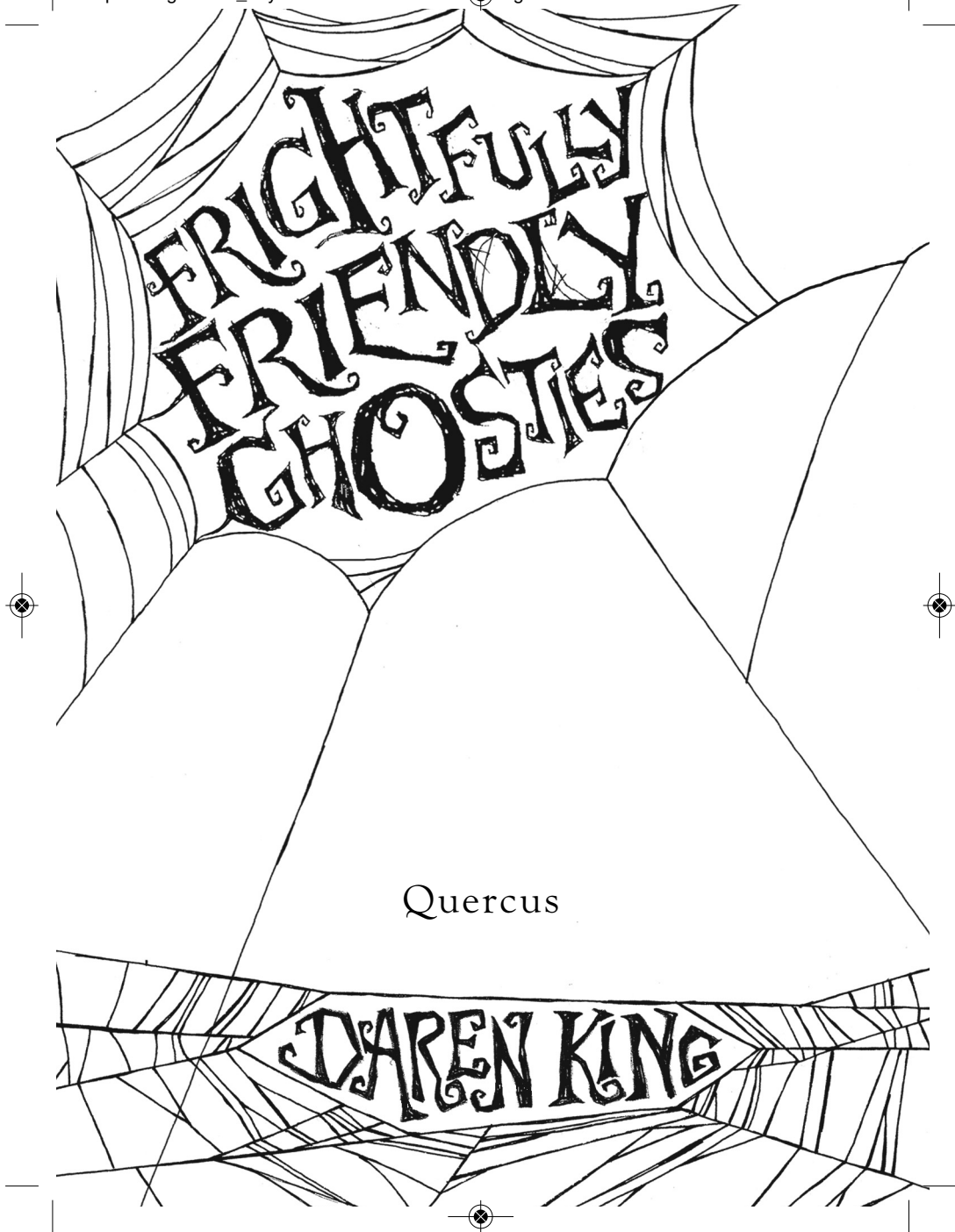


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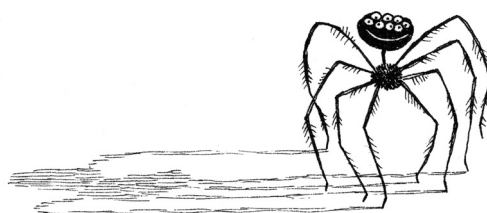
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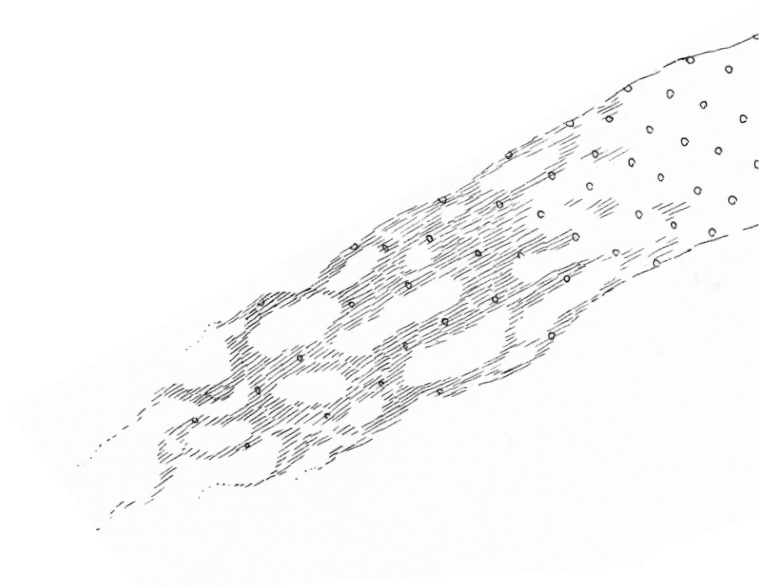
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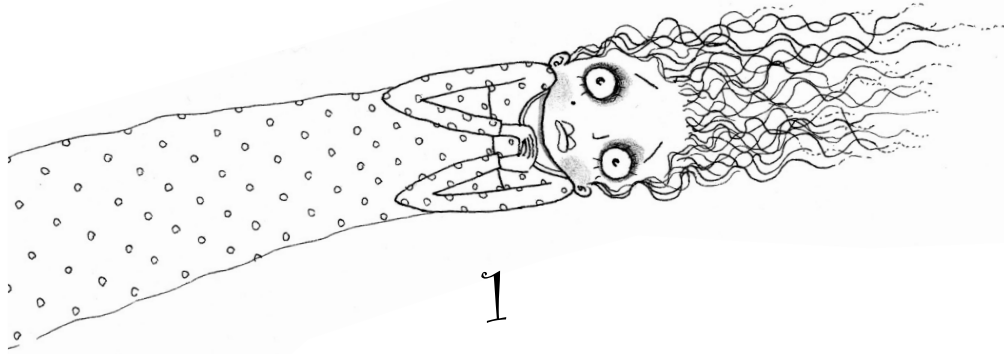
MOUSE NOSES ON TOAST
SENSIBLE HARE AND THE CASE OF CARROTS
PETER THE PENGUIN PIONEER



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1

Pamela Fraidy

You still-alives are so mean to us ghosties. Only yesterday you locked Pamela Fraidy in the attic. She's a nervous wreck as it is! Not all ghosties can pass through walls, you know. That's only in cartoons and story books.

The only ghosty who can pass through walls is Charlie Vapour. He can pass through ceilings too, even when he's wearing a hat.

Poor Pamela. We could hear her shivering from outside the attic door.

'Try to keep calm,' I told her through the

1

wood. 'We'll get you out.'

'Help!' Pamela cried. 'It's d-d-dark in here, and I think it may be haunted.'

I asked Charlie to pass through into the attic, to comfort her.

'Certainly not, Tabitha,' said Charlie, in that adorable cockney accent of his. 'It would be an invasion of her privacy.'

'But she's petrified.'

