

The Goloknip Stories

by Roderick Ramage

Lettuce Leaf

Ben stared at his plate in disbelief.

'What is that?'

'A lettuce leaf. "I can see that. What is it?'

'Your lunch'

'That's not lunch. I'm hungry.'

'Then you can have another leaf.'

Ben looked at his mother questioningly. His mother picked up the latest copy of the *New Scientist*.

'Now listen to what I read: "Often you have to offer children a new food up to 15 times before they begin to enjoy eating it." This is the ninth'.

His shoulders slumped.

'Six lettuce leaves still to go.'

Ben closed his eyes. It felt as though his mother had opened the window and the wind would blow the lettuce leaf away.

'If only I could fly it away.'

In his head he heard a faint "pop" and a voice.

'Keep your eyes closed and count slowly from 1 to 7.'

Ben felt a little lurch.

'May I open my eyes?'

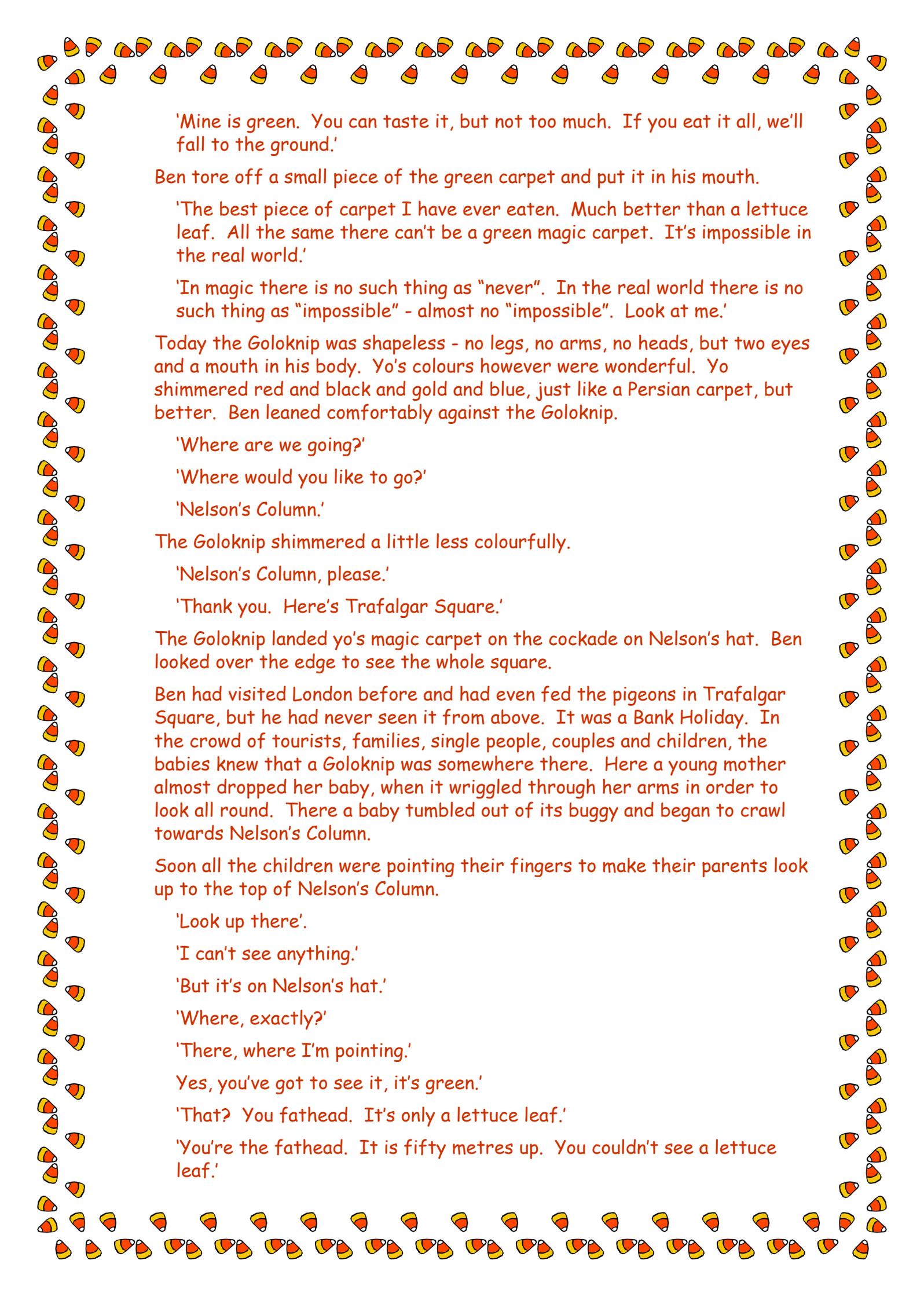
'Not yet. When I say yes, then you must count backwards from 7 to 1 and open them. Wait, wait, and ... yes.'

