

CHAPTER 1

Maggie Sparks was a witch. A small, curly-haired, freckle-faced witch, who was usually full of mischief and fizzing with

MAGIC.

But not today.

Today she was worried.



Grandad Sparks, Maggie's favourite person in the whole world, was looking after her while Mum and Dad were away. She should have been as happy as a witch who'd worked out the secret to an excellent slime spell. But she wasn't.



Grandad could see that Maggie was worried. Even Bat, her pet chameleon, had changed colour to Worry White to match Maggie's mood.

'Don't worry,' said Grandad Sparks. 'Mummy and Daddy will be home soon!'

'That's what I'm worried about!' cried Maggie.

Mum and Dad had gone to the hospital to swap Mum's big tummy for a baby. They'd been gone for **AAAAAAAAAGES.**

'What do they want a baby for?' said Maggie. 'What's the matter with me?'

‘There’s nothing the matter with you, Maggie Moo!’ said Grandad Sparks. He gave her one of his warm, crinkly smiles. ‘But think what fun it will be to have a baby brother!’

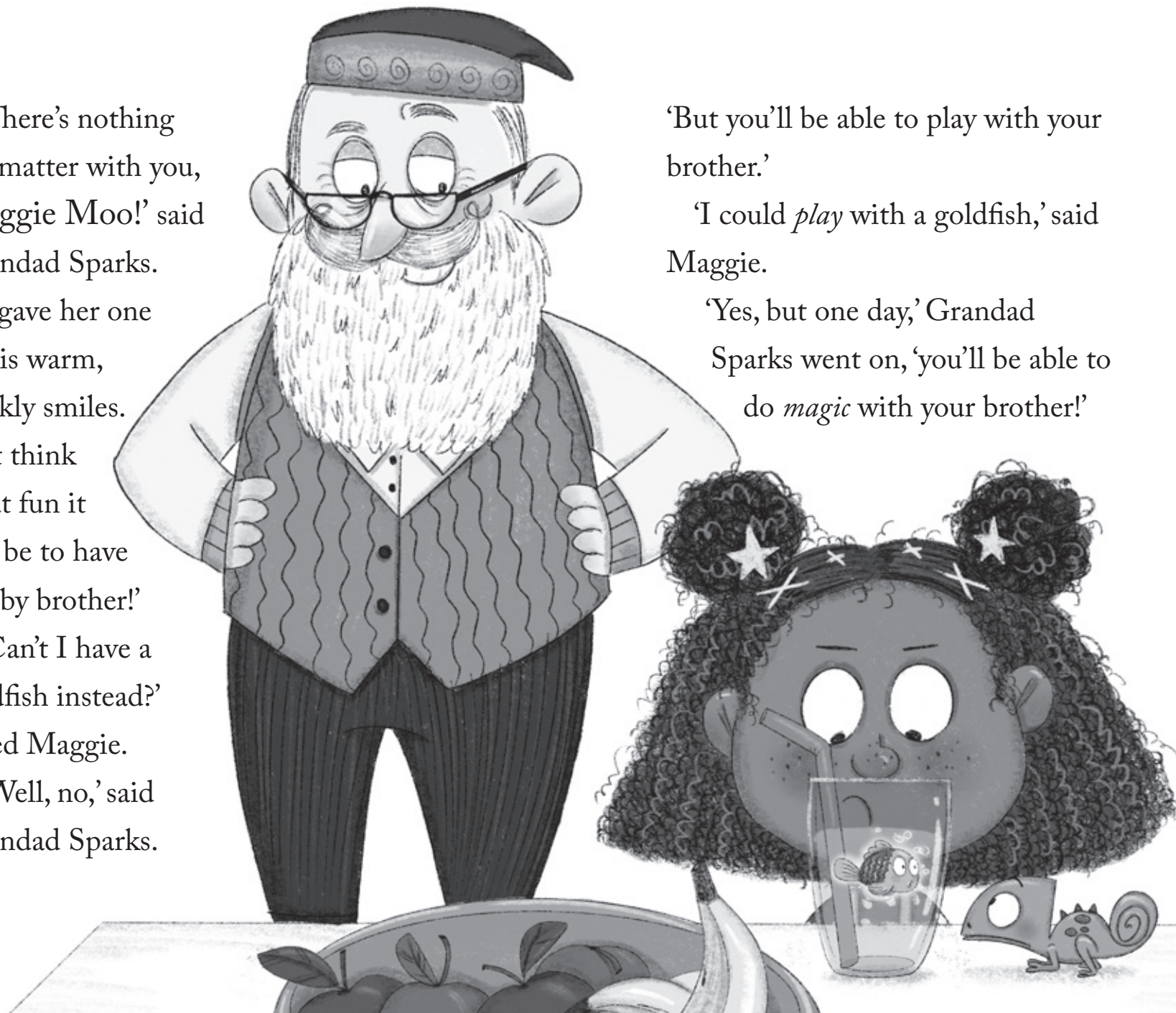
‘Can’t I have a goldfish instead?’ asked Maggie.

