



Magic Tales

The Magic Book



James Julian Smith worked for a wizard. Not mixing spells of course, the wizard did that himself, but dusting test tubes and apparatus, sweeping the floor, sticking labels onto jars of frogs legs, sorting ladybird eggs, and looking after all the other mysterious and wonderful things that wizards use.



His most important job was dusting the magic book in which the wizard wrote all his spells.

The book was bound in leather and was so important it was chained to a table, and the table itself was fixed to the floor. It was very thick and smelled of long ago, and mystery.



It was a smell to make any nose tingle with excitement. James Julian wanted to see inside the magic book more than anything else in the world. The wizard used it every day, but whenever James Julian tried to look over his shoulder, the wizard would bang the book shut and wait for him to go away.



Whenever he had finished working on a spell, he would lock the clasp of the book and put the keys in his pocket.

One day, the wizard went out on a collecting errand. There was a special ingredient he wanted for a spell and only he knew where it could be found.



“Carry on dusting,” said the wizard, popping his favourite frog into his pocket as he went out.

“Yes, your Wizardship!” said James Julian.

He decided to start by dusting the book. Flick went the duster, flick... flick... James Julian stroked the leather cover gently with his finger... and made a startling discovery.



The book was unlocked! The wizard had FORGOTTEN TO
LOCK THE BOOK!

James Julian stood staring at the book for a whole minute
before he dared to open it. He turned the pages very
carefully. Each one was covered with spidery writing and
strange marks and symbols. James Julian couldn't
understand ANY of it.

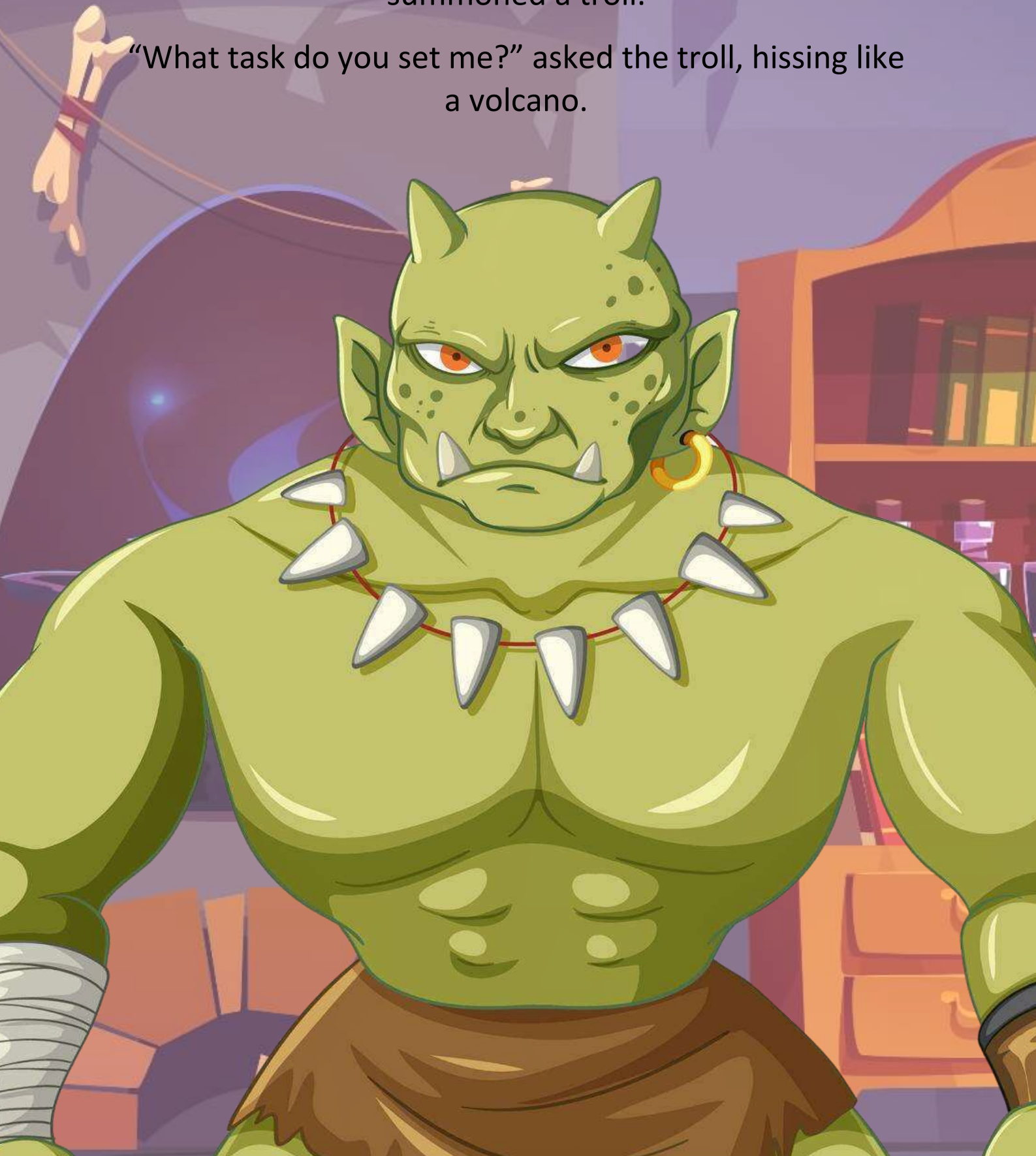


If only HE could cast a spell. Just ONE spell. Just a LITTLE one. He moved his finger along one of the lines of writing and began to read strange words that sounded like gobbledy gook.



There was a swishshshsh! A rush of cold air! A swirl of hissing around his ears! James Julian slammed the book shut so fast he almost caught his nose in it. He wasn't fast enough. The magic words he had just read had summoned a troll.

