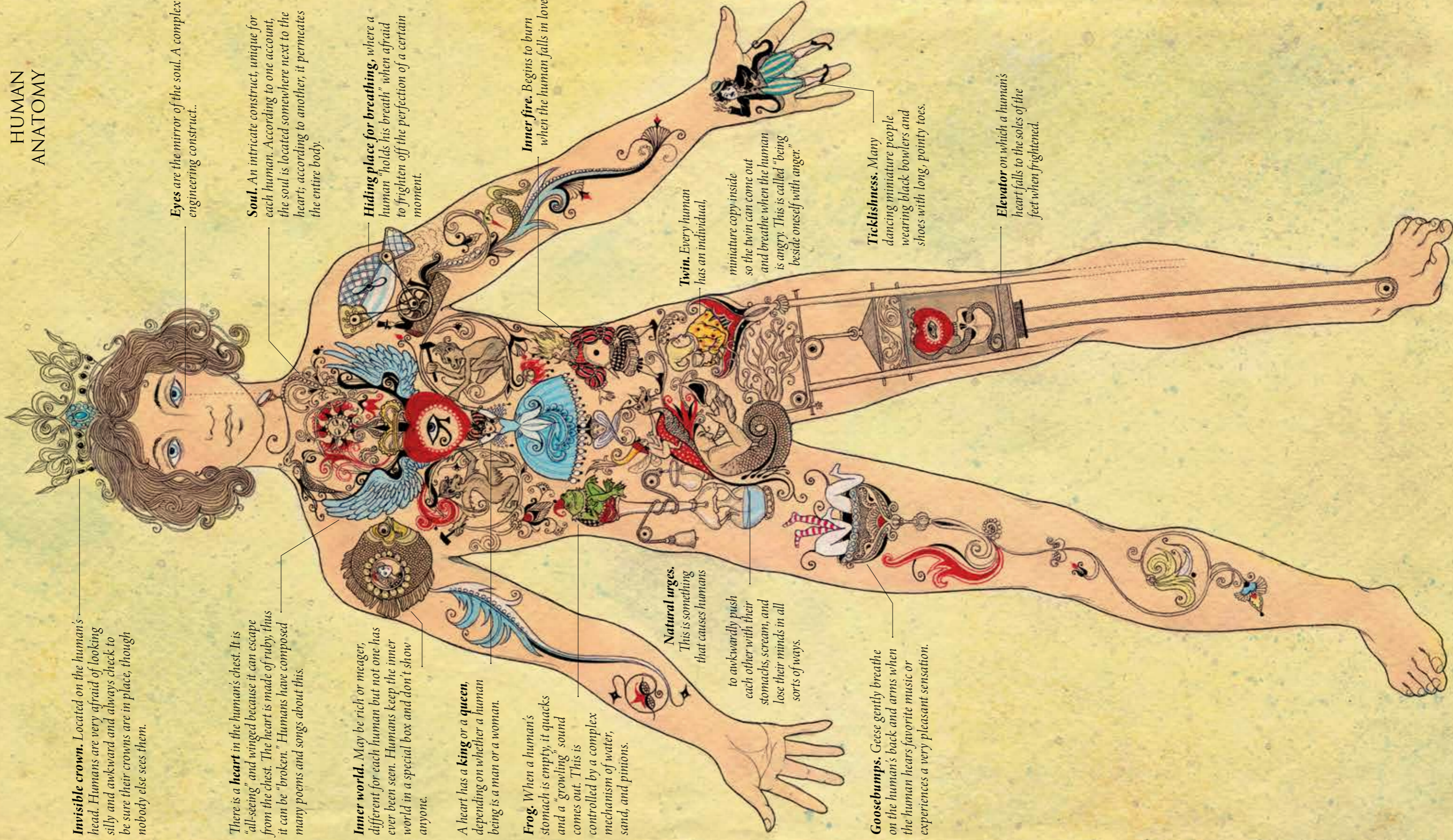
Inner fire. Begins to burn when the human falls in love.

Twin. Every human has an individual,

miniature copy inside so the twin can come out and breathe when the human is angry. This is called "being beside oneself with anger."