‘Well, no,’ said Grandad Sparks.

‘But you’ll be able to play with your brother.’

‘I could *play* with a goldfish,’ said Maggie.

‘Yes, but one day,’ Grandad Sparks went on, ‘you’ll be able to do *magic* with your brother!’



Maggie's eyes lit up.

'I can do magic on the baby?' she said with a grin. 'Brilliant! I could turn him into a goldfish!'



'No, no, not *on* him, *with* him!' said Grandad Sparks.

'That's boring,' grumbled Maggie.

'Just you wait, Maggie. As soon as you see him, you'll love him to bits.'

Suddenly, a terrible screeching noise came from outside.





Was it a terrifying pterodactyl pouncing on Penny the postwoman? Was it a tomcat with his tail trapped in a toilet seat?



No. It was Maggie's new baby brother.

Bat dived into the fruit bowl and disguised himself as a banana.

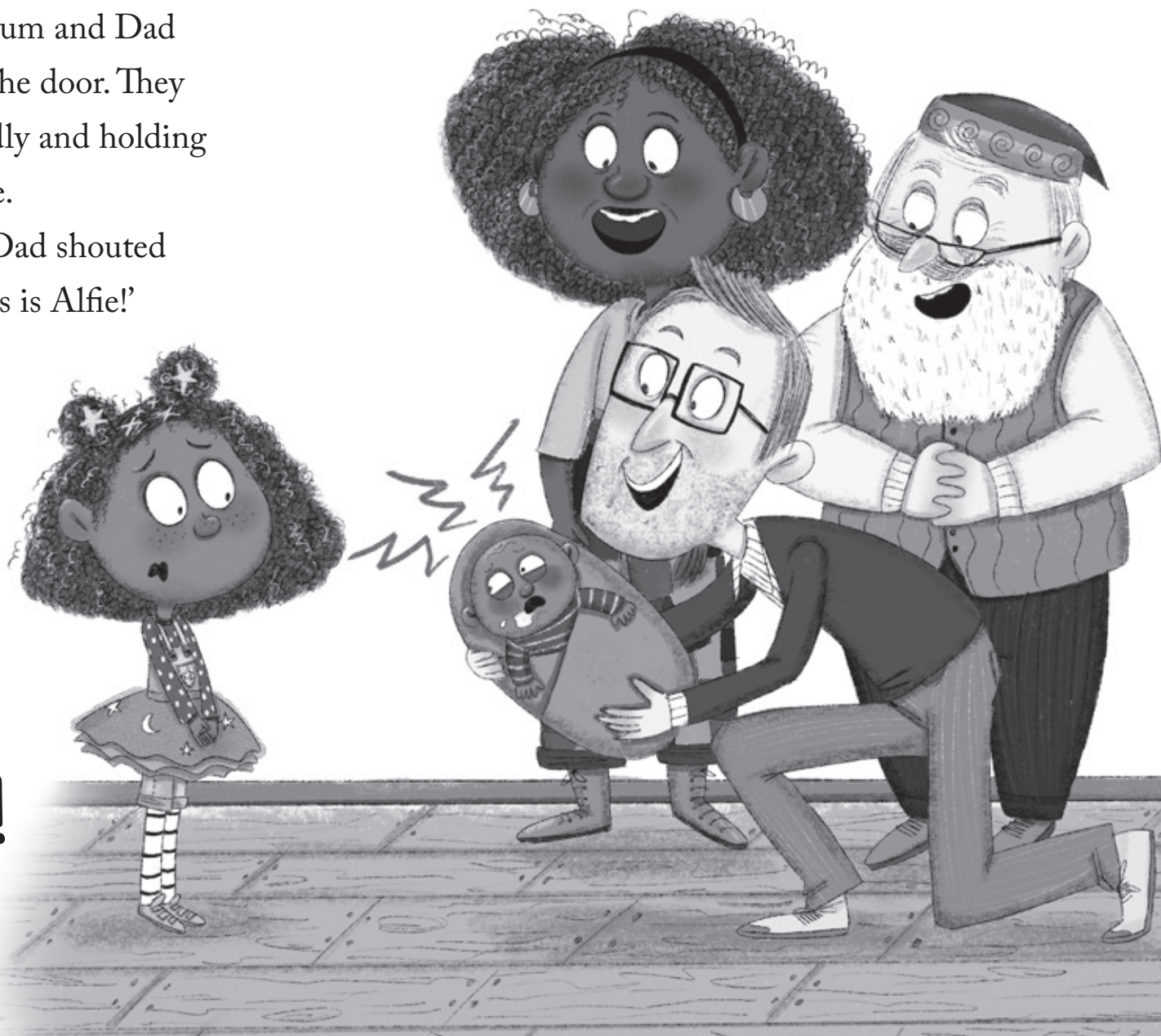


Seconds later, Mum and Dad marched through the door. They were smiling proudly and holding a screaming bundle.

‘Look Maggie!’ Dad shouted over the noise. ‘This is Alfie!’

Maggie looked down at the little noise monster. Its face was all red and wrinkly. It had no hair, no teeth and was covered in dribble.

YUCK!

