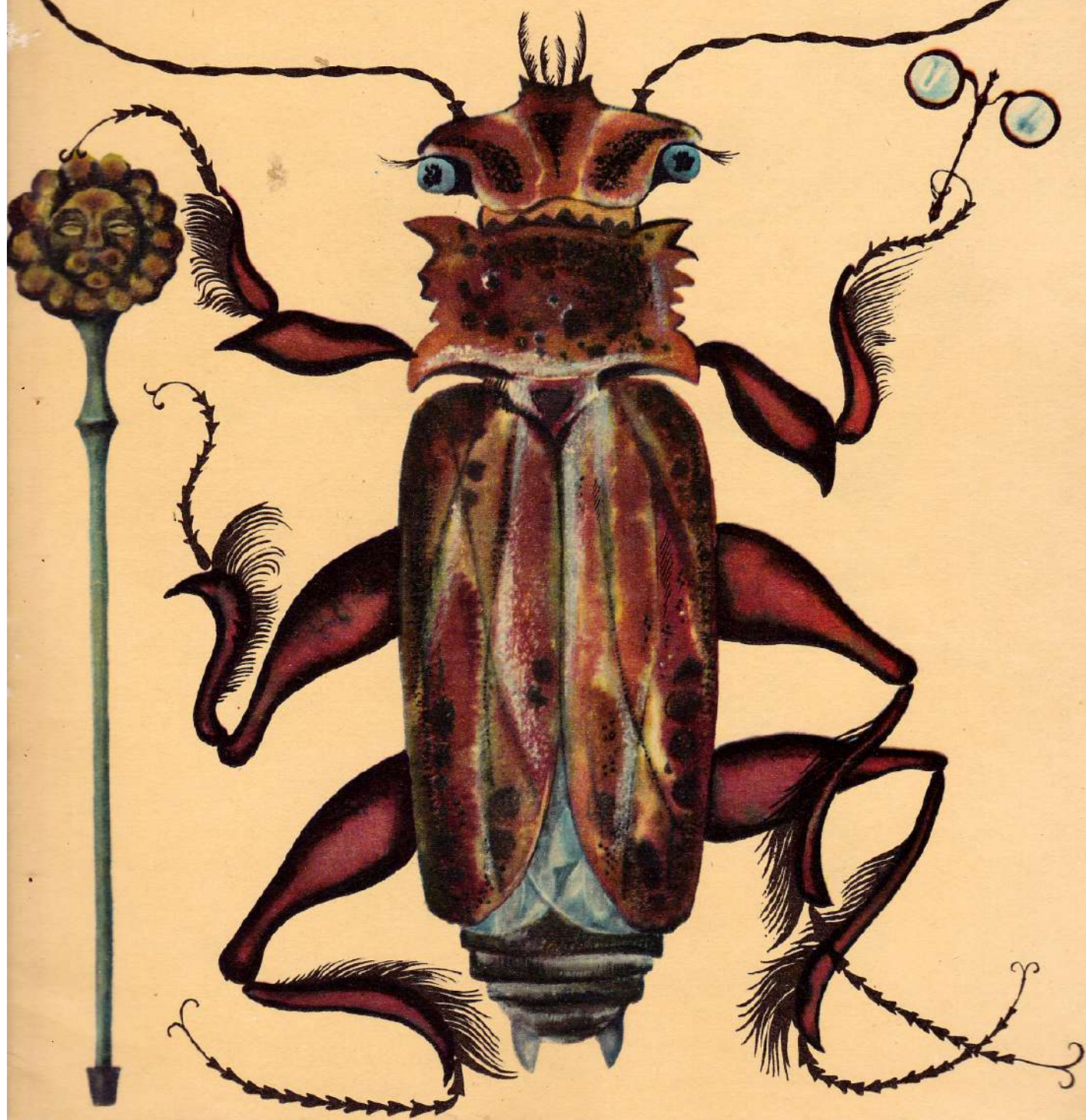


Kornei Chukovsky

COCK-THE-ROACH





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PART ONE

Bears went to the hike
A-riding on a bike.

Then came Tom-the-Cat,
Back-to-front he sat.

Spry mosquitoes drifted by
In a big balloon on high.

Lobsters looked like shrimps
On a dog that limps.

Wolves were mounted on a horse.
Lions drove in cars, of course.

Hares in pairs
Crammed in a tram.

Toad rode on a broom...

What a merry bunch!
Gingernuts they munch.





* * *

Suddenly a Titan
Crawls beneath the gate—
Whiskers meant to frighten,
Very stiff and straight.
Cock-the-Roach
Cock-the-Roach,
Cock-the-Roach the Great!!



