

The Flying Castle Stories, 1, 2 and 3

By

Robert Mayfield

Illustrations by John Wakefield

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Introduction

Hope you enjoy these three stories of the Flying Castle Stories of which there are fifteen in all. Inspired by Horsham Town Hall they bring in many of the features of this iconic and quirky old building that has stood in many different forms in the centre of Horsham over the past six hundred years. During that time the castle has collected many legends which lie hidden in the fabric such as the ghost of Dan Roberts who acted for the Duke of Norfolk as custodian of the Town Hall in the 18th Century.

More details can be found at

<http://www.flyingcastlestories.co.uk> .



‘Dedicated to all those who like quirky old buildings that have stories to tell.’

The stories

[The Human Cannonball](#)

[Swiftly the Elephant](#)

[The Sundial](#)

[The Human Cannonball](#)

Lucky Jim, the little green Genie; six inches tall and wearing a ridiculously tall top hat, could not believe his ears as he sat in one of the castle turrets waiting for the 'witching hour,' when their flying castle came to life, and sailed off on a new mission. He was listening to a conversation in Market Square below.



"Most of which you won't need," said the man on leaving the hall.

"What do you mean?" asked his friend.

"If you look at it sensibly all you need is a waterproof suit, a crash helmet, good boots and gloves. You don't need breathing equipment."

"What do you know about it then?"

"Use your brains; you add breathing equipment, you will weigh yourself down, and when you are flying through the air it will bring you down short of where you want to land. You want to land safely don't you?"

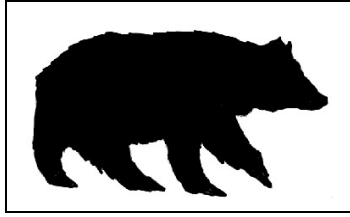
"Hum I see what you mean. I want to make it a success. Not everyone gets the chance of being shot out of cannon from England to Scotland. The other day a man was shot from Mexico to America. So I thought it would be good to be shot out of a cannon as well. I want to fly!"

"You're a nut!"

"Ok, but a happy nut!" and so the two went off chuckling down the road.

'I would like to see that,' thought Lucky Jim, 'a human cannonball! I wonder if Barnie heard.'

He looked down from the turret to Barnie the Bear who stood motionless, in a striding position, on the pub sign. It looked just as though he was ready to walk off into the distance. If only people knew the truth: that once Barnie the Bear came to life, he could do more things than squeak in the wind, which is just what the sign below him used to do in bad weather.



There was now a glint in Bernie the Bear's eyes.

'Aha!' thought Lucky Jim, 'we have contact. Tonight should be quite exciting.'

Sometimes when life gets quiet, there is a chance to think about things. Our four heroes had had plenty of time to do that. Lucky Jim was a genie, but he had found that, when not needed by Robin, his master, life could get quite boring. It was a great relief to find that by hanging around the flying castle things could get interesting. Then there was Bernie the Bear; the poor lonely looking bear outside the pub.

The third adventurer was Rosalinda, the Ladye Fayre who kept an eye on the flying castle during the day from her shop over the way.



As for the lion, known as Greatlion, well he could be seen each day standing like a statue on the front of the castle.



The 'witching hour' was between one and four in the morning when things were at their quietest, so that given a full moon, the four would come together and take their flying castle off to heaven knows where.

Four plus, one makes five, and the fifth member of the crew was a little Yorkie called Paddy; he would come prancing up and join them just as the flying castle was about to take off.



They had enjoyed these secret journeys for the past year, after all why shouldn't genies and shop signs have a life of their own! As Lucky Jim had put it, "we can't go

on swinging in the wind or sitting in a magic lamp all the time.”

The clock struck one. There were stirrings. The jets came to life and hastily Barnie the Bear, Rosalinda, Paddy and Lucky Jim scrambled through the front door. The next moment they were off.

“Where are we going tonight?” called Rosalinda as she made her way up to the bridge. There was no reply. She burst through the door and stood aghast; there was no one at the helm!

“Barnie, Lucky Jim, there is no one here. Where is Greatlion?” Lucky Jim and Barnie came racing up the stairs, eagerly followed by Paddy.

“Where is Greatlion? We can’t do without him! Who is flying this thing? We are going to crash!” cried Rosalinda.

“You can crash if you like,” growled Barnie the Bear, “I don’t want a mess round my pub.” He grasped the wheel but the flying castle seemed to know exactly where it was going; it was set for the north of England.

“I think,” said Lucky Jim, “I think, I know exactly where we are going.” The others looked at him in astonishment. “Barnie knows!”

“Come on Barnie let’s hear what this is all about.”

“A human cannonball; that is what it is all about!”

“Woof, woof!” barked Paddy, as he peered intently off to one side. All turned round, and their mouths dropped open in astonishment, for there, flying alongside, was Greatlion, frantically waving a piece of paper.

“He’ll have to land on the roof and climb down,” said Lucky Jim, and that is just what Greatlion did. In next to no time he was back on the bridge, still brandishing the paper.

“There,” he said, “that is our mission,” and he showed them the photograph of a man flying through the air having been shot out of a cannon.

“That’s what Barnie and I were talking about,” said Lucky Jim.

“Well, it has happened,” exclaimed Greatlion. “The only trouble is that George Waverly has gone into outer space.”

“We must rescue him,” said Rosalinda. “Oh please, please; we can do it.”

