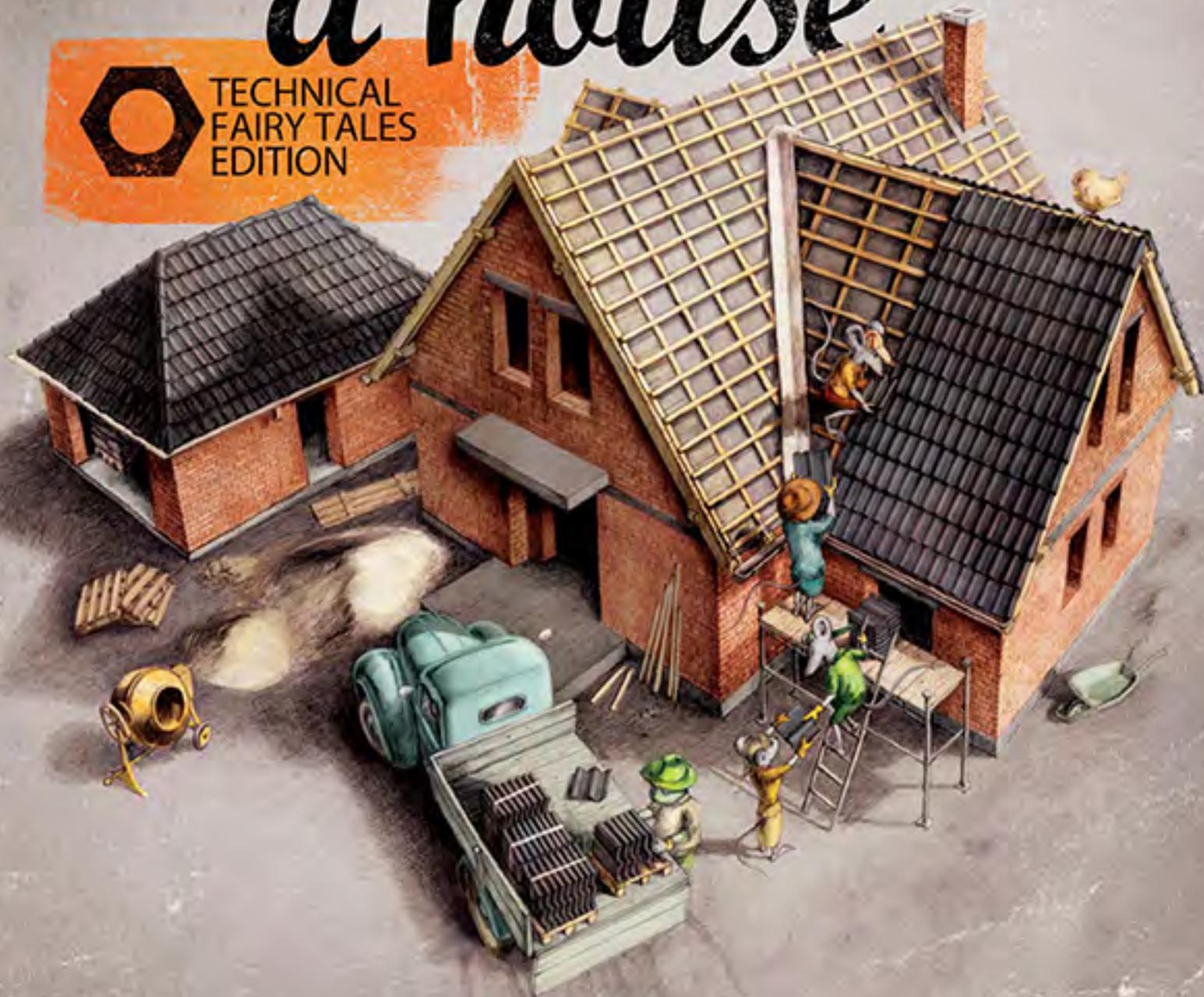


Martin Sodomka

How to build a house



TECHNICAL
FAIRY TALES
EDITION





Many fairy tales end with a wedding, but this one begins with a wedding. 'Where are you going to live exactly?' Titch, one of the wedding guests, asked the groom, Arnie the rat.

'With granddad,' replied Arnie.

