



FAIRY TALES
GONE BAD
ZOMBIERELLA

By
Joseph Coelho

Illustrated by
Freya Hartas





PROLOGUE

The Librarian



Hello, I'm The Librarian.
I used to believe in nice things!
Sweet things.
Fairy tales and butterflies
that don't bite.
Then I began to work in the library.
In the reference section.
The section for adults only
where there are big books,
dangerous books,
forbidden books.

I spent my days stamping books,
shelving books
and reading ... books.
I found a hidden section at the back of the library,
covered in powdery dust as thick as snow.
A section full of old books,
unread books,
unthumbed books,
unloved books.



You know how when you leave fruit in a bowl
uneaten, it goes off?
Mould starts to bloom on the skin,
the flesh goes brown and soft,
flies lay eggs, maggots squirm,
horrid smells find their way into the fruit...
The same happens with books!



The same had happened to these books.
These books, these fairy tales, had gone off.

Their covers were swollen, cracked leather.
Their spines were bent and creased.
Their covers strained against the chains
that bound them.

A padlock, orange with rust,
decorated with the gaping, snarling face of
a demon,
its terrifying mouth forming the keyhole,
kept the books locked tight.
I had the key,
this key.



I slipped it into the mouth of the demon padlock.
It chewed at the key.
The key was hard to turn,
creaking and groaning,
metal against metal.



I twisted with all my might until
the lock sprang open.
I wrestled the chains off the books and
peered at their titles, and this is what I found...

Goldilocks and the Three Bears
had changed its title to ...
Grannylocks.



The Ugly Duckling had changed its title to ...
The Monstrous Duckling.



Jack and the Beanstalk had become ...
**Jack and the Flesh-Eating
Beanstalk.**



The Boy Who Cried Wolf had become ...
The Boy Who Puked Up a Wolf.



Sleeping Beauty had become ...
Creeping Beauty.



And *Cinderella* had become ...

ZOMBIERELLA!!!





I took *Zombierella* off the shelf.
Its pages were musty smelling.
This book had not been read for a
very long time –
it was very off!
Way past its sell-by date!
Inside I found all sorts of horrible,
disgusting, foul and nasty changes to the story..
I started to read and, as I read, I began
to change.
I was no longer just a librarian of normal books,
I was The Librarian of decrepit stories,
ragged legends,
putrid parables.
I was The Librarian of fairy tales
that had gone ...



BAD!!!





CHAPTER 1

The Digging of a Grave

It was on the dullest days
with the greyest skies
that Cinderella missed her father most.

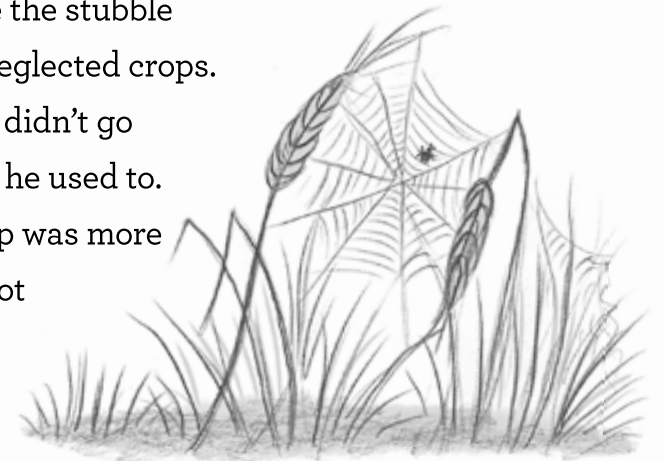
He was buried out back.
Under a flint grey tombstone
in Lumpkin's field,
where the nettles and brambles
made way for the poppies.

She'd visit his grave
whenever she could.
Her faithful horse Lumpkin
nuzzling at her side.
Her one friend.
Her only family.



She rode Lumpkin over the grey fields,
the last scraps
of her father's lands,
in a dress of rags and hand-me-downs
to feel free.