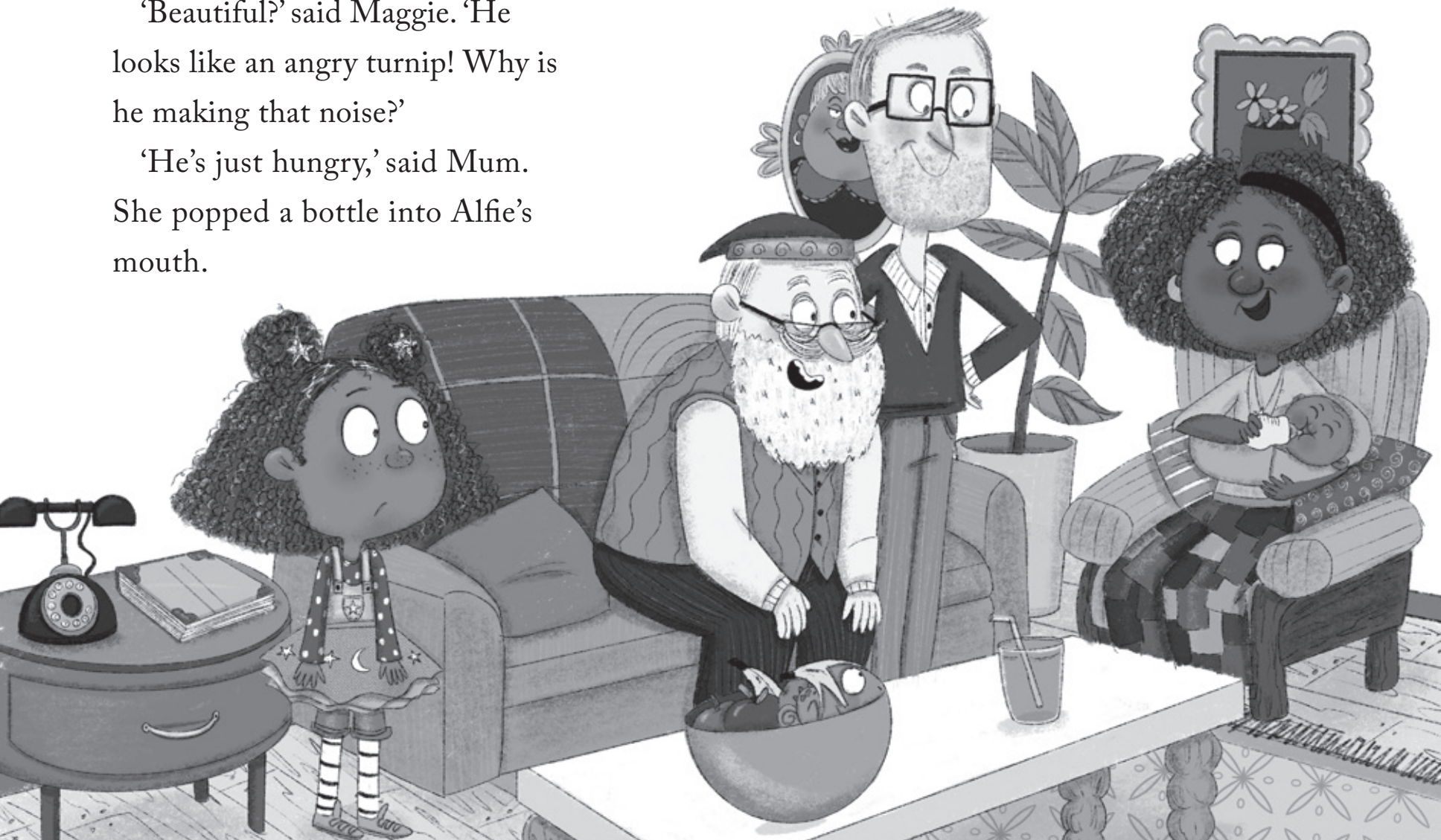


‘What a beautiful baby boy!’ said Grandad Sparks.

‘Beautiful?’ said Maggie. ‘He looks like an angry turnip! Why is he making that noise?’

‘He’s just hungry,’ said Mum. She popped a bottle into Alfie’s mouth.

As if by magic, the noise stopped. ‘Is that magic milk?’ asked Maggie.



‘No,’ chuckled Dad. ‘It’s Mummy milk.’

Mummy milk? Maggie was confused. ‘But I thought milk only came from—’

‘Cows?’ suggested Dad.

‘Fridges,’ said Maggie.

Then Dad propped Alfie over his shoulder, patted his back and ...

BURRRRRP!

‘Good boy!’
said Mum.



Maggie watched as everybody gazed down gooey-eyed at the baby. She had a funny feeling in her tummy. She felt worried and cross and sad all at the same time.

Bat turned bright green.

OH DEAR!

Maggie wasn't just worried and cross and sad, she was jealous too.

Bat could sense Maggie's magic was building. Her fingers began to tingle and tiny sparks started to fizz from her hair. Bat ducked further down into the fruit bowl.



Turning away from Mum and Dad, Maggie reached up her sleeve and pulled out her wand. She could make a much bigger burp than snotty baby Alfie. All she needed was a little **MAGIC**.