'For the time being,' added the bride, Lucy, looking at Arnie meaningfully. 'With Arnie's granddad for the time being, before we find something.'

'Why don't you build your own house?' asked Tony, another of the wedding guests. 'The council has started selling new plots on Sunny Side. I'm thinking about going into it myself. My brother-in-law could lend me his old lorry for the building work.'

'So, you would build a house just so that you could have a lorry?' rejoined Arnie.

'Yeah, that's right. Transport of materials is essential. Do you know how much you would save by it?'

Well, before the story starts, let's have a quick look at who is who. We now know who Arnie and Lucy are. The rats Titch, Fred, and Tony, are Arnie's mates. Tony, until recently, was still working for Arnie's enemy, Lanky Jack, building his motorbike. Jack, though, made a complete fool of himself with his unbelievably villainous behaviour, so Tony then went over to Arnie's gang. In particular, though, we shouldn't forget to introduce Bill, the cock sparrow, and Christian, the frog. Arnie has lived through so many adventures with them that they would be worth recounting at length.

'You call that a lorry? I think your brother-in-law lets his kids play with that instead of dolls,' laughed Arnie. 'I thought you wanted to build a house, not play in the sand.'

'Well, for one thing,' retorted Tony, aggrieved, 'we're not building a nuclear power station, and, for another thing, there's a trailer to go with that. Basically, sometimes we'll have to make many trips, although Sunny Side isn't all that far away.'

'Yeah, and now you come to mention it, when are we going to go there to have a look?' asked Arnie.

'When you want. Maybe tomorrow even,' said Tony.

'Good, agreed. Now open up that little angel's bonnet and let's see if it's got an engine, or if you wind it up with a key.'

TRANSPORT OF MATERIALS

A house weighs hundreds of tonnes and it's obvious that those tonnes of materials must be transported to the building site. And when you already have the sand, cement, bricks, and roof tiles delivered to site, then it's still necessary to get everything onto the scaffolding, up to the first floor, and even onto the roof. Building a house is, in a nutshell, just nothing but lifting, carrying, pulling, and shifting.



'Bill, just a minute. Where's that workshop that I wanted there?' protested Arnie, as soon as Bill had spread out on the table the drawings of the future house.

'Here,' indicated Bill, 'I've called it the garage.'

'Yeah, but...'

'And Bill, why did you change the shape of the windows?' joined in Lucy. 'Look, I drew them completely differently. That's nothing like...'

'Some things I reduced,' said Bill firmly, 'and some things I simplified. That is, so that the house wouldn't be so expensive.'

'But we've had a mortgage approved, haven't we?' objected Arnie. 'That would cover everything nicely.'

'It might do, but let me show you something. Christian has done a sort of simple calculation. You're borrowing 10,000 with interest at five per cent over twenty years. According to the contract, in that case, you will repay sixty-six monthly, i.e. 792 annually. Multiply that by twenty years and we get almost 16,000. Therefore, you will pay 6,000 gold pieces extra – do you really want to take out the highest mortgage?'

For a moment there was silence, but Bill soon broke it. 'Can I continue? Look how I've resolved the position of the rooms towards the four points of the compass. That in my opinion is an important point: from the living room there is a beautiful view and its windows face the south-east, the same as the windows of the bedroom on the first floor. The study and the guest room face north-east, and the two small rooms on the first floor face north-west. It seems to me to be ideal like that.'

'There should be three of those little rooms,' said Arnie in a low voice, 'but two will do.'

If your ancestors, thousand of years ago, had not waged war, nor moved all over the continent, in short, if they hadn't dreamt up nonsense and instead gone and deposited a solitary gold piece in the bank at five per cent interest, then you as the heir today could expect the sum of 15,500,000,000 billion gold pieces. That's not bad. For such an amount you can buy yourself a nice house and a car, and you will still be left with enough for half the globe. You can take this money out or wait another year and after that year a further 77,000,000 billion gold pieces will accrue to you. So, a little consequence of all this is that it's more advantageous to save than to borrow.

INTEREST





spirit level

'Arnie, I have a feeling that that wall is not true,' said Bill.

'Like, it's lopsided, or it's not a real wall?' asked Arnie.