Ticklishness. Many dancing miniature people wearing black bowlers and shoes with long, pointy toes.

Elevator on which a human's heart falls to the soles of the feet when frightened.



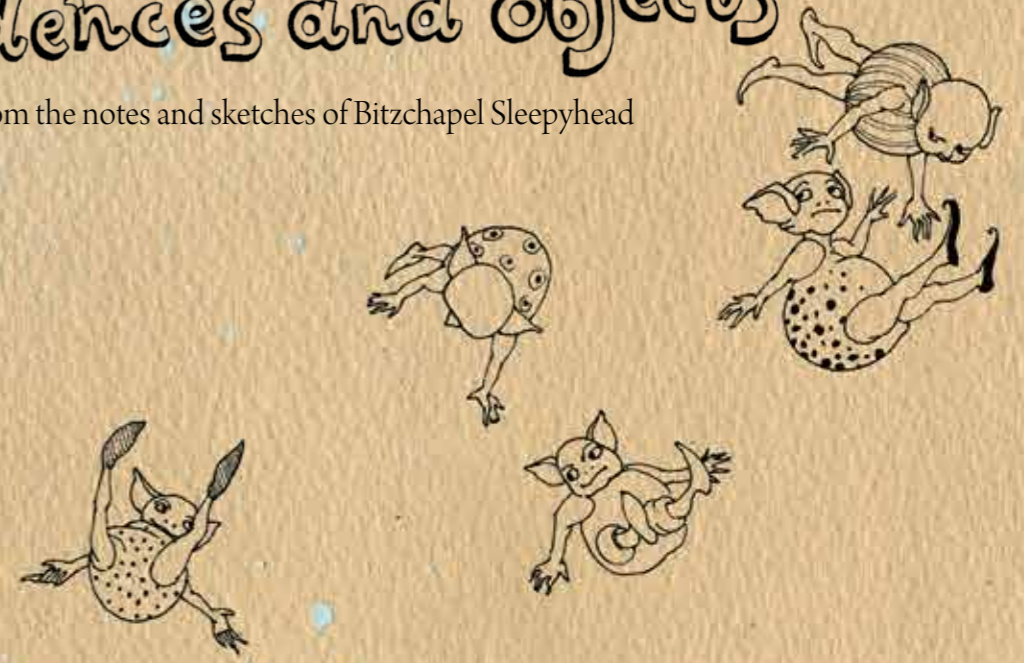
A PAGE FROM THE ENCYCLOPEDIA OF
FANTASTIC BEINGS, BY THE BROTHERS GROMM





Regarding human residences and objects

From the notes and sketches of Bitzchapel Sleepyhead



BITZCHAPEL SLEEPYHEAD

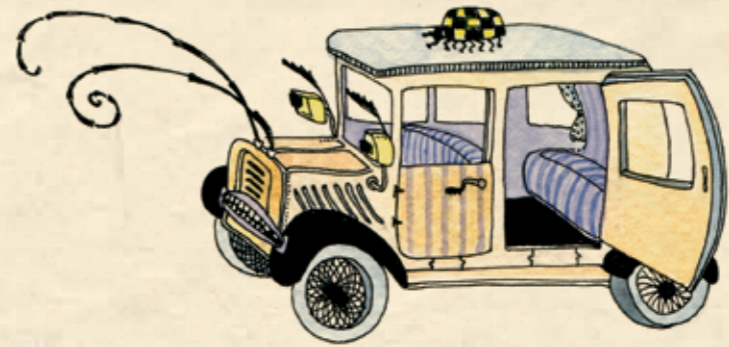
The royal court's planner of tea parties with spirits from underwater, underground, and above the stars; possessor of a killer pipe; botanist; aeronaut; and book fancier of the nineteenth degree.