“I don’t think we have any choice,” replied Lucky Jim, “the flying castle seems to have decided things for us as usual. He’ll be dead by now,” said Lucky Jim. “I shall have to do a bit of magic on him!” and before anyone could reply the tiny genie had shot off the bridge and was seen soaring off into the night.

“It’s all very well for him,” grumbled Barnie the Bear, “but we are not genies. Now we have got two people to find.”

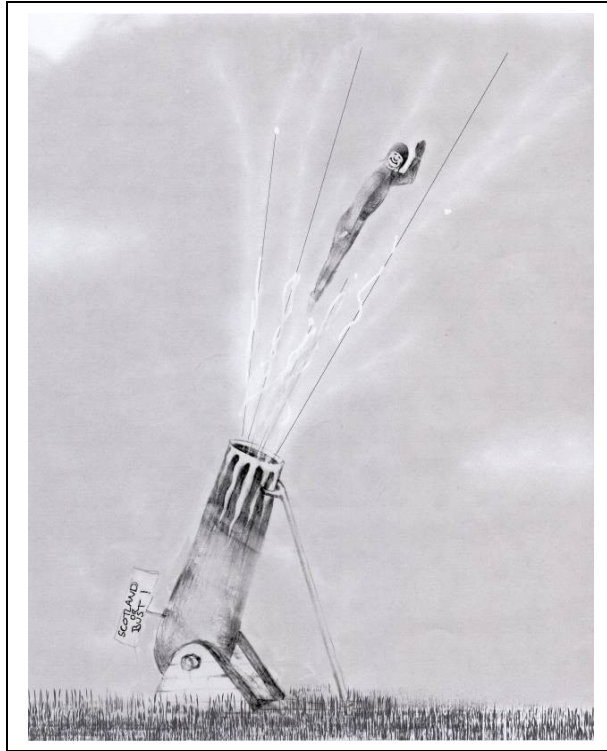
“Never despair old chum,” growled Greatlion as the flying castle hit a pocket of air, and took a nosedive towards the ground. Greatlion took over the wheel and the craft soon righted itself.

“It’s taking this flying quite well,” observed Barnie. “How many castles could do this kind of thing?”

“It’s perfect,” replied Greatlion. “Just look at it; it is so compact. I love it. It handles like a dream.”

“Who would think that under a great heap of stones there was a flying castle,” remarked Barnie. “I have spent years looking at it. The turrets are perfectly placed for the jet engines, and it can be steered from a little hut on the roof.”

“We even have a flag,” added Rosalinda, who always liked to give the picture a nice rosy glow. Suddenly Rosalinda let out a shriek of delight. “I can see them, there they are,” and sure enough far off in the distance could be seen two figures floating in space.



George in flight

Greatlion steered the castle alongside them and came to a complete stop: the jet engines burbling away gently. Paddy and Rosalinda ran the length of the building, and up through the skylight in time to greet Lucky Jim and the ‘human cannonball.’

“Thank you so much,” gasped the ‘cannonball’ as he breathed in the fresh air. “Who could have guessed that the cannon would work that well? I was aiming to be shot into Scotland not to be shot into outer space. I had a large breakfast of baked beans, but I did not realise they would work that well. Anyway my name is George Waverly.”



“I am Rosalinda, your rescuer is Lucky Jim, and this is Paddy. Then we have Greatlion and Barnie the Bear up on the bridge. Come on and have a look.”

Mr Waverly could not believe his eyes; here he was miles above the earth’s surface walking through a castle.

“Nuts!” He exclaimed, “I must be nuts.” He looked out of the window, and saw the night full of stars. He could see the earth below them hanging in space.

“I don’t believe this. Pinch me Rosalind. Ow! Not that hard!”

“See, we’re still here Mr Waverly. Now come and meet the captain and his mate.”

The next thing that surprised him was to see a big brown bear, standing beside a lion steering the flying castle.

“Greetings,” growled Greatlion, “where would you like to go? I am Greatlion and this is Bernie the Bear.”

“Oh yes, Scotland would be good. Land me at the spot I was aiming for,” he replied. He held onto the rails his eyes bulging as he took in the bizarre situation in which he found himself. Here he was travelling through space on the way to Scotland in a flying castle! Then to cap it all the craft was piloted by a lion!

“You don’t look well Mr Waverly. Have a seat,” said Rosalinda gently pushing a stool in his direction.

“Thank you,” he muttered. “I am very grateful to you all. But I cannot work out what all this is about. It just doesn’t make sense.”

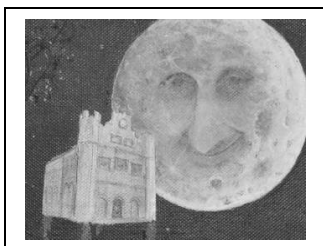
“Life makes very little sense at times,” exclaimed Lucky Jim standing on the windowsill, “you just have to make the best with what you have got. I could take that a little further and say that firing yourself out of a cannon doesn’t make much sense either!”

“Hm! Point taken,” he muttered.

“Come and have a pot of tea; it’s all ready,” said Rosalinda.

“You have a kitchen as well!”

So it was that Mr Waverly found himself drinking tea high above the earth on his way to Scotland.



It was not long before the castle came into land. Not a soul was in sight, which was just as well for Mr Waverly. The farewells over, the craft began to rise up from the Scottish mists, and he stood back and watched in awe as the castle disappeared into the night.

“Who would have believed it,” he muttered to himself as he turned and walked up to the big net, which was meant to catch him.

“What are they hoping; that I will fall down from the sky into this big net?” It was then he had a brainwave.