'You know very well what I mean,' retorted Bill.

'So, for the purpose,' said Arnie, 'I'll take the plumb line and do a check. I say, you're right – I deviated slightly. Mate, you've got a spirit level in your head!'

'Birds have lots of useful instruments in their head. Are you on your own here today?'

'Yeah, yeah. The lads help me mostly at weekends, and Freddie almost not at all now because in September he started studying mechanical engineering and, poor chap, he has to study all the time. But I'm making the most of it here. Every evening I manage to get something done, and can't even get enough sleep for looking forward to carrying on again the the next day.'

'Have you ever noticed, Arnie, that in nature there are no vertical, right-angle, or perfectly regular shapes at all?' said Bill casually.

'And what about the surface of water?' objected Arnie. 'That seems to me to be most of the time quite level.'

EXTERNAL WALLS AND STRUCTURAL WALLS



plumb line

'I'll tell you lads precisely how my crafty nephew made his way into my position - with empty promises, by toadying, and lying. He gradually undermined the trust of my superiors and eventually I ended up here in the archives - and serves me right too. Reason being was that from the start I also swallowed his patter. At the time he was in a crisis situation. A certain band of gangsters had banned him from the town and he needed help. I felt sorry for him, so I had him work for me as my assistant. Well, that's how it happened. Let's change the subject. How's the construction going Mr Arnold? I saw that you've already got the roof on. I go there to have a look occasionally.'

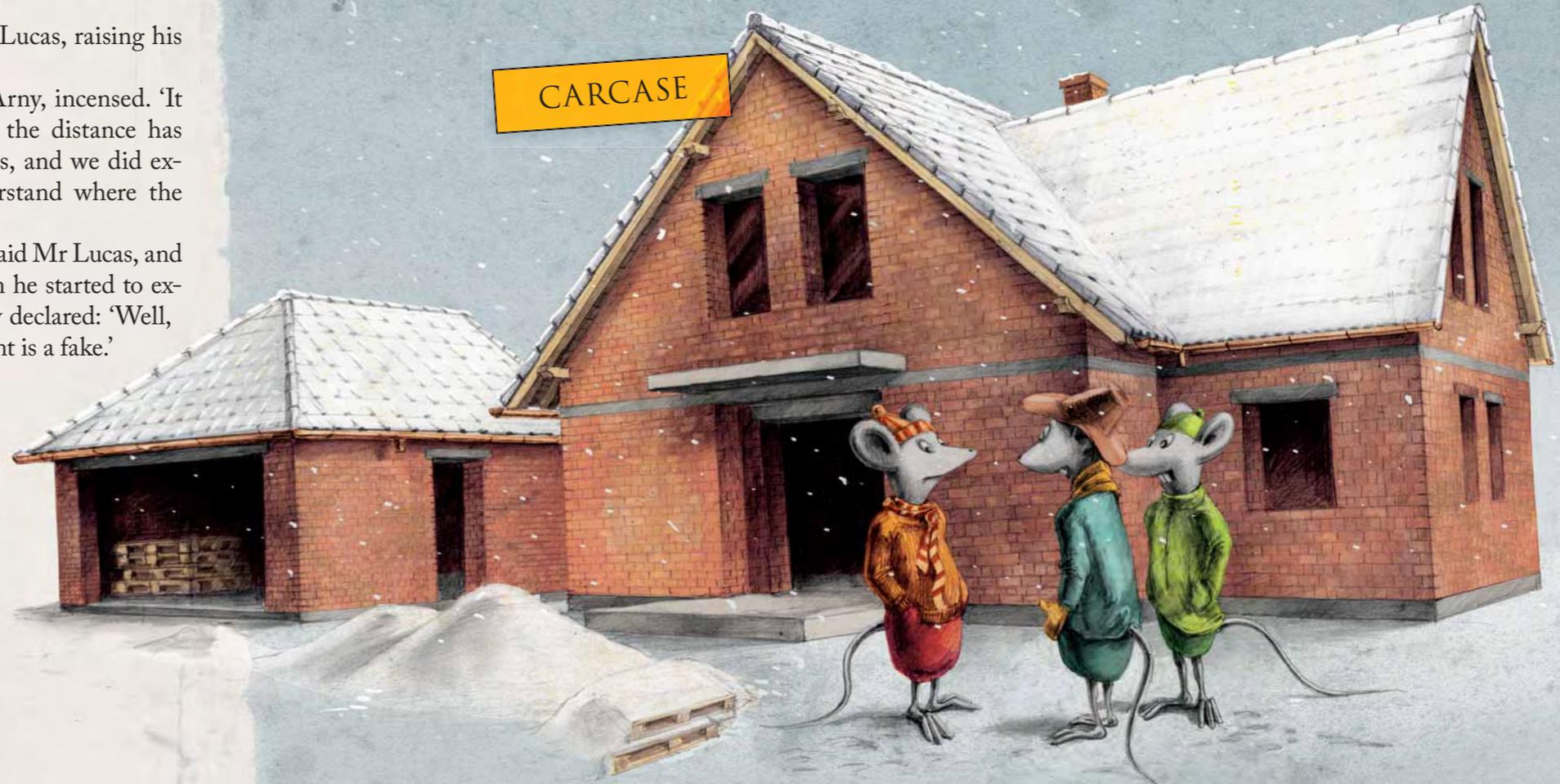
'To be honest, Mr Lucas, me and Tony have a little problem here. The building department has accused us of not keeping to the prescribed distance from the street line, and it looks like a right old pickle.'