Iron insects



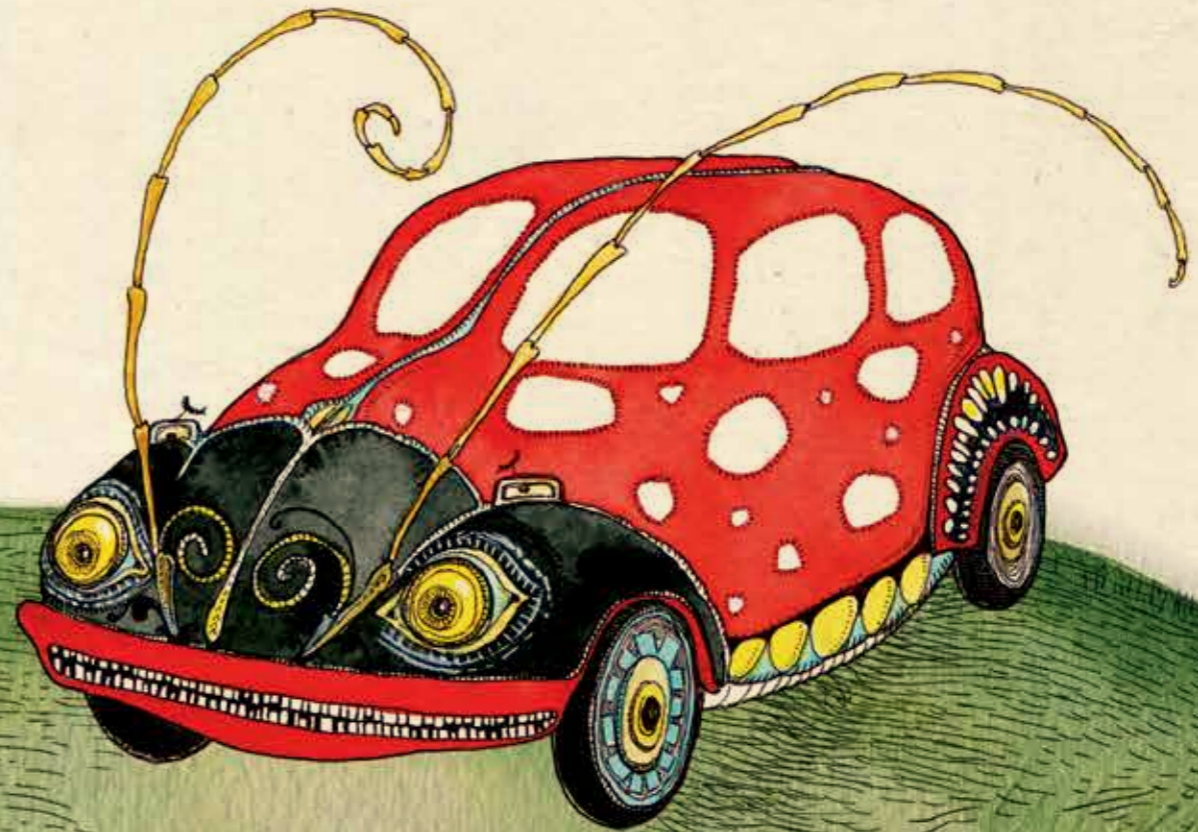
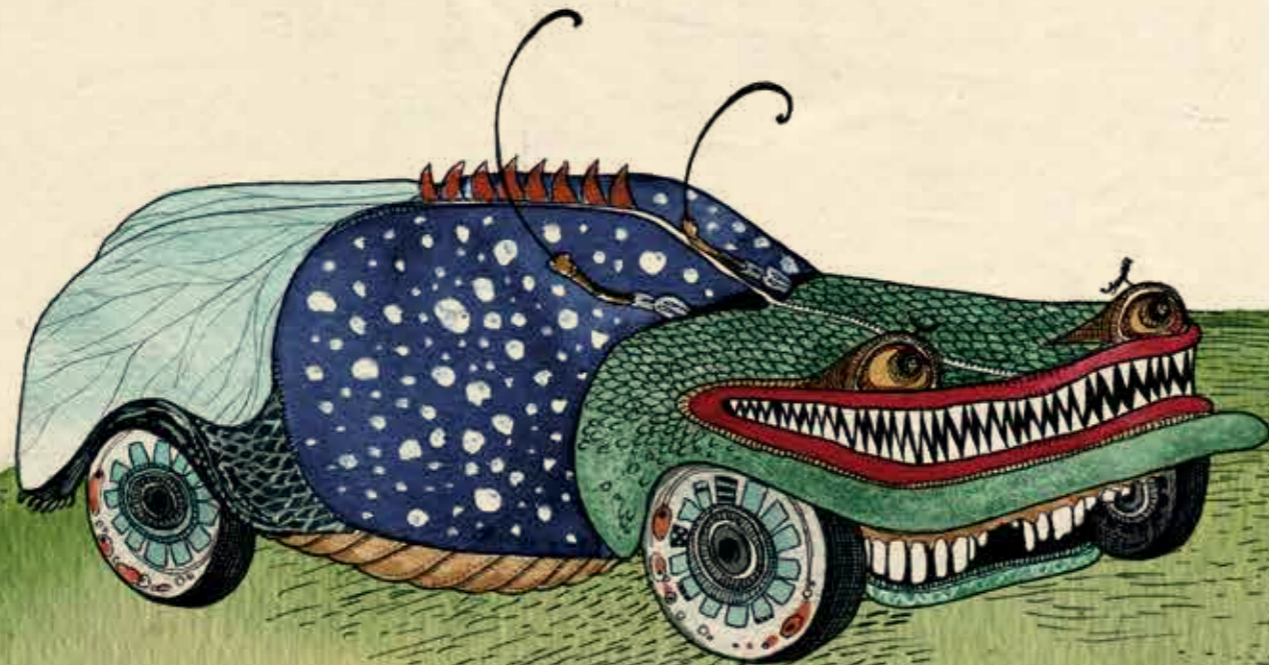
Unlike us, humans don't fly. They're wingless and they don't use carriages harnessed to winged toads or bound around on flying fish or ride on the wings of scarab beetles.