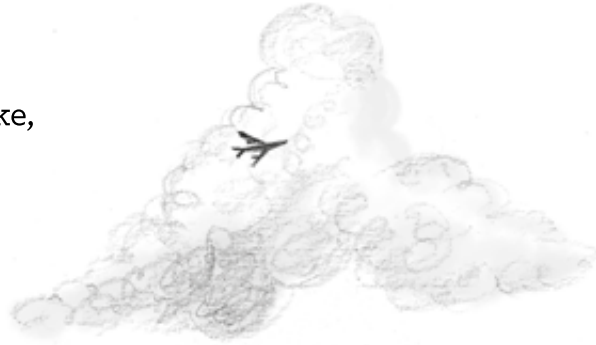
Clutching onto Lumpkin's greying mane
they rode the stubble
of their neglected crops.
Lumpkin didn't go
as fast as he used to.
His gallop was more
pained trot



than lightning strike,
more hobble
than throttle!

The bones
of his once muscular back
stuck painfully into Cinderella,
but she needed to ride him
one
last
time.

From the field's edge
she could see the winding,
dusty road that ran into
Grimmsville.
A town with glamour
long behind it,
it now sat festering ...
forgotten.



As she stroked Lumpkin's grey coat,
she noticed how his breath
came in long, wizened puffs,
how his rib cage rattled,
how his once strong legs shook.

"It's OK, Lumpkin, we'll rest now."



Lumpkin whinnied in appreciation.
Though if he could,
he'd run to the silver moon for her.
They started to turn back when
Cinderella's gaze
was hooked,
shooked,
drawn in by
the old abandoned mansion
at the top
of the hill.



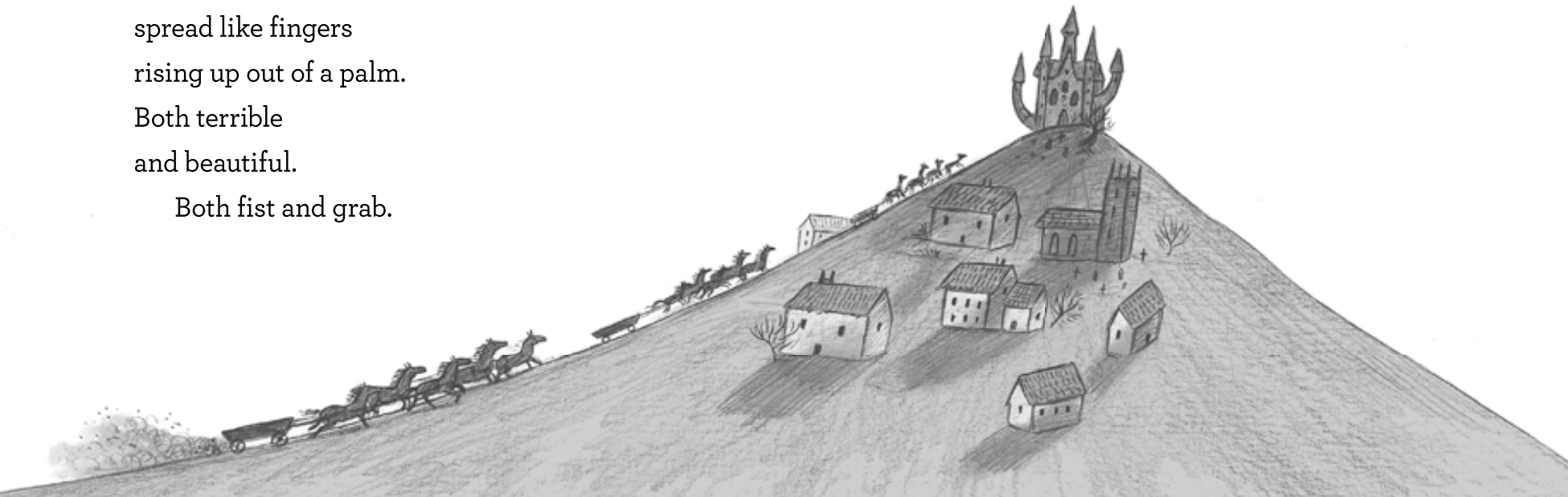
Dum dum!