'And why didn't you do it exactly in accordance with the regulations? What was so

complicated about it?' said Mr Lucas, raising his eyebrows.

'Well, just look here,' said Arny, incensed. 'It clearly says in this letter that the distance has changed from six to five metres, and we did exactly that. So, we don't understand where the problem is at all.'

'What letter? Let me see it,' said Mr Lucas, and he quickly glanced over it. Then he started to examine it intently and eventually declared: 'Well, gentlemen, this official document is a fake.'



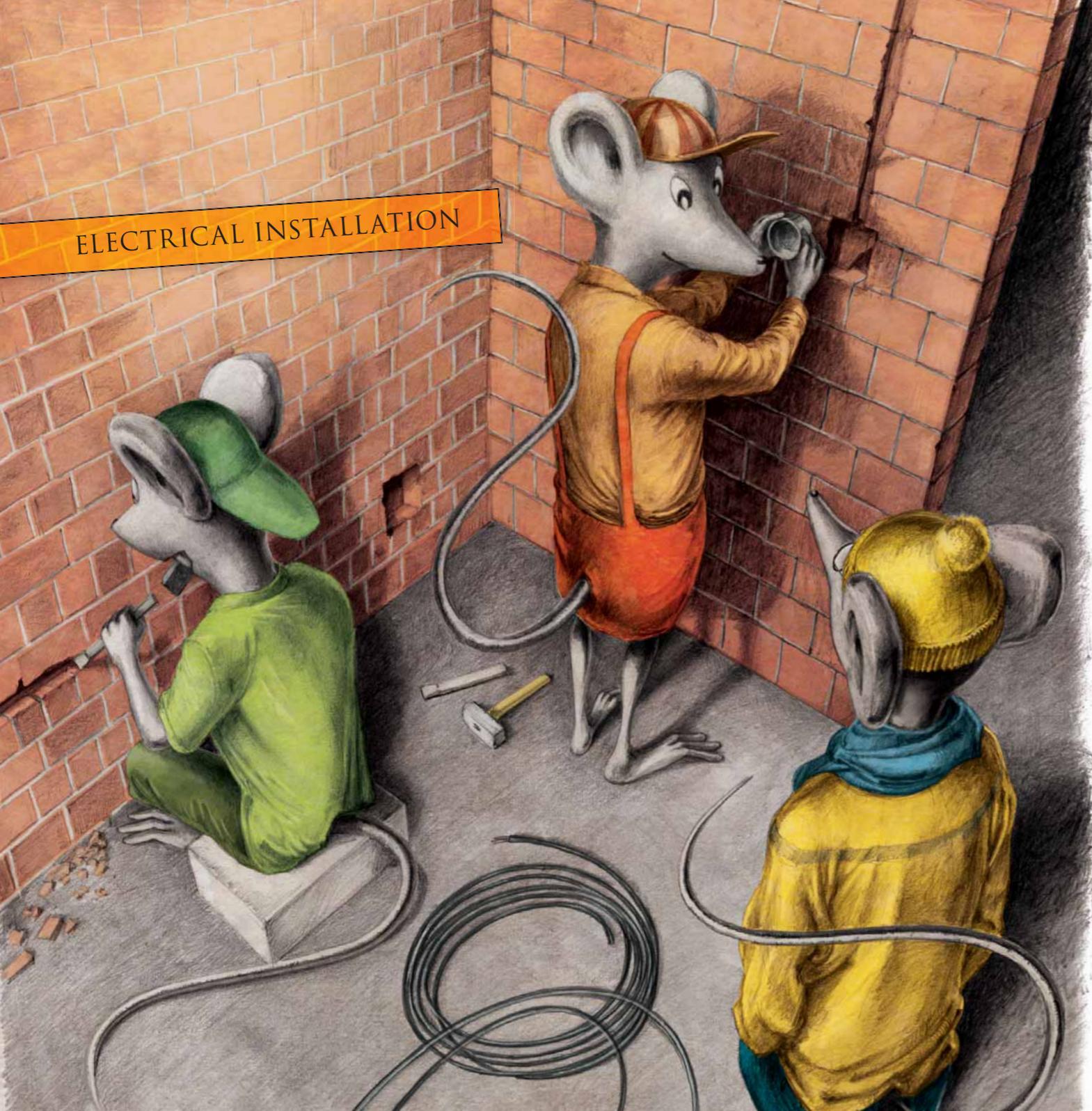
'I must say then that Lanky Jack really is a dab hand at dirty tricks,' said Fred.