Humans manufacture enormous beetles from metals they mine under the gnomes' land and then climb inside these beetles when they need to go places! Aided by mechanics (a form of wizardry humans use to wake up soulless objects) and a potion known as "gasoline," the human forces the iron insect to rapidly run around the city. If a lot of these beetles converge in one place, though, they poke along at the speed of a caterpillar crawling from a leaf onto a branch and then the bored humans incite the beetles to bellow at one other. Iron insects have eyes on the front and back that light up in the dark so the human inside can see where the insect is going. These beasts sink in water but if humans need to cross the ocean, they sail off on giant iron seagulls instead of in a seashell or under a mermaid's scale, as we do.



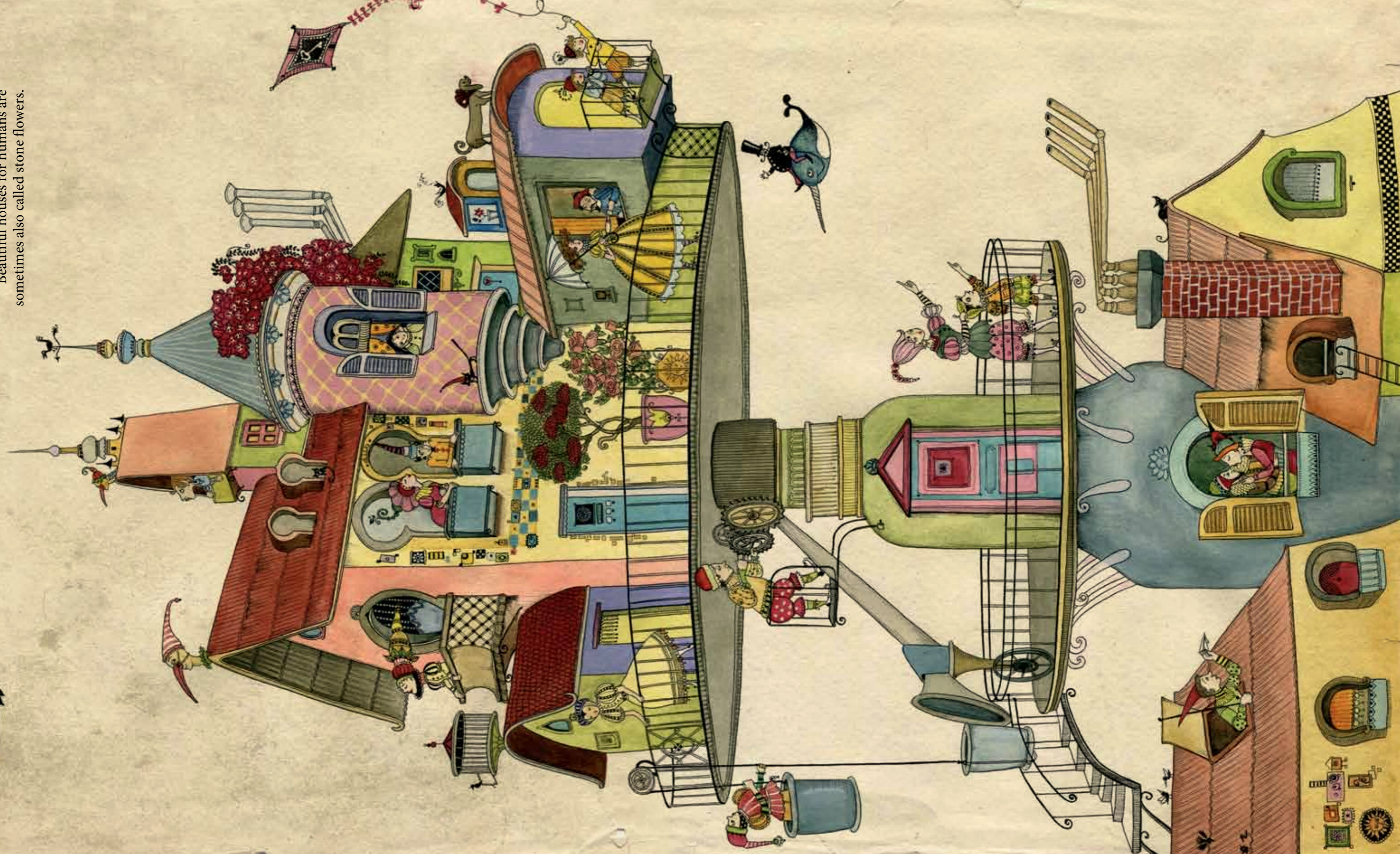
The iron beetle sticks out one of its wings and humans climb inside.

Humans are tremendous wizards: they haven't just coerced the gnomes' metals to furrow the seas, they've also made them fly in the sky! They pile inside an iron dragon that makes much quicker work of the oceans than the swimming iron seagulls. During the flight, the humans inside the dragon sleep and eat whatever the dragon has swallowed.