Dum dum!

Dum dum!

The horses
were larger than any
Cinderella had ever seen.
Blacker than the backs of eyelids
during nightmares.
They were galloping up the winding road
that led to the mansion
up on the hill.

A mansion with five towers
spread like fingers
rising up out of a palm.
Both terrible
and beautiful.
Both fist and grab.



There were three
groups of six

horses each pulling
a carriage unlike

anything Cinderella had
ever, ever seen.

The carriages
were low
so
low.

Reminding her of something
she couldn't quite remember.
And coloured a deep black
that refused to reflect
the setting sun.

From behind the last carriage
a wisp,
a cloud
was rising,



heading towards Cinderella and Lumpkin
like a dark omen.

Lumpkin attempted a whinny
but it came out like a rasp.

“It’s OK, Lumpy.”

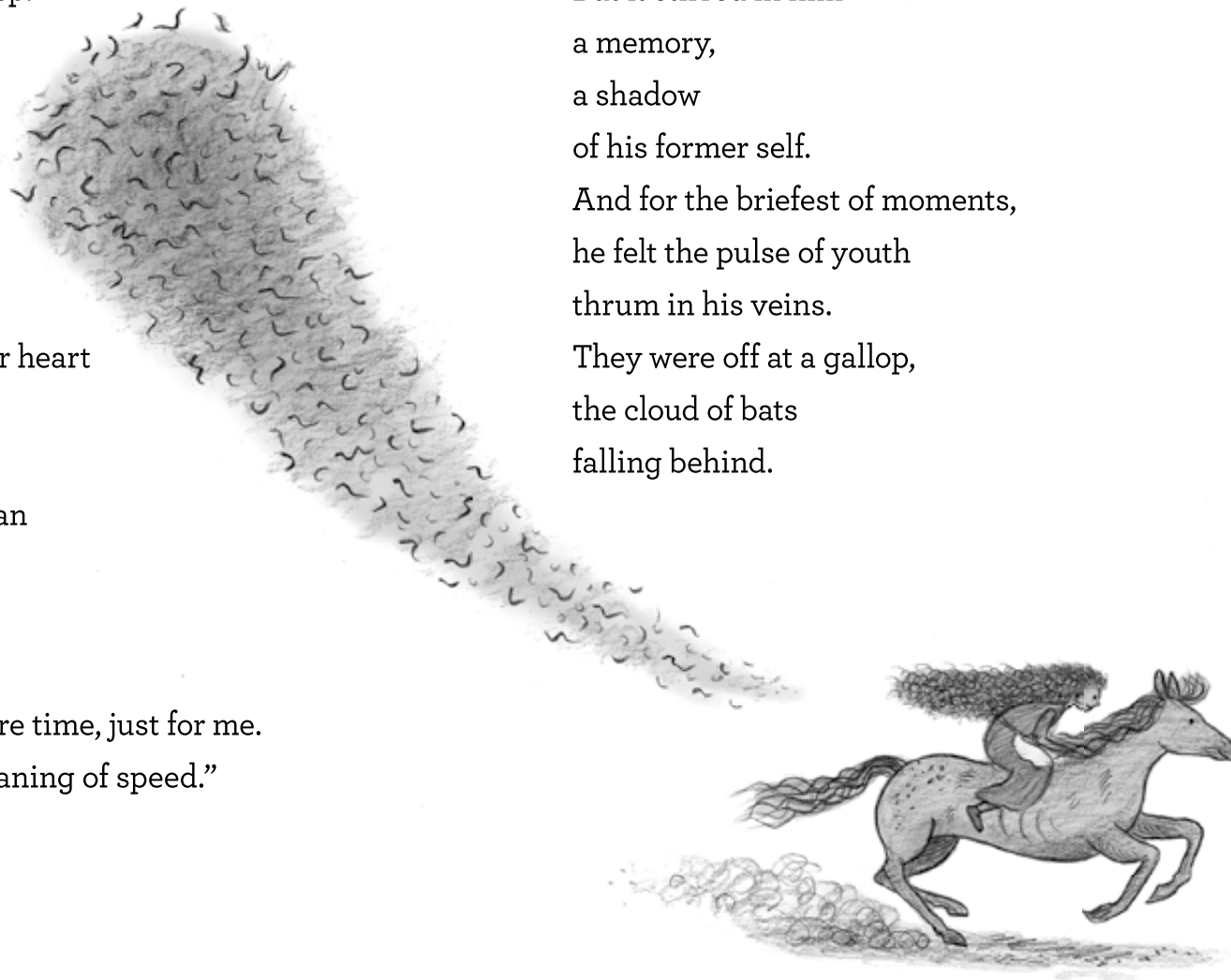
The cloud got closer
like a swarm
of bats.