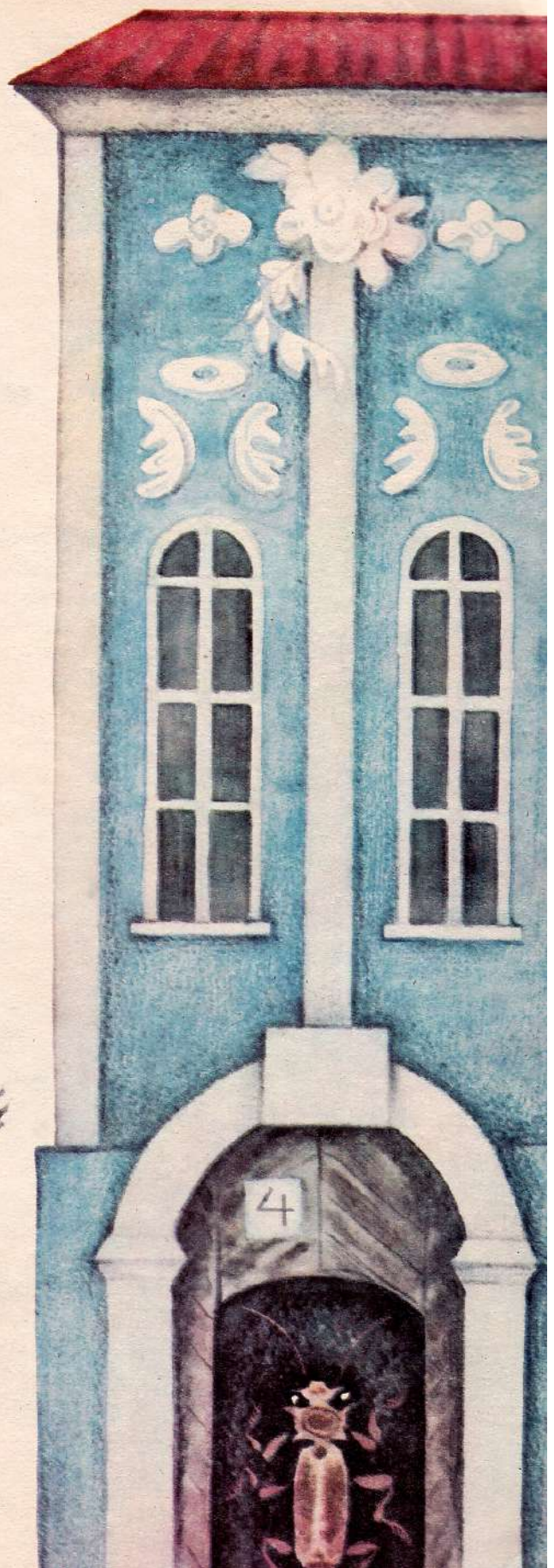
Sharp and loud his shout rings out,
While his whiskers wave about:
"Don't you worry, I shan't hurry,
But I'll gulp and gobble you!
That is true!
Oh, too true!
There's no hope for you!"

Creatures rock and sway,
Fainting right away.

Such a dreadful flight!
Wolves eat wolves on sight.

Poor old Uncle Crock
Gulps a frog in shock,

And Mum Jumbo, all a-shake,
Sits on a hedgehog by mistake.