Ben counted backwards from 7 to 1, opened his eyes and turned to look at the Goloknip.

'Where are we?'

'On my magic carpet.'

'Magic carpet? You cannot be serious. Magic carpets are Persian, they are not green but red and black and gold and blue. Persian carpets are never green.'



'Mine is green. You can taste it, but not too much. If you eat it all, we'll fall to the ground.'

Ben tore off a small piece of the green carpet and put it in his mouth.

'The best piece of carpet I have ever eaten. Much better than a lettuce leaf. All the same there can't be a green magic carpet. It's impossible in the real world.'

'In magic there is no such thing as "never". In the real world there is no such thing as "impossible" - almost no "impossible". Look at me.'

Today the Goloknip was shapeless - no legs, no arms, no heads, but two eyes and a mouth in his body. Yo's colours however were wonderful. Yo shimmered red and black and gold and blue, just like a Persian carpet, but better. Ben leaned comfortably against the Goloknip.

'Where are we going?'

'Where would you like to go?'

'Nelson's Column.'

The Goloknip shimmered a little less colourfully.

'Nelson's Column, please.'

'Thank you. Here's Trafalgar Square.'

The Goloknip landed yo's magic carpet on the cockade on Nelson's hat. Ben looked over the edge to see the whole square.

Ben had visited London before and had even fed the pigeons in Trafalgar Square, but he had never seen it from above. It was a Bank Holiday. In the crowd of tourists, families, single people, couples and children, the babies knew that a Goloknip was somewhere there. Here a young mother almost dropped her baby, when it wriggled through her arms in order to look all round. There a baby tumbled out of its buggy and began to crawl towards Nelson's Column.

Soon all the children were pointing their fingers to make their parents look up to the top of Nelson's Column.

'Look up there.'

'I can't see anything.'

'But it's on Nelson's hat.'