Cinderella could feel her heart
start
to rush.

Lumpkin’s muscles began
a slow twitch
beneath her.

“Please, Lumpy, one more time, just for me.
Let’s show them the meaning of speed.”

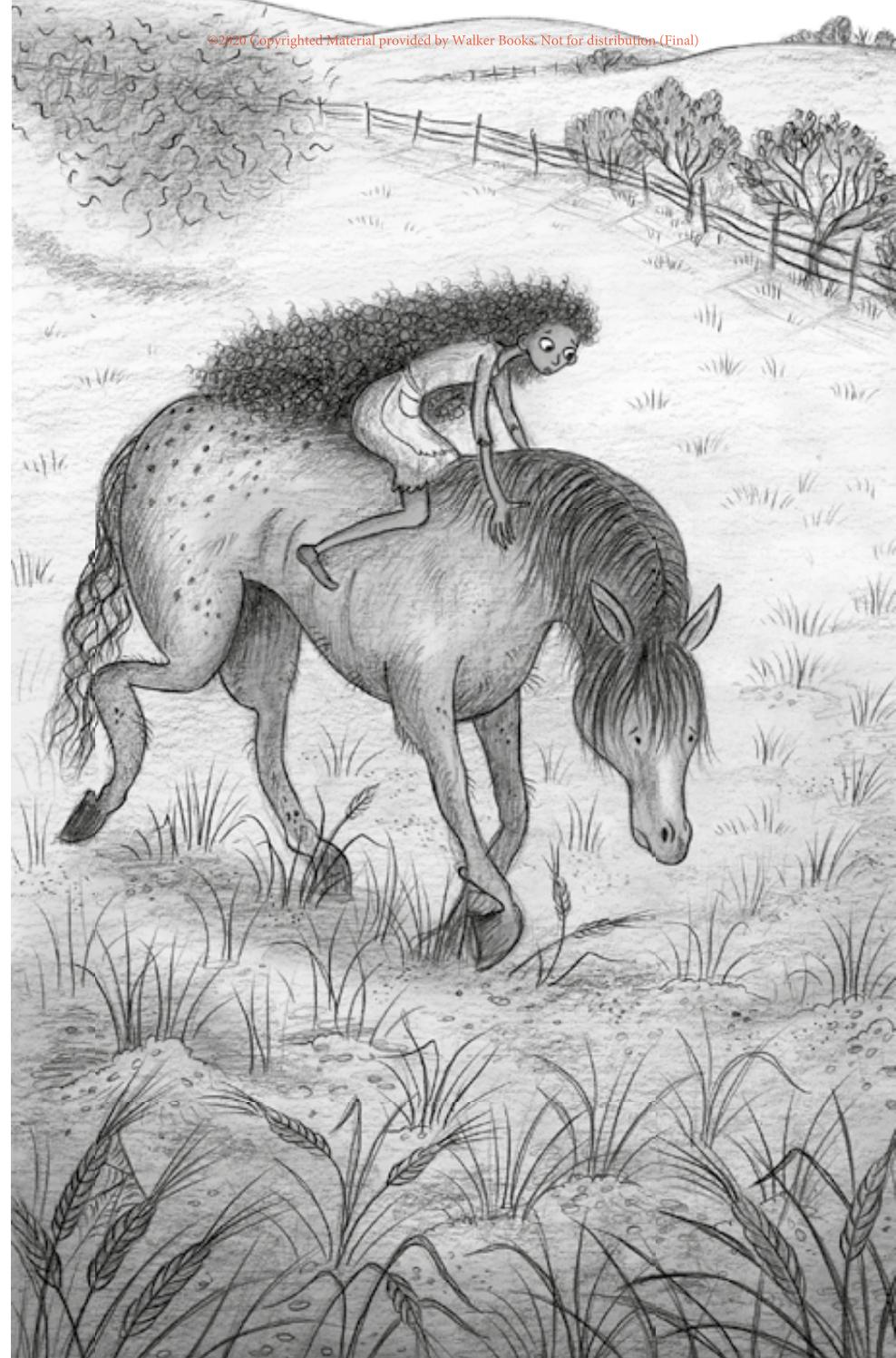
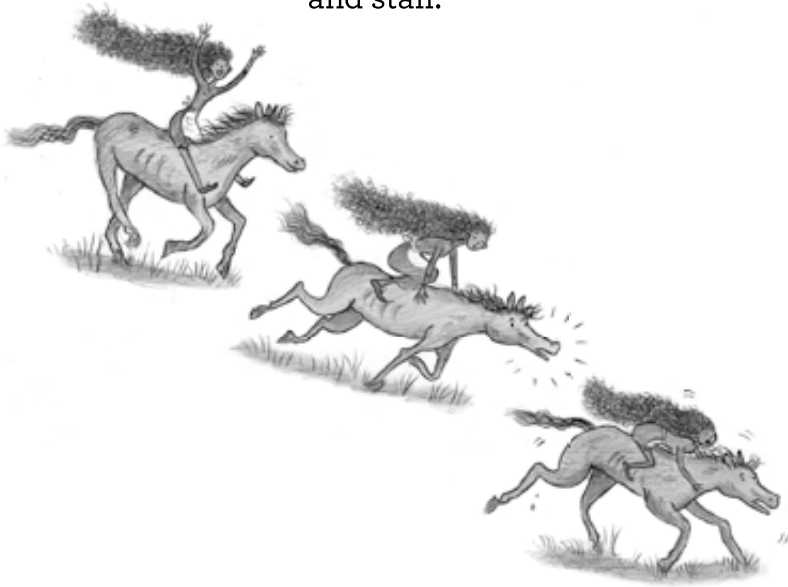
Cinderella dug her heels
into Lumpkin’s bony side
and immediately felt a pang of regret.
But it stirred in him
a memory,
a shadow
of his former self.
And for the briefest of moments,
he felt the pulse of youth
thrum in his veins.
They were off at a gallop,
the cloud of bats
falling behind.