'I think I'll give you a kick,' growled Arnie.

'So, admit it,' Fred went on, 'Jack sends you a false letter, which you believe because it never occurs to you at all that it could be a trick, and you start building. After a time they send an inspector round and he understandably finds out that you've built the house incorrectly. You whizz round to the council, eyes popping out of your

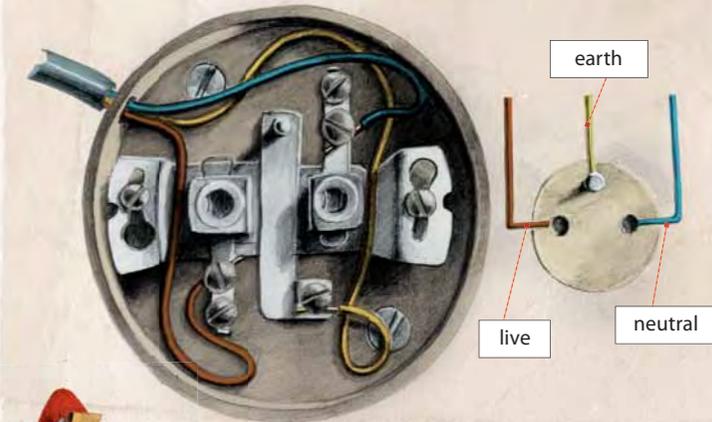
head, what the hell does it mean, and you find out there that nobody ever sent such a letter. Someone took you for a ride. Hard luck - and goodbye. You're up the creek. As I said, a nice piece of work. If a normal council officer had been sitting there then perhaps you would've come to an agreement. Anyone must see that this is not your mistake. But the main problem lies in the fact that a normal council officer is not sitting in the building department right now.'

ELECTRICAL INSTALLATION



WIRING THE SOCKETS

Here is one example how a socket can be wired. It's a pity that sockets are built a little differently in every country. Engineers couldn't reach agreement at the time and so now we have to put up with it – so hopefully next time.



Dear readers, please, never, and really never, attempt to take a socket apart or touch anything. The fun ends here, actually, and your life is at stake. You don't have to be afraid of ghosts under the bed, but you definitely should be afraid of dismantling a socket.



'Hello, lads. I've just found out that our neighbour, the one with the red roof, has got the same problem as we have,' said Tony, after knocking and entering Arnie's partly built house. 'And now listen! Apparently, two days ago some bloke visited him and suggested that if he paid something then they would turn a blind eye at the council and would not give him any problems. In other words, basically, he was asking for a bribe. The neighbour described this guy to me and do you know who it is?'

