

THE STORM

A TIK AND TOK ADVENTURE

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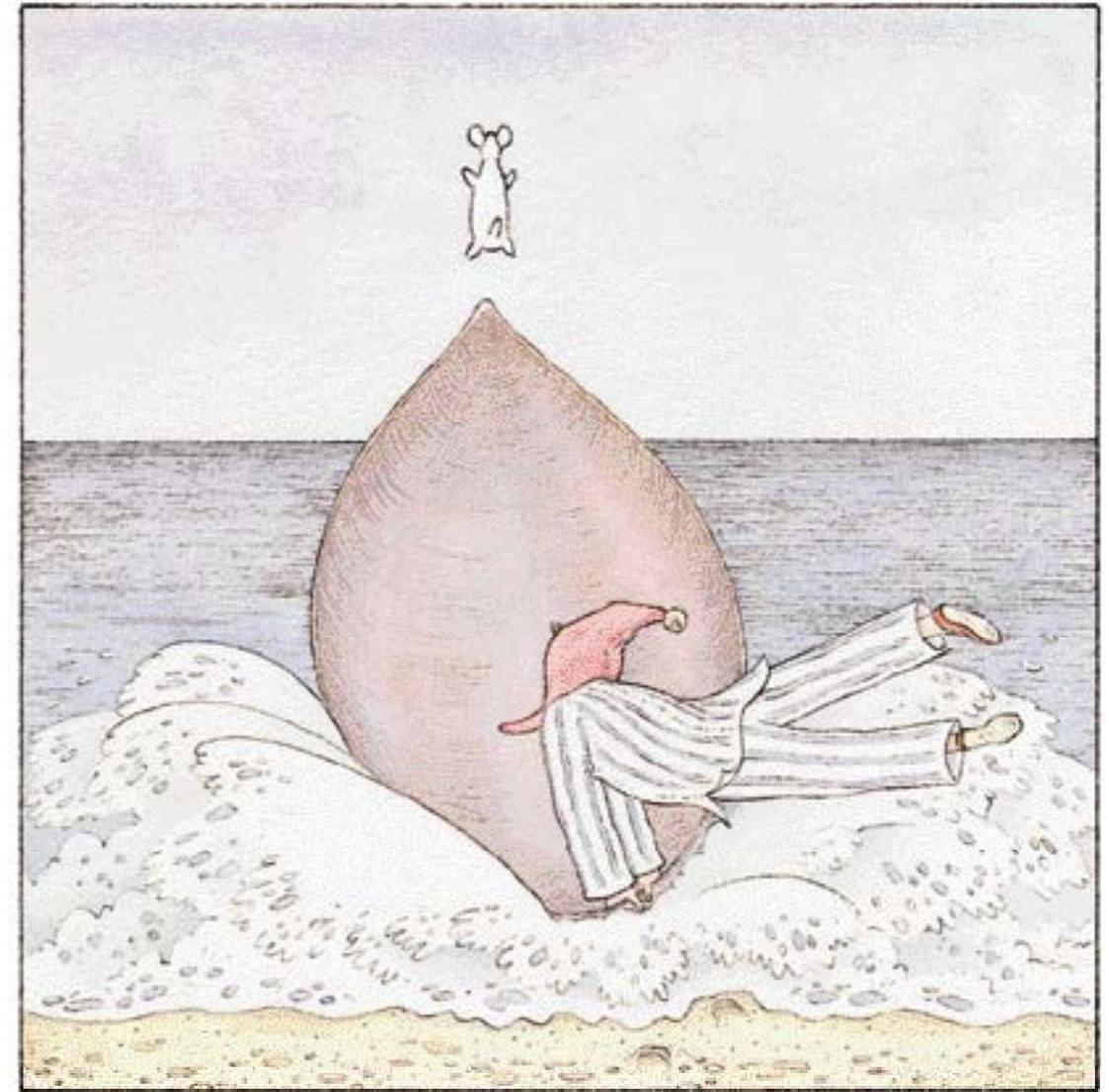


At dawn the next day Tik was at the window. As the light grew he saw a shadow at the water's edge, growing darker and clearer until, the sun reaching over the horizon, he could see a small boat resting in the surf. His heart leaped and then he did too, down onto the soft sand and over to the waiting vessel. Tok was asleep inside. Tik ran his hand along the prow and sniffed his fingers. The boat was made of cinnamon bark, each piece stitched to the next so finely that he couldn't feel the join as he brushed his fingertips over the hull.

'Tok!' squealed Tik. 'Wake up! Have you ever seen anything quite so beautiful?'

'Mmmm...?' mumbled Tok. 'What was that? Mmmm... oh, yes... beautiful. Good smells.'

'Come on,' giggled Tik, 'out we go!'

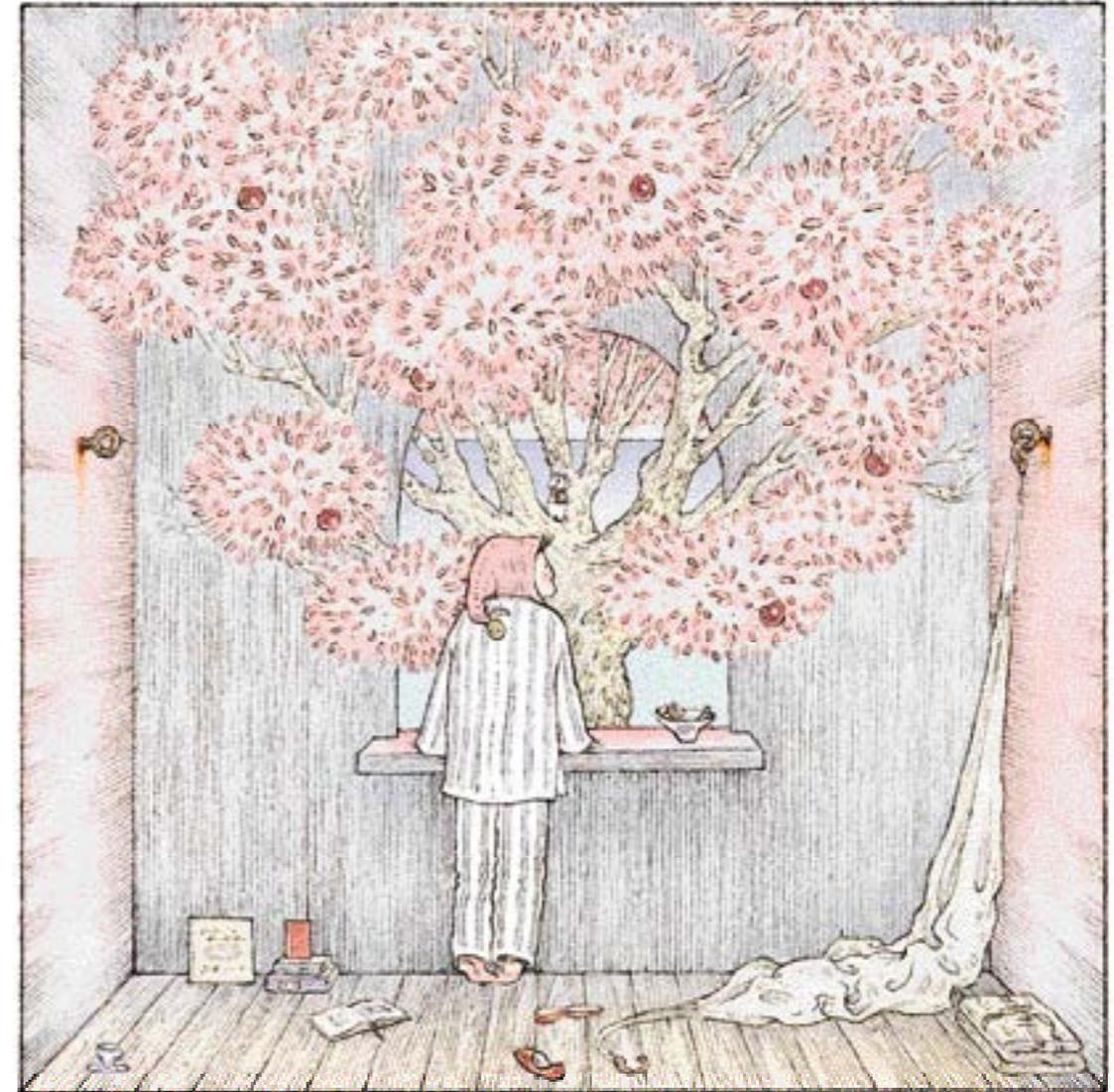


'Oh,' he said mournfully, 'it's empty. Nothing but a few grains of sand.'

And he shook them out onto the beach and pocketed the little red box.



Tik was woken at dawn by a soft, rustling sound. Lying in his hammock with his eyes closed he listened hard and tried to imagine what it could possibly be. It sounded something like the wind playing in the trees at the edge of the wood. At last he opened his eyes, and looked out of the window. Or rather, couldn't look out of the window, for it was full of the leaves and branches of a wonderful tree, pushing into the room and whispering in the breeze. Tok was sitting between two branches, breakfasting on the gorgeous fruit.



Tik leapt down to the sand. The wind was whipping through the long grass and whistling round the house, building to a dull roar that filled the darkening sky. Out on the headland sheets of rain began falling through the golden glow. The wind was shrieking now, driving the pelting rain this way and that and all the world was ablaze with the dancing light of the great golden ring rushing on through the shattering storm.

Tik caught sight of Tok at the edge of the beach, his little white body glowing like gold in the fiery light, and as soon as Tok knew that Tik had seen him he bounded away at top speed, heading for the dark wood.



'No, Tok!' Tik shouted. 'Not the wood! Not the wood!'

But it was no use. Tok had gone and the great light had reached the beach, snapping and licking towards



'Well, well,' murmured Tik.

Tok smiled.

They stood on a mossy mound in a clearing and at their feet lay a small branch, straight and hollow with six holes along its length. Tik picked it up and blew into it. It made a beautiful sound, hanging in the air and fading away. Like a picture that disappeared as he drew it. Like the wind at play in the grass. And as he played note after note, little chains of sound formed and melted away, like waves on the sea.

'Well, Tok,' said Tik. 'A gift. When I least expected one.'

'Fancy that,' said Tok.

And they walked slowly back the way they had come, the sound of the flute threading the trees like a bird.