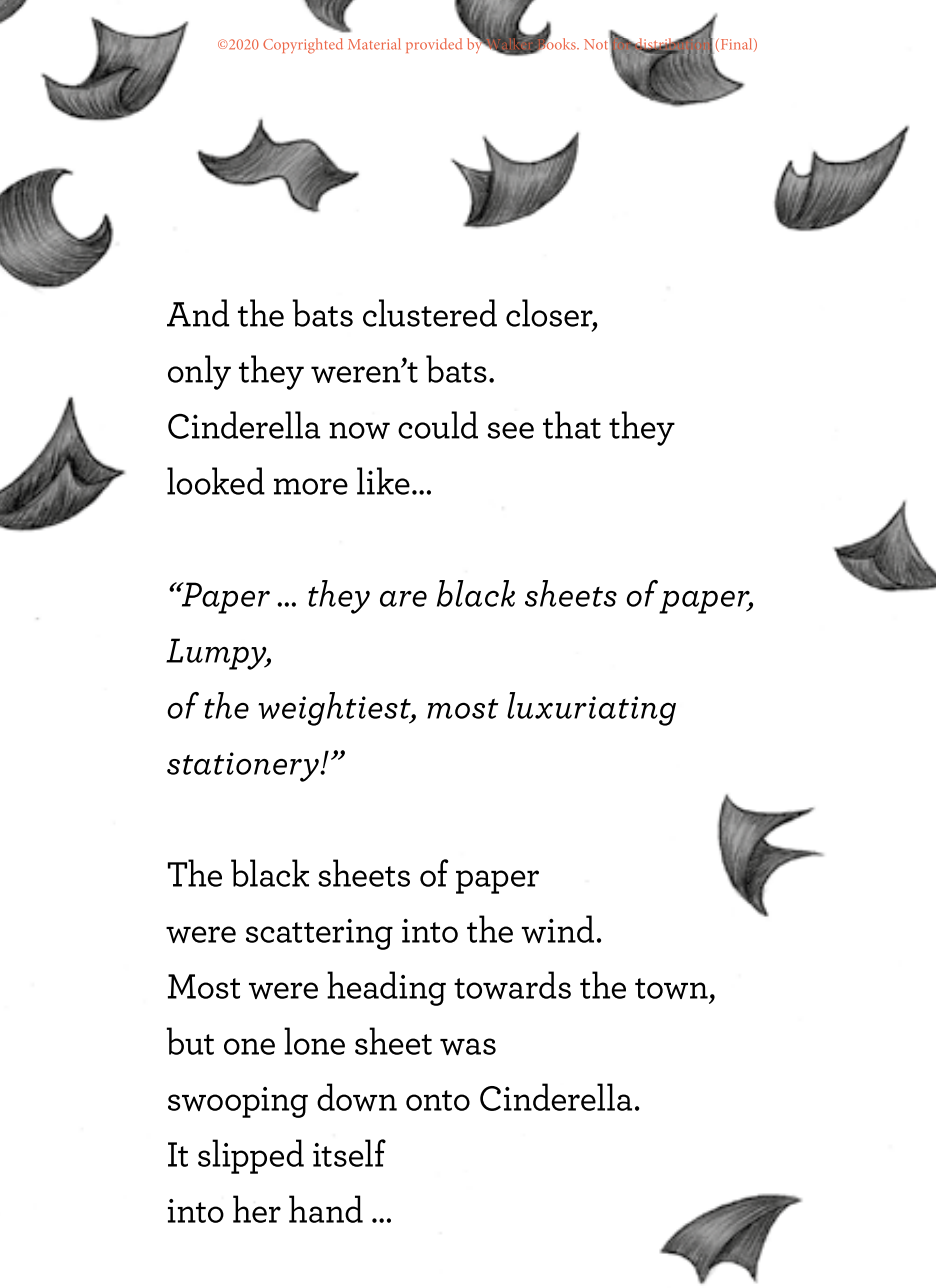


“Wahooooooooo!”

exalted Cinderella.

But as soon as the shout left her lips,
Lumpkin began to slow
and shake
and stumble
and stall.