'Lanky Jack?'

'No, he wouldn't have taken a risk like that – it was Milky.'

'So, do we also wait until Milky comes to us for a bribe?' asked Arnie. 'Well, brilliant, let him try! He'll get it, he'll get it like...'

'I fear that nobody will come for a bribe,' said Tony, interrupting Arnie's outburst. 'It's my guess that in our case Jack is not interested in any money. I think he has a completely different aim. The only thing he's after is that we would indeed have to pull our houses down.'

'Well, that's fantastic,' groaned Arnie. 'Hasn't anyone got at least a suggestion of a plan how to stop Jack?'

'One thing occurred to me earlier,' said Bill slowly. 'Jack, in my opinion, must have some paper and a fake stamp somewhere to be able to produce these forgeries. He definitely hasn't got them in his office, nor with him at home – he's too careful for that. And I think that Milky, as Jack's sidekick, could well know where they are hidden. We know that Milky is due to pick up the bribe. We'll agree with the neighbour that we'll secretly photograph the handover of money. If it

comes off we'll have Milky over a barrel. I still don't know how to proceed further, but I should say that the hideaway with the stamp is the way to turn the tables on Jack, that is, if he hasn't already got rid of everything.'

'That's a good plan, but I would simplify it a bit,' began Fred. 'Forget about the photographing. We'll wait for Milky somewhere, grab him by the scruff of the neck and beat it out of him real hard.'

'You know that normally I don't approve of violence,' joined in Arnie, 'but this time I'm in favour.'

'Boys, I don't know,' doubted Tony, 'because I think that Milky became mixed up in it without even knowing how. He never was any great thinker. I'll try and have a talk with him. After all, we used to be mates until recently, didn't we?'



‘Go over it once again Arnie,’ said Christian, shaking his head. ‘I don’t think I took everything in first time round.’

‘Right, look,’ began Arnie, ‘as I was saying, that chap who’s building a house at the end of the street, who looked so menacingly when Tony told him about our troubles, is boss of the police department for the western region.’

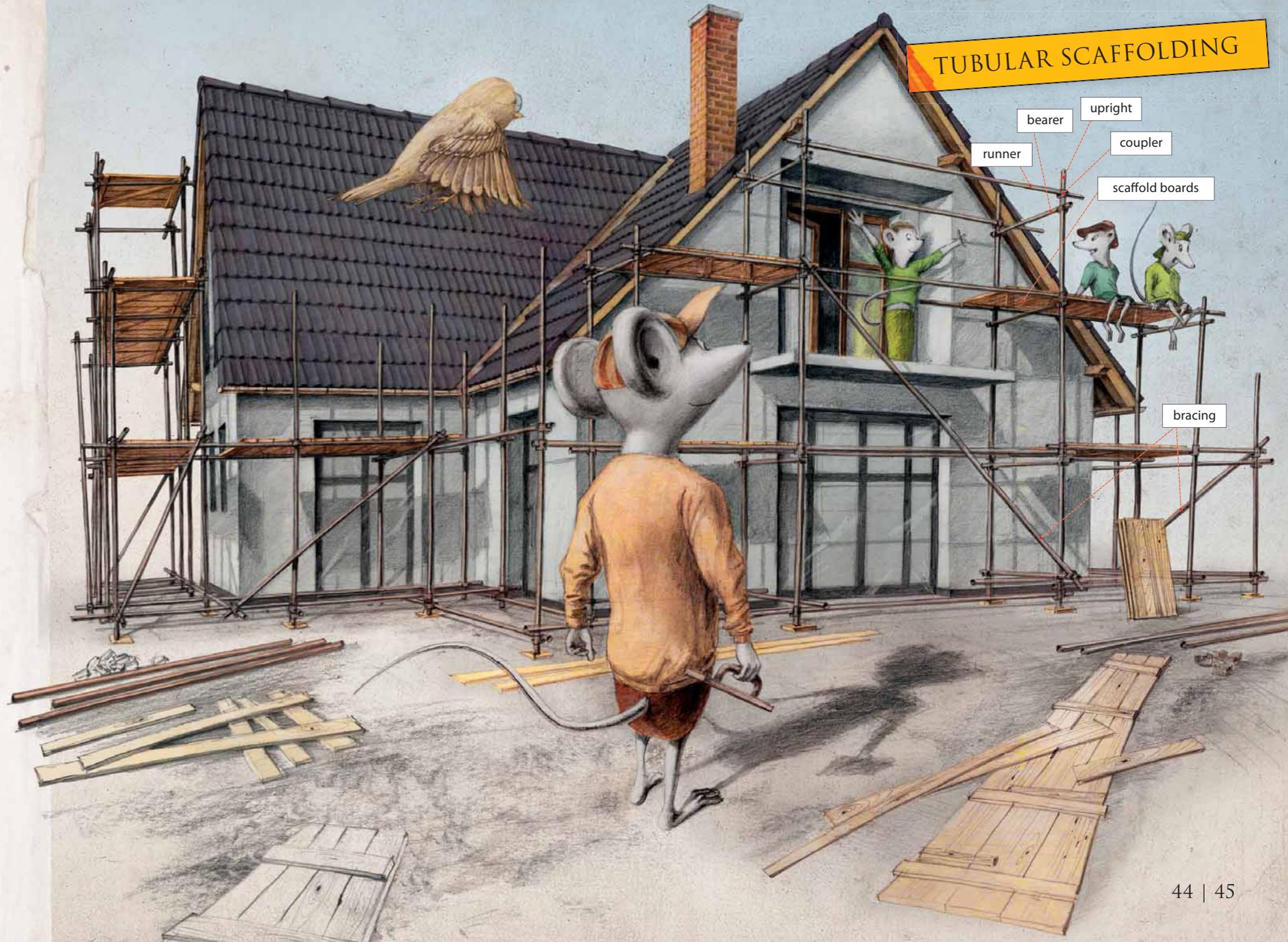
‘That’s unbelievable!’