A HOME
Beautiful houses for humans are
sometimes also called flowers.





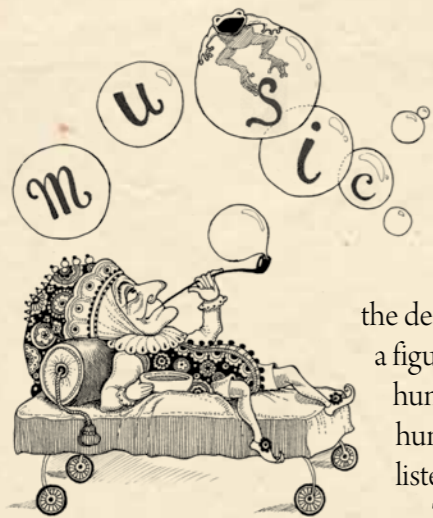
FEYA
NYMPHAEA

Ballet master of dusky aromas, author
of a scholarly work on healing
by playing a wooden flute,
possessor of a thousand
and one cobweb castles.

music

As told by Feya Nymphaea





is one of the most irresistible of human phenomena. It is the most powerful of all human charms. With the help of music, a human is capable of building or destroying a city, growing a tree in minutes, sowing a meadow with flowers, arranging a feast, shaking the earth, resurrecting the dead, immobilizing the enemy, curing an ailment, misleading reason, carving a figurine out of carbuncle, and summoning sun, rain, or tornado. The power of human music is truly astonishing but something else is even more astonishing: humans don't see or know this! One has the impression that they compose and listen to music solely for the sake of enjoyment!

This isn't so difficult to understand if one scrutinizes how a human plays one melody that builds a magnificent cathedral and then another melody that razes it to the ground. Sometimes a human will conjure up a pile of treasures using song and then the final chord will turn it all to sand and seashells. And then there's this: Humans gather by the hundreds to listen for a while to music that makes tails and horns grow but when they go home, to a populated area, or to a loved one's for a date, they all pretend they don't any tails or horns, which don't exist anyway.

People were not always blind to the effects of music, though. There was a time when they built cities with its help and used music as a medicine. A few humans—Goethe and Schelling, for example—even wrote "Architecture in general is frozen music." And the human Franz Lang lamented in his book *The Theater of Human Affections*, "The human ear is closed to the music of angels. This is shameful to admit! Music has ceased to act on even the most trivial of scratches." In human cathedrals dedicated to the past—places where objects kept in solemn silence are so forgotten that humans write on little papers beside the things, telling what the object is, who it belonged to, and why it was needed—one can find many amazing things created with the help of music: chalices, pendants, tabernacles, jewelry boxes, candle holders, dresses, tapestries, trunks ... one couldn't possibly list it all! Many references to musical instruments that forced humans to cry or to dance until they dropped have been preserved.

This was all so long ago that it has been transformed, in human minds, into tales and fables. Of course this doesn't mean music has lost its power, only that its fruits have been concealed from human view in some mysterious way.

The story of this loss is both mournful and romantic. In the Middle Ages of human history, the somber Minnesinger Sator composed a secret song for his beloved, the beautiful Fuschia, daughter of a sideshow puppeteer. The melody was so beautiful that it drew precious stones and gold out from under the earth. As the song's words flowed, tiny musicians appeared out of nowhere and fulfilled all Fuschia's wishes. These creatures disappeared when the song ended.

This beautiful woman, however, loved another, the unprepossessing and undistinguished son of a tax collector. Harboring a mortal resentment, Sator tainted several mediants in the chiming melody of the city's clocks with an allure that caused debauched spirits to appear before the city's women at night. They were burned at the stake and drowned in water reservoirs as punishment. Fuschia, however, proved unsusceptible to this subtle taint and so prepared for her wedding to the son of the tax collector as if nothing had happened.

On the day of the festivities, Sator stole his way into the celebration wearing the mask of a street jester, saying he wished to present the newlyweds with a gift. At that time, music itself was often a gift played in the presence of those being honored so nobody was surprised when the clown brought a horn to his lips. And they even enjoyed themselves when his playing compelled them to begin dancing. This dance was subsequently given the name "dance of death." Everyone who was at the wedding bid farewell to life that same day. Then their relatives and neighbors died. The tainted melody seeped through the city walls, creeping into other cities until the dance of death engulfed everything around it. Only those who were blind to music survived: they might hear it but they couldn't see or feel its effect. Just as things have been for humans ever since.

ВЕЩИ, СОЗДАННЫЕ МУЗЫКОЙ

1. Пуговицы. Золото, этюд на флейте-пикколо.

2. Подставка для яйца. Серебро, концерт для валторны.

3. Подвеска. Золото, жемчуг, ноктюрн на клавишине.

4. Зеркало. Медь, филигрань, сюита для виолончели.

5. Тарелка. Фарфор, элегия на кларнете.

6. Ножницы. Сталь, песня под бубен с колокольцами.

7. Садовая ваза. Мрамор, импровизация на органе.



FUSCHIA AND THE TINY MUSICIANS



Elle me paroit cependant sié. Rats,
 Le Rats dits qu'il a' est rien omis de se
 & que la traducteur, ami de Rondelet, s'aura da. par
 après à celui-ci, qu'il a produit presque mot à mot
 comme chapite, & qu'il a laissé seulement ce qui
 sembleroit ne pouvoit avoir bono-graca ou fianças
 d'Aristote. Sec.
 Mais une chose que l'on a à remarquer au traducteur, c'est qu'il ne s'est point occupé de la correction de son ouvrage.





LYCINIA