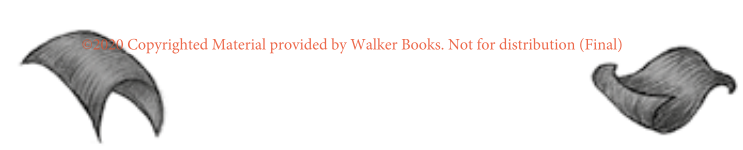




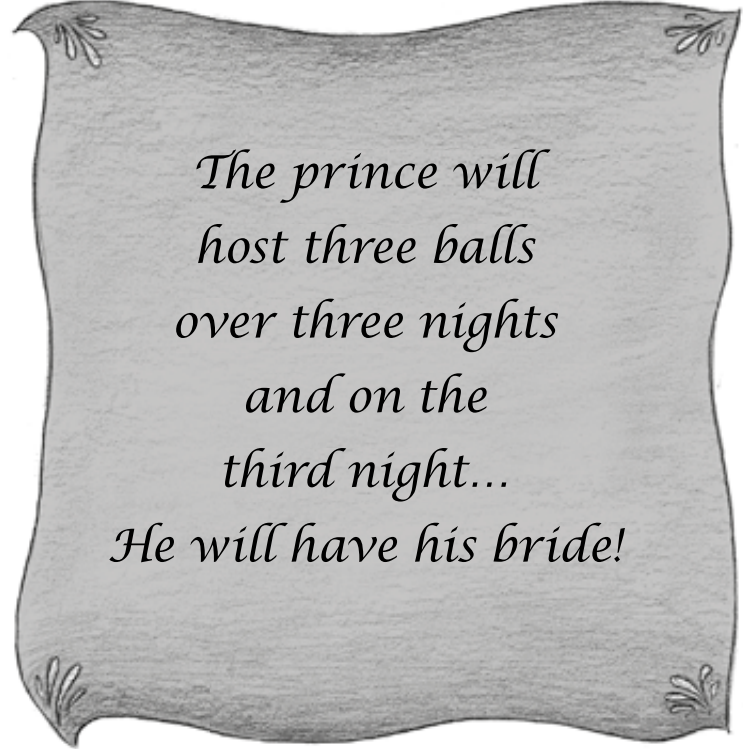
And the bats clustered closer,
only they weren't bats.
Cinderella now could see that they
looked more like...

*"Paper ... they are black sheets of paper,
Lumpy,
of the weightiest, most luxuriating
stationery!"*

The black sheets of paper
were scattering into the wind.
Most were heading towards the town,
but one lone sheet was
swooping down onto Cinderella.
It slipped itself
into her hand ...



it was a flyer
on cave black paper that stained Cinderella's
fingers.
And printed upon it,
in the thickest and reddest ink...



*The prince will
host three balls
over three nights
and on the
third night...
He will have his bride!*

*“Looks like a prince is moving into
the old abandoned mansion, Lumpkin,”*
said Cinderella, as they plodded
back to her father’s grave,
knowing full well that
an invitation to a ball,
any ball,
would never,
could never,
be for her.



Lumpkin’s eyes were two watery pools
as he kneeled by Cinderella,
his rattling breath
echoing through his skeletal frame.

An apple tree grew bent and heavy
above her father’s grave.
Cinderella picked an apple
redder than the setting sun



and fed it to her faithful friend.

In her heart she knew
that her beloved Lumpkin
would soon be gone
and she would be left alone
with them,
her so-called family,
in the house,
the house that was hers,
that should have been hers,
but now was theirs.

A house that once
glittered with joy
but now
was sunk in darkness.