‘I blinked too. Jack well knew that, and therefore didn’t send him any letter.’

‘Yes, go on,’ said Christian, hurrying Arnie along.

‘And so this copper, first thing the next morning, started to investigate everything and it was terribly straight forward. He had the department summons Milky, and he explained to him the benefits of fine accommodation at the state’s expense with decorative iron components on the doors and windows, and Milky immediately broke down. The same day the police had the fake stamp in their hands, but it only had Milky’s fingerprints on it. It was obvious that Lanky Jack would deny his guilt and throw everything at Milky, and consequently it would be difficult to pin anything on him. So then they approached me and requested a little help.’

‘And they did the right thing in choosing you Arnie, because if anyone can reliably succeed in catching Lanky Jack out, then that person is you.’



‘Well, Arnie, the final inspection committee didn’t find any defects. I think you can start to move in – congratulations. It’s a nice house in a nice place.’

‘Thank you, Mr Lucas,’ said Arnie. ‘We haven’t got much to move in. I hope that you’ll accept an invitation to our house warming.’

‘But with pleasure, gladly,’ replied Mr Lucas. ‘And how do you actually make a living, Arnie, if I can ask?’

‘I’ve got a small factory here with my mates and we manufacture motorbikes. At the moment everything’s starting to go quite well.’

‘Your motorbikes, or the factory?’

Arnie laughed, then saw Titch and Tony bringing a record player from somewhere, and said: ‘It looks like our house warming.’

FINAL INSPECTION

SOUND INSULATION

Living in your own home brings, among other things, an everyday benefit too, in that you can put music on loud without worrying. And if you have built sufficiently thick walls, closed the windows, and no-one is at home, then there’s nothing to stop you from pounding the drums, banging away at the electric guitar, or even learning to play the violin! Gradually, you will also discover another marvellous quality of your home – peace.



'Do birds also take out a mortgage to build a nest?' Arnie, the rat, asks his old friend Bill, the sparrow. Arnie's carefree youth has ended. He has got married and is building a house. Building the house itself is not a simple task, but producing a design arranging building permission, and taking out a mortgage require possibly even greater efforts. Arnie gradually starts to turn grey from all this and does not suspect that the greatest problem still lies in store for him. No, problem is too weak a word, an absolute disaster is coming. We hope that everything will turn out all right. Indeed, that's how it usually is in fairy tales.



For children from the age of 7



 b4u publishing

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ISBN