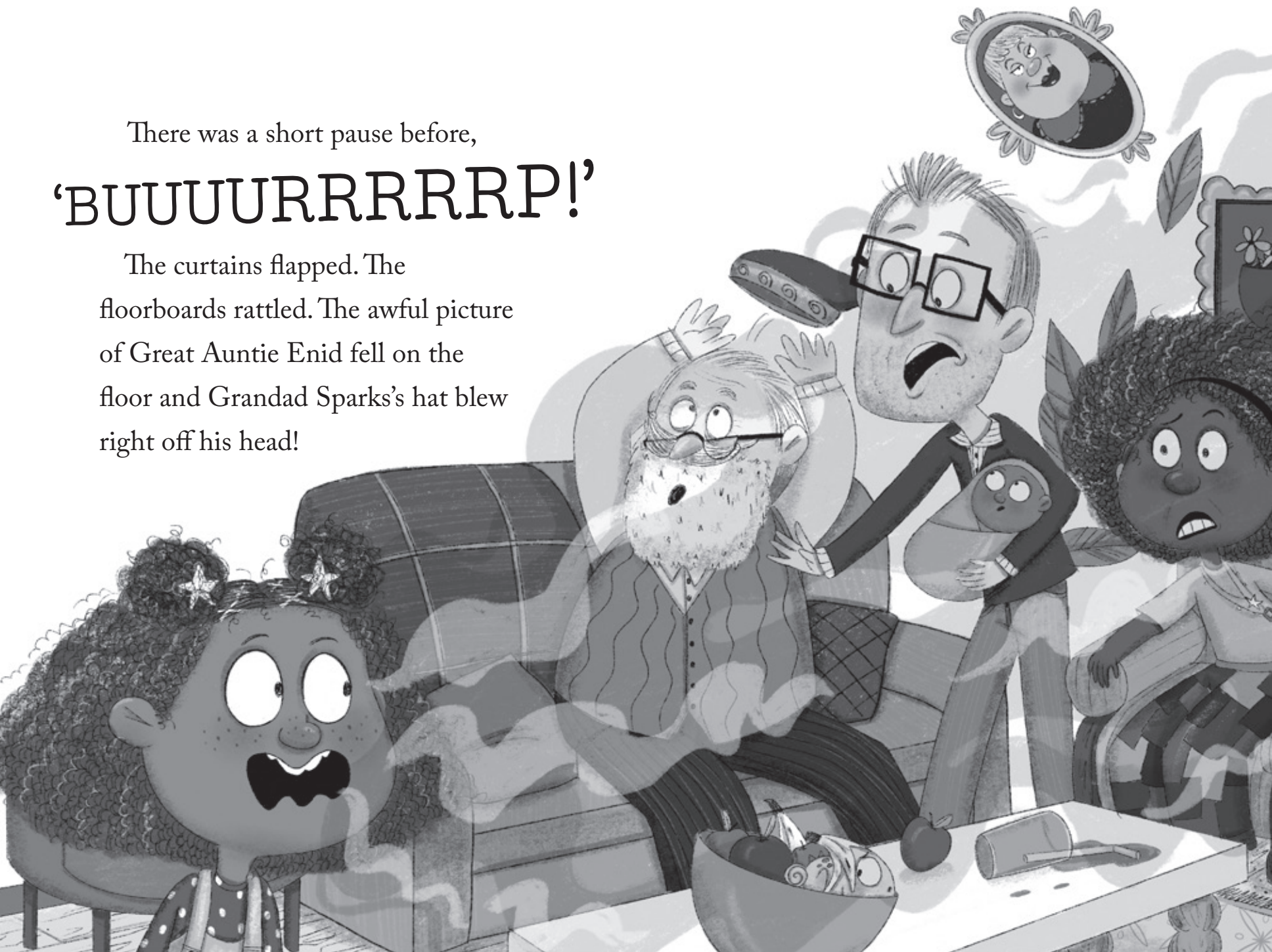
Maggie wiggled her wand and whispered:

**'Wild wind blow
and thunder roar,
make my burp better
than the one before!'**



There was a short pause before,
‘BUUUURRRRRP!’

The curtains flapped. The floorboards rattled. The awful picture of Great Auntie Enid fell on the floor and Grandad Sparks’s hat blew right off his head!