Lumpkin’s head rested
on Cinderella’s lap,



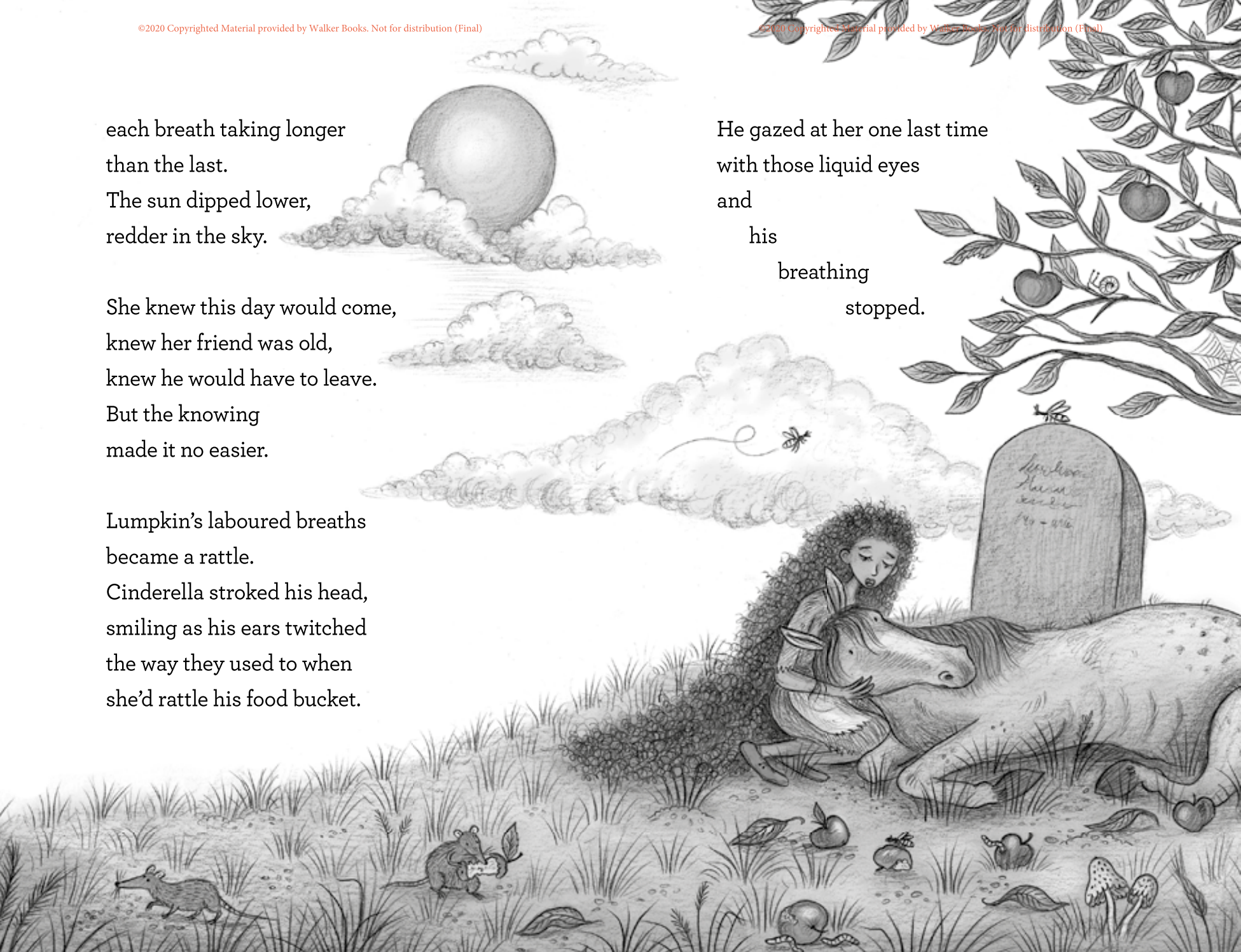
each breath taking longer
than the last.

The sun dipped lower,
redder in the sky.

She knew this day would come,
knew her friend was old,
knew he would have to leave.
But the knowing
made it no easier.

Lumpkin's laboured breaths
became a rattle.
Cinderella stroked his head,
smiling as his ears twitched
the way they used to when
she'd rattle his food bucket.

He gazed at her one last time
with those liquid eyes
and
his
breathing
stopped.





Cinderella did not cry,
she had prepared for this.
Everything would change now.
Lumpkin had been her one escape.
Her so-called family
never ventured into the fields,
never went close to Lumpkin
who never failed to bite.

Cinderella would miss his company
and his protection
now she was alone.

She picked up a spade
and began to dig.
And then it hit her,
what those carriages
reminded her of.
They looked
like ...

COFFINS.