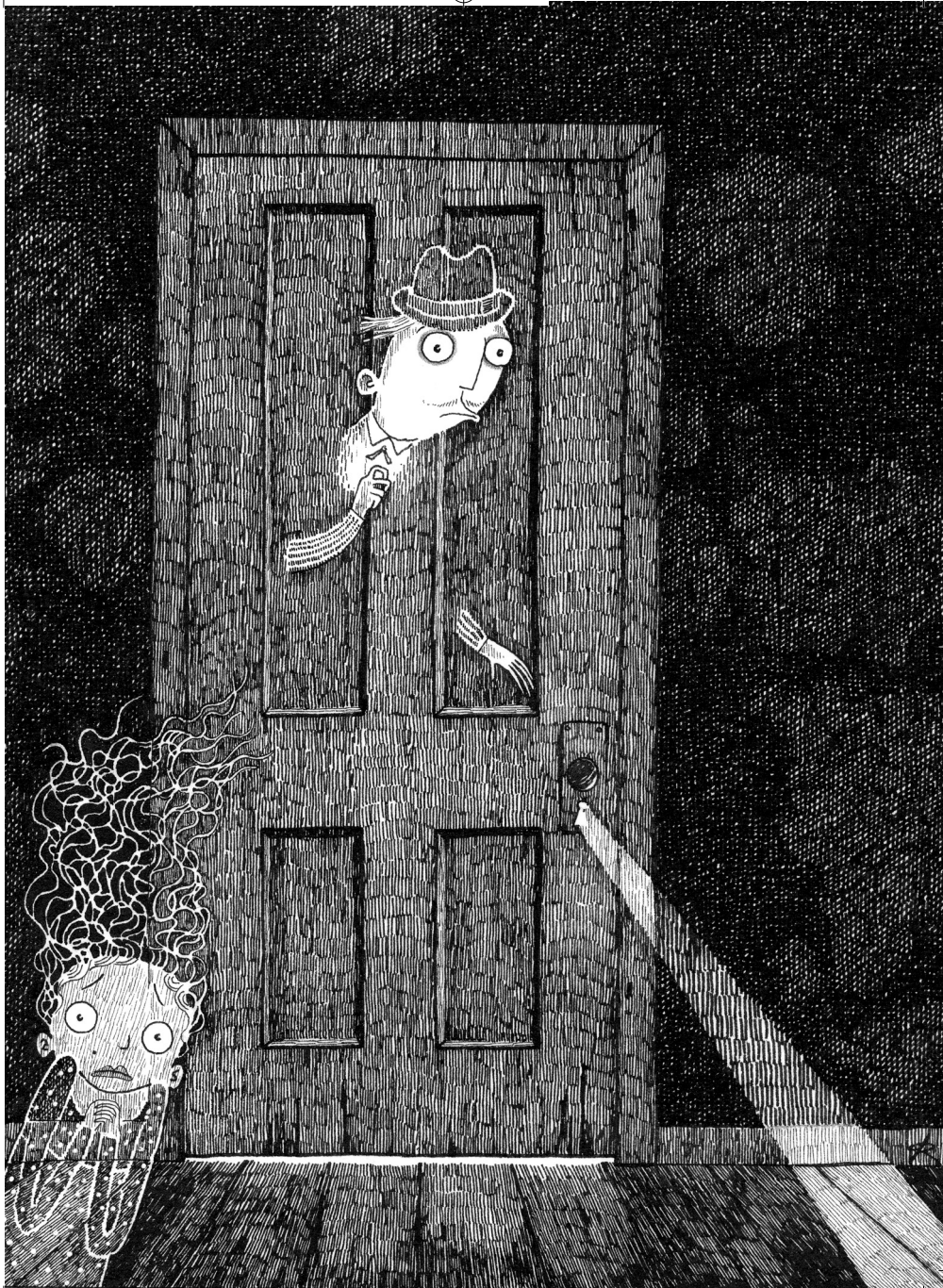
'Who isn't? This rickety old house gives me the shivers. No wonder the still-alives always look flustered.'

'Charlie,' I said, 'please do comfort Pamela.'

Charlie passed his head through the door, then pulled it out quickly. 'It's dark in there. I reckon I'll wait out here with you, Tabitha.'

'But you're the only ghosty who can pass through.'

Once again, Charlie passed his head through the door, shuddered, and pulled it back out.