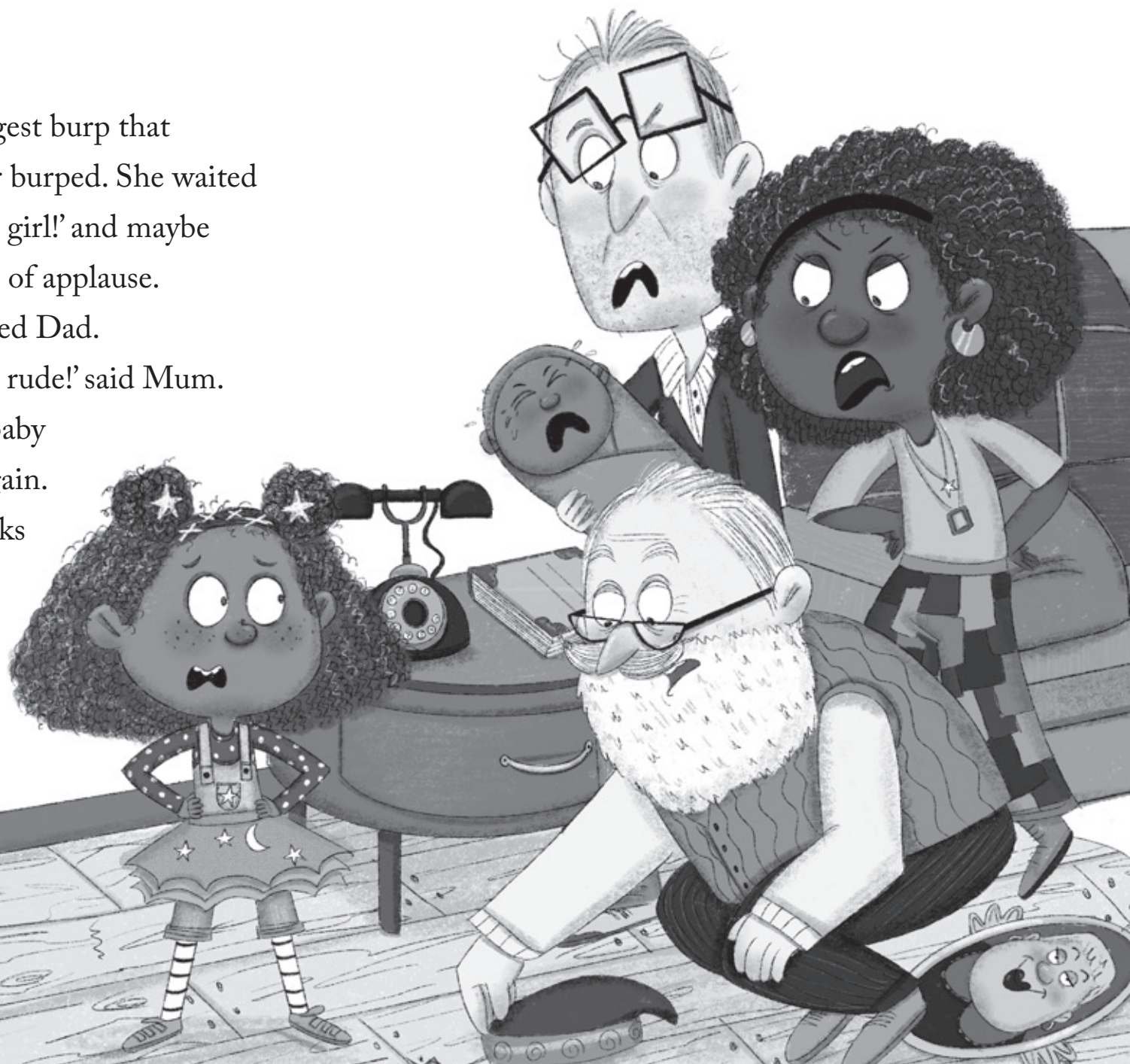
It was the biggest burp that Maggie had ever burped. She waited to be told ‘Good girl!’ and maybe even get a round of applause.

‘Maggie!’ gasped Dad.

‘That was very rude!’ said Mum.

The monster baby started crying again.

Grandad Sparks just shook his head and picked up his hat.





Maggie sat scowling in the “naughty corner”, while Mum rocked Alfie to sleep on the sofa. Bat climbed onto Maggie’s shoulder and licked her ear. It usually made her laugh. But not today.

Maggie looked over her shoulder at the tiny monster, now fast asleep in *her* mum’s arms.

‘Maggie?’ said Mum. ‘Would you like to hold Alfie? You can come out of the naughty corner and sit next

to me,' she added, patting the sofa cushion next to her.

'No,' snapped Maggie. 'I think he should go in his cage now.'

'It's a cot, Maggie, not a cage,' said Mum, as she stood up and laid the sleeping baby inside it.

'Well, I think I'd better leave you to it,' said Grandad Sparks, heaving himself up off the sofa.

He kissed Mum, hugged Dad and stroked the monster's little head. Then he picked Maggie up and gave her a big cuddle.

'See you later, Maggie Moo,' he said. Then he whispered in her ear,

'Brilliant burp!'

Maggie smiled and started to feel a bit happier.



The baby was behind bars (where it belonged!) and Mum had freed Maggie from the “naughty corner” a whole three minutes early.

Maggie looked at Alfie through the side of his cot. He looked less like a turnip now. He was even smiling in his sleep. Maggie could feel the corners of her mouth start to curl up just a tiny bit before a loud

PARP

came from his nappy.

‘Ew! We’ll have to keep an eye on this one,’ Maggie whispered to Bat. ‘He’s trouble!’