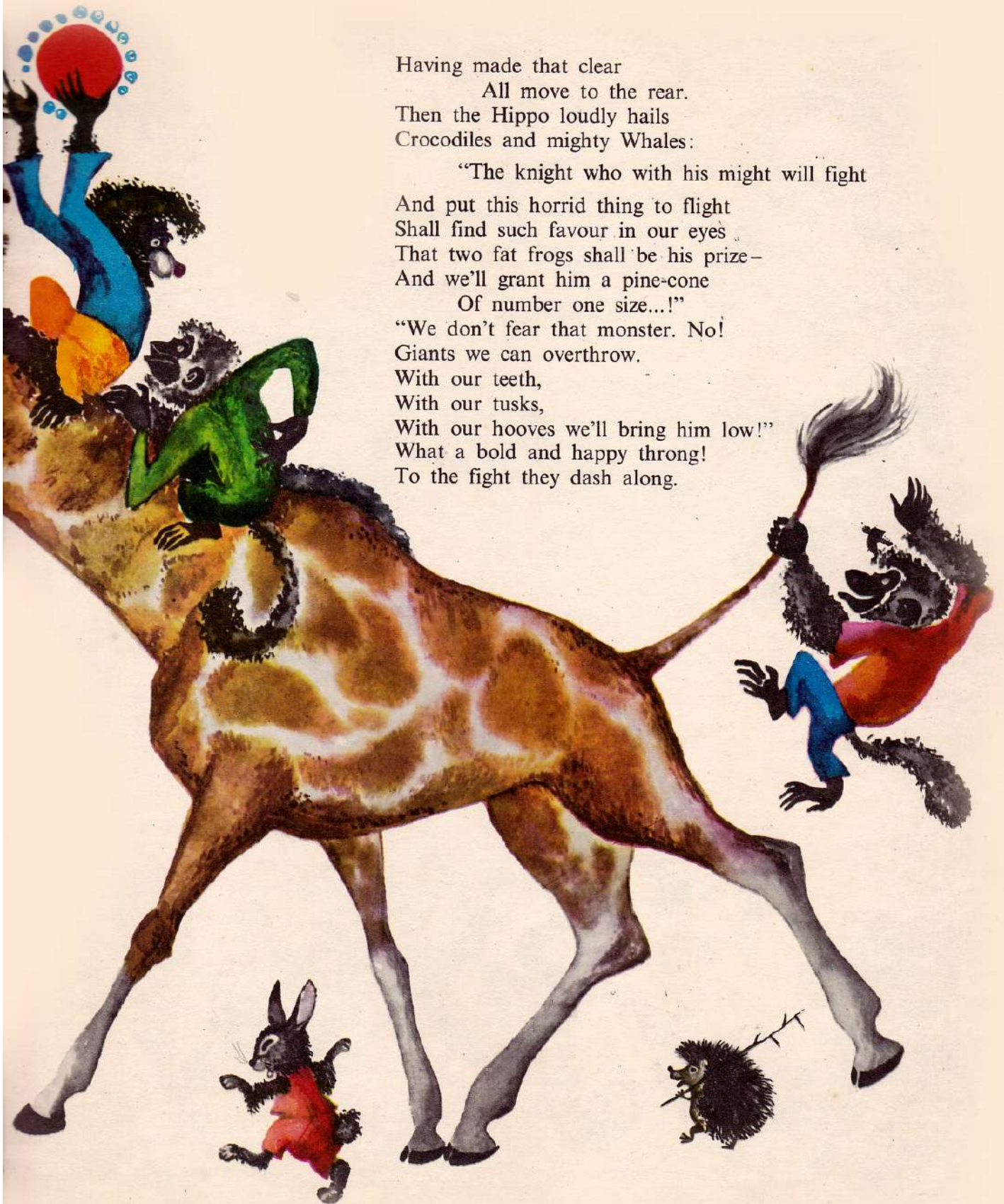
Only Lobsters feel all right—
In a pinch they love a fight.
It is true that back they wriggle,
Yet defiant whiskers wiggle.
Let the tyrant fear!

Let the giant hear!!
“Hey, you, listen! We’re proud, too!
We have whiskers just like you.
We can shout out louder, too.
So, Big Whiskers, off with you!”



Having made that clear
All move to the rear.
Then the Hippo loudly hails
Crocodiles and mighty Whales:

"The knight who with his might will fight
And put this horrid thing to flight
Shall find such favour in our eyes
That two fat frogs shall be his prize—
And we'll grant him a pine-cone
Of number one size...!"
"We don't fear that monster. No!
Giants we can overthrow.
With our teeth,
With our tusks,
With our hooves we'll bring him low!"
What a bold and happy throng!
To the fight they dash along.





But when they see those whiskers wave,
 Oh, dear me!
 Not a single beast is brave.
 Oh, dear me!
 Over hill, over dale, through the woods
 they tear...
 Cock-the-Roach's whiskers gave them such
 a scare!



To the scene the Hippo came
 And his face went red with shame:
 "Hey, you Bulls and Rhinos there!
 Don't you dare hide in your lair!
 Were you born
 With no horn? .
 Toss him in the air!"
 Bulls and Rhinos say: "Don't blare!
 Please speak softly. Do take care!
 We would surely
 Gore him sorely,
 But horns are dear, like hide and hair,
 And who will pay for wear and tear?"