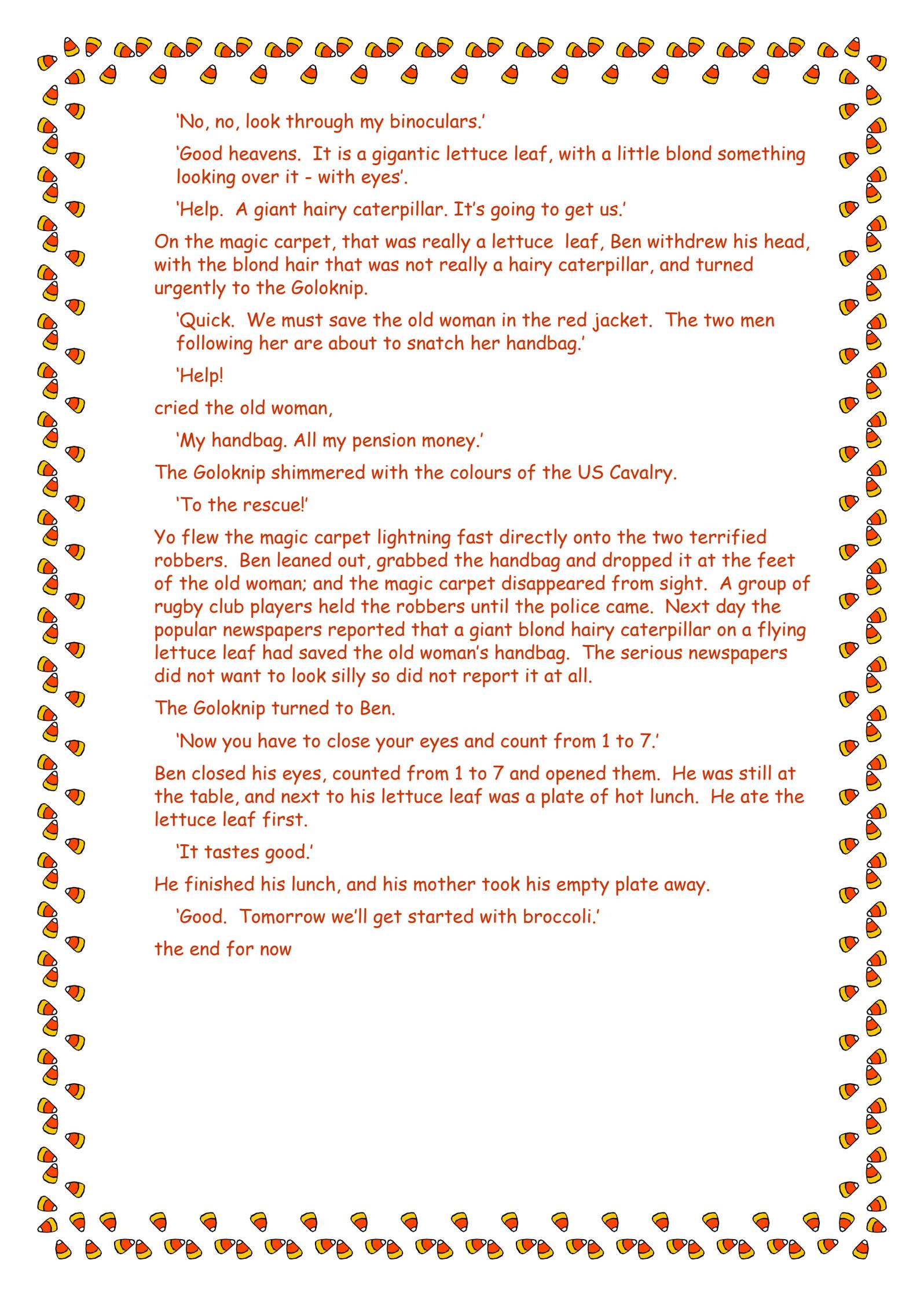
'Where, exactly?'

'There, where I'm pointing.'

Yes, you've got to see it, it's green.'

'That? You fathead. It's only a lettuce leaf.'

'You're the fathead. It is fifty metres up. You couldn't see a lettuce leaf.'



'No, no, look through my binoculars.'

'Good heavens. It is a gigantic lettuce leaf, with a little blond something looking over it - with eyes'.

'Help. A giant hairy caterpillar. It's going to get us.'

On the magic carpet, that was really a lettuce leaf, Ben withdrew his head, with the blond hair that was not really a hairy caterpillar, and turned urgently to the Goloknip.

'Quick. We must save the old woman in the red jacket. The two men following her are about to snatch her handbag.'

'Help!

cried the old woman,

'My handbag. All my pension money.'

The Goloknip shimmered with the colours of the US Cavalry.

'To the rescue!'

Yo flew the magic carpet lightning fast directly onto the two terrified robbers. Ben leaned out, grabbed the handbag and dropped it at the feet of the old woman; and the magic carpet disappeared from sight. A group of rugby club players held the robbers until the police came. Next day the popular newspapers reported that a giant blond hairy caterpillar on a flying lettuce leaf had saved the old woman's handbag. The serious newspapers did not want to look silly so did not report it at all.

The Goloknip turned to Ben.

'Now you have to close your eyes and count from 1 to 7.'

Ben closed his eyes, counted from 1 to 7 and opened them. He was still at the table, and next to his lettuce leaf was a plate of hot lunch. He ate the lettuce leaf first.

'It tastes good.'

He finished his lunch, and his mother took his empty plate away.

'Good. Tomorrow we'll get started with broccoli.'

the end for now