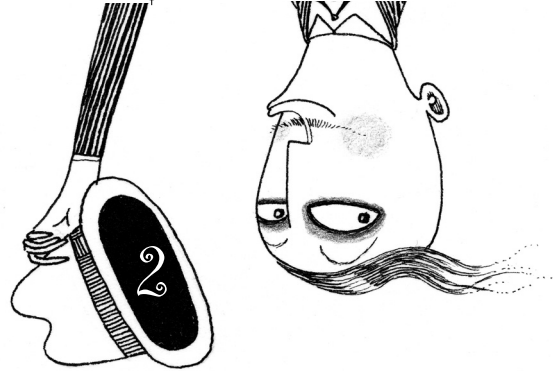
‘Tabitha Tumbly, I refuse to float into that attic. There’s a spider in there as big as my hat.’

Pamela was getting desperate. ‘What are you *doing* out there?’

‘Don’t you worry about a thing,’ I told her. ‘We will float downstairs and fetch the key.’

That happened yesterday, and the key is still on the hook by the front door. The problem is, ghosties can’t pick things up.

I can move things, I’m a poltergeist, that’s why they call me Tabitha Tumbly. To be honest, I’m not very good at it. I can make a basket of laundry tumble off the sideboard, or an orange roll along the kitchen table, but I can’t lift a key from a hook, float it upstairs and insert it into a keyhole. Only a still-alive can do that. But, as Wither would put it, you still-alives are mean.



Charlie Vapour

Charlie and I left Pamela Fraidy quivering in the attic and wisped downstairs to the hall, where we found Wither floating by the hat stand.

‘Where are the still-alives when we need them?’ Charlie asked him.

‘The still-alives are frightfully mean,’ said Wither, wrinkling his forehead. ‘You’re better off without them.’

‘We need them to help us with the key,’ I told him.

‘They won’t help,’ said Charlie as the three of

us floated towards the front door. 'It was the still-alives who locked Pamela in the attic in the first place.'

'They didn't intend to.'

Wither folded his bony arms. 'Tabitha, they were being mean and you know it.'

'Even so,' I said, 'it doesn't hurt to ask.'

'There's a still-alive in here,' said Charlie, passing his head through the wall.

'I haven't been in that room since I was still alive,' I said. 'Which room is it?'

'It's the drawing room,' said Wither.

'The drawing room?'

'He means the lounge,' said Charlie. 'Wither is frightfully old-fashioned.'

'I call it the living room,' I said. 'At least, I did when I was still living.'

'Life was more civilised in my day,' said Charlie. He took off his hat – it's the polite thing to do – and passed through the lounge wall.

A moment later, we heard a loud scream and Charlie reappeared, white as a, um, ghost. ‘Those still-alives give me the shivers.’

‘Any luck?’

‘No, Tabitha. There was one sitting in an armchair eating corn flakes. I bid her good morning and she picked up her breakfast tray and threw it at me.’



‘Perhaps she wasn’t hungry.’

Wither frowned. ‘Why are the still-alives so mean?’

‘I told you they wouldn’t help,’ said Charlie, putting his hat back on. ‘We’ll have to move the key ourselves. Tabitha, you can move objects.’

‘Oh, not terribly well.’

‘Don’t be modest. You’re a poltergeist.’



'I could try.' I closed my eyes, then opened them again.

'No. I simply cannot do it.'

'Try again.'

I tried, and the key jiggled.

'You must think I'm a frightful show-off.'

'Not at all,' said Charlie and Wither together.

'I'm sorry,' Wither said to Charlie, 'I didn't mean to talk over you.'

'No,' said Charlie, 'it was I who spoke over you. Tabitha, do try again.'

'Face the other way,' I said. 'I can't do it with you two watching.'

Charlie and Wither turned to the wall.

'No peeking.' I gave the key a good jiggle. It jiggled and jingled and jangled, but stubbornly refused to move from the hook.

'It isn't your fault,' said Wither.

‘Don’t blame yourself,’ Charlie said,
adjusting his tie. ‘The hook is an awkward
shape.’