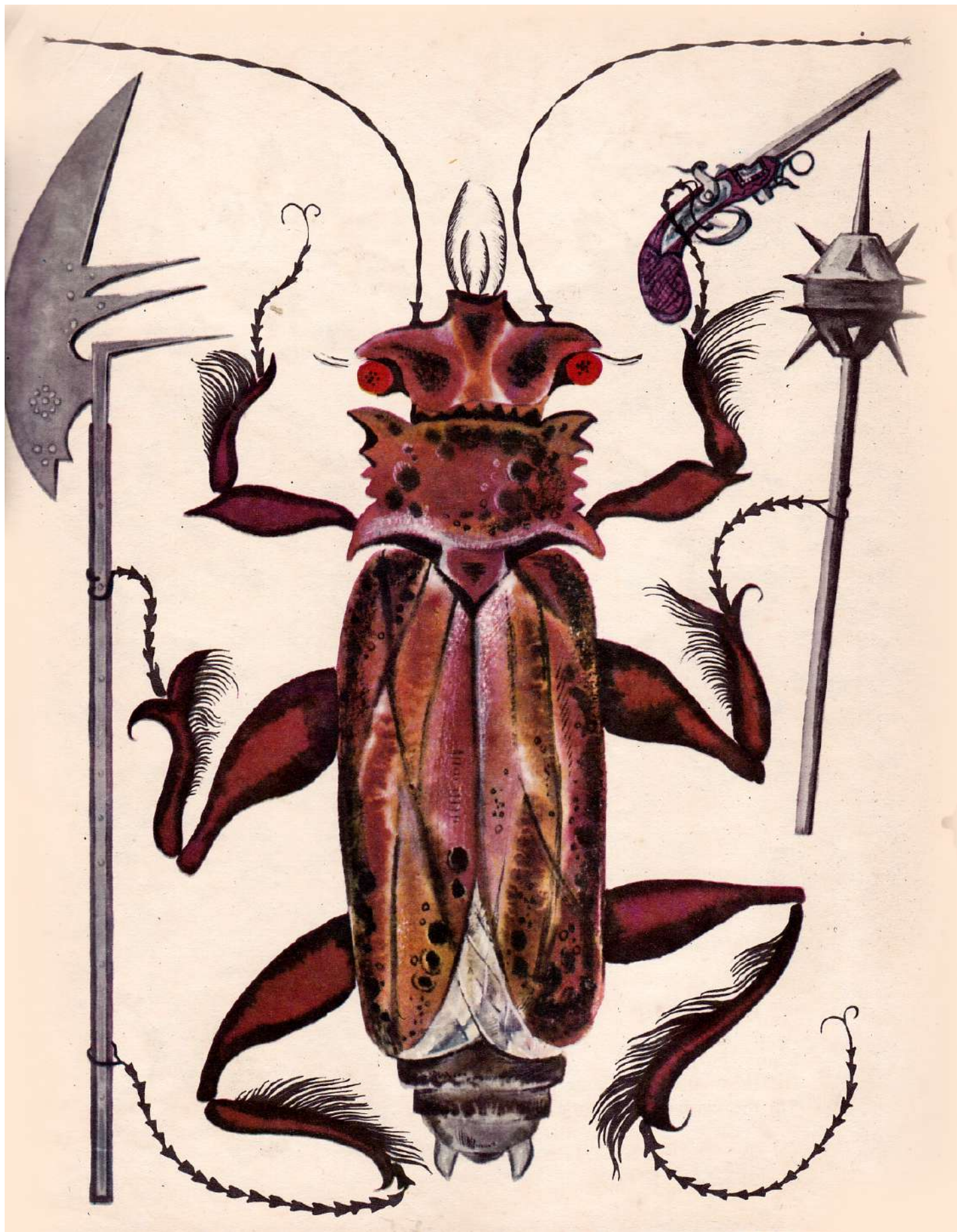
How they shake and quake underneath the hedge
By the swampy lake, every nerve on edge!

Crocodiles in nettles hide their heads and skulk.
In a ditch Mum Jumbo settles down to sulk.

Creatures' teeth rattle, so great are their fears—
Look at their shivering, quivering ears!
Every Monkey hops and skips,
Grabs his bags and packs his grips.
Falling into frantic fits
Each

One
Quits!
Sharks hate worry,
Scurry, hurry,
But their tails make quite a flurry,
Till the swish makes cuttle fish
Scuttle off
Like other fish.





Oh, those wretched Beasts!
How they howl and growl!



They declare in every lair
That the glutton and his feasts
Are unfair and foul.



"Why! it breaks a mother's heart
With her little one to part,
Chubby Jumbo, Baby Hare,
Or a cuddly Teddy Bear.

The rogue, the scoundrel! Oh, how cruel
To use our babes to make his gruel!!"
How they weep no words can tell.
Mummies bid their babes farewell.



* * *

Then one morning through the dew
Hopped and skipped a Kangaroo.
When he saw great Cock-the-Roach
Loud he shouted with reproach:

“Goodness! Do you think he’s strong?

Ha! Ha! Ha!

Think again, for you are wrong!

Ha! Ha! Ha!

Cock-the-Roach! Cock-the-Roach...

...He’s nothing but a brown cockroach!

That’s the horrid midget’s name—

If you obey him you’re to blame!





Haven't you got claw and paw,
Fangs to tear and bite?
How could you bow down before
Such a tiny mite?"

But the Hippos now felt bad,
So they whispered:
"Are you mad?
Go away! Don't make a fuss,
You will make things worse for us!"





Suddenly a wee bird flew
From the woods dark green and blue,
Flitting fast as any arrow,
Such a perky little Sparrow!

“Cheep-peep-peep!
A-cheep-a-peep!”

How he nips! Oh, what a cheek!
For the cockroach in his beak
Dies without a single squeak.

His long ginger whiskers are hidden from view.
That giant, the tyrant has now got his due!

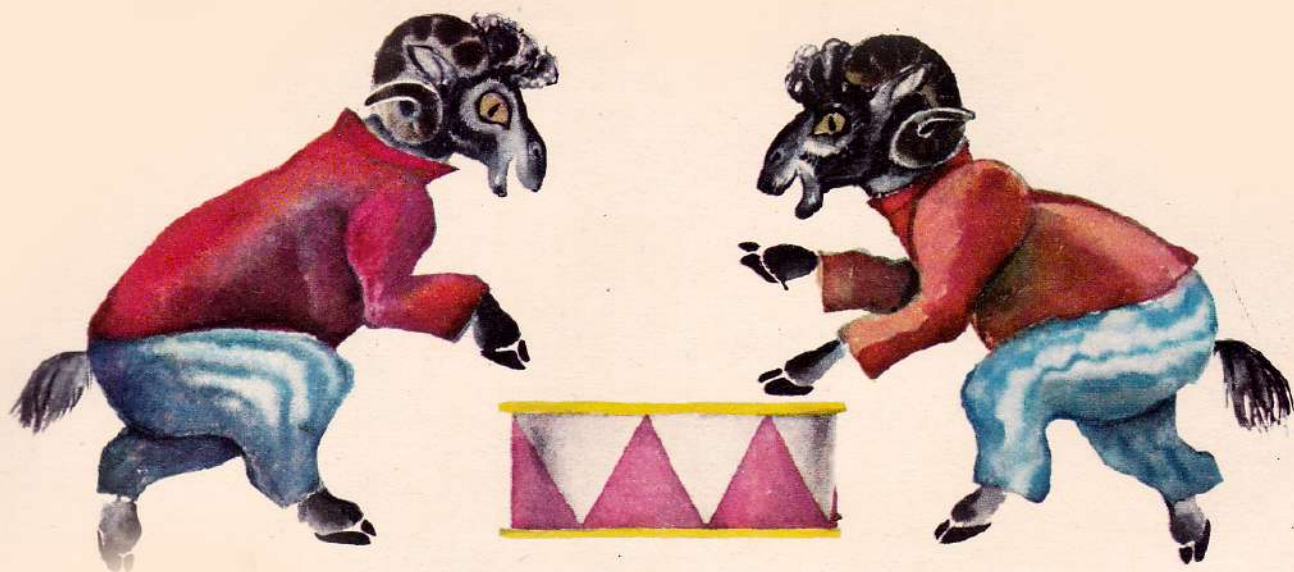


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Oh, how happy, daft and daffy,
Act those creatures now they've heard!
They feel great, congratulating
Both themselves and that small bird.









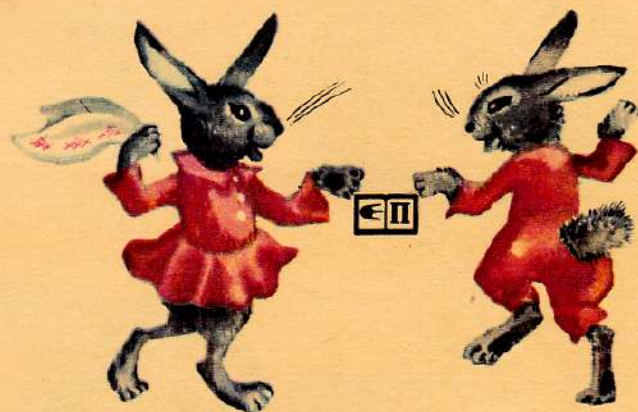
Mummie Jumbo, looking smart,
Skips in a jig with all her heart,
Till the Earth and Sky start rumbling.—
Down the very Moon comes tumbling
And it sends poor Jumbo stumbling.

* * *

What a fuss the Beasts are making!
From the lake the Moon they're raking.
They must nail it up on high
In its place to light the sky!







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К. Чуковский

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