"What task do you set me?" asked the troll, hissing like a volcano.



James Julian was trembling so much he couldn't think of anything to say at all.

"Set me a task or I will strangle you," said the troll as though it was something he did every day.

"W.w.w.water that!" gasped James Julian pointing to a flower pot standing beside the desk.



“It shall be done!” said the troll and left the room. He returned carrying a large barrel full to the very brim with water.

“No ... NO ... NOT THAT MUCH!” gasped James Julian,
“YOU’LL MAKE EVERYTHING ELSE WET!”



But it would seem that the troll had suddenly gone deaf for he poured every drop of water in the barrel over the flower growing in the flowerpot. James Julian was right. It WAS too much. It DID make everything else wet. It washed the flower right out of the flowerpot. But the troll had not finished.

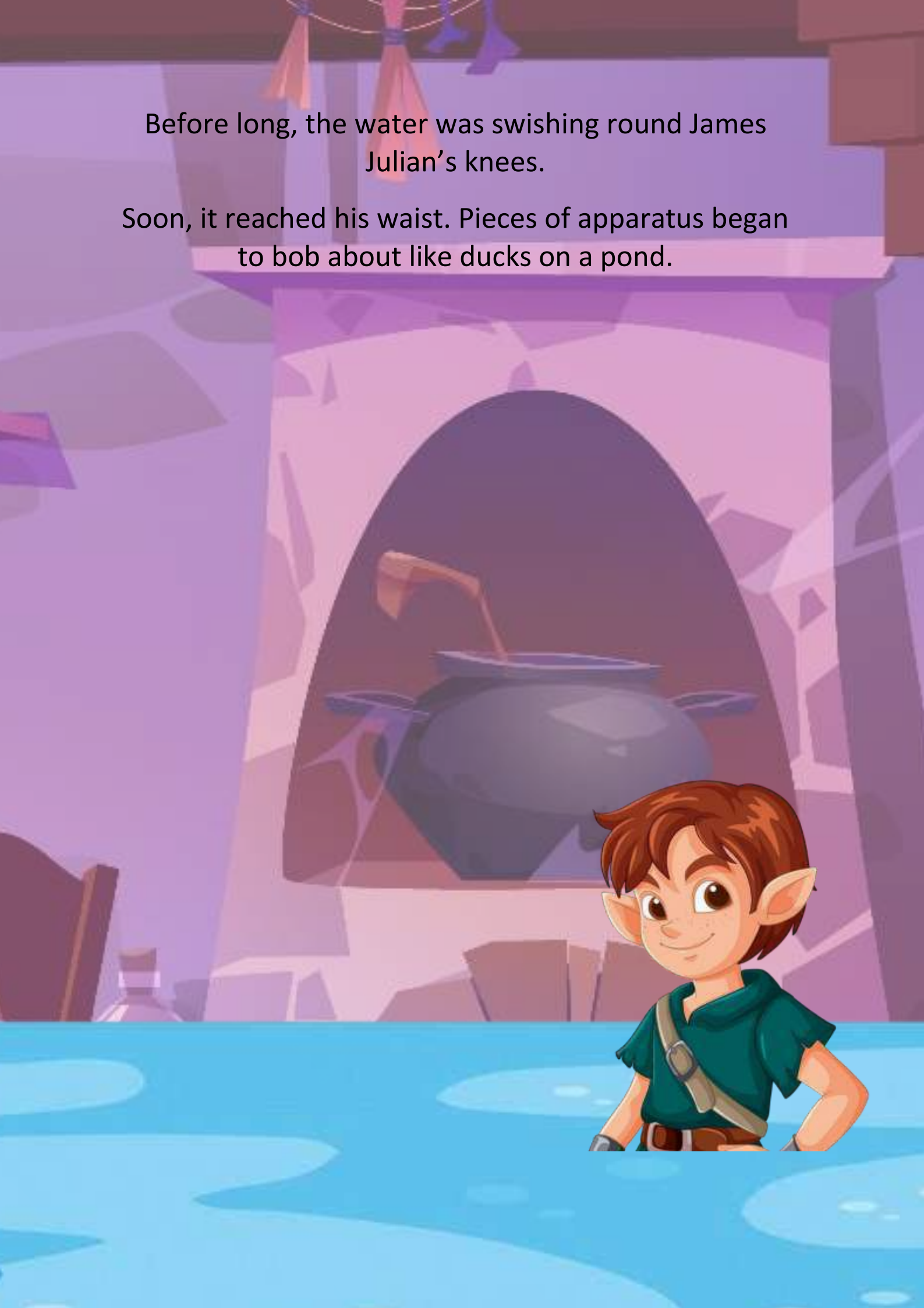


He fetched another barrel of water and emptied that over the flowerpot too... and then another... and another... and then another. And all the time the troll was pouring, James Julian was shouting “STOP! STOP! Oh please STOP!” His voice got very hoarse.



Before long, the water was swishing round James Julian's knees.

Soon, it reached his waist. Pieces of apparatus began to bob about like ducks on a pond.



The water was already lapping round his chin. Anymore and it would be over his head. James Julian couldn't hold his breath forever. What WAS going to happen to him?



But just when he thought he was going to drown, the wizard returned home. The wizard knew EXACTLY the right words to dismiss the troll, send the water rushing out of the door, and the apparatus whizzing back to the shelves.



“At least you managed to keep the book dry,” said the wizard as he took the book from James Julian’s upstretched arms, “and it looks as though your arms will ache for a week, so we’ll say no more, but let this be a lesson to you. Do not meddle with things you do not understand.”



“Oh, I’ll never do it again,” said James Julian. And he didn’t, but that was because the wizard never left the magic book unlocked again, and he didn’t get the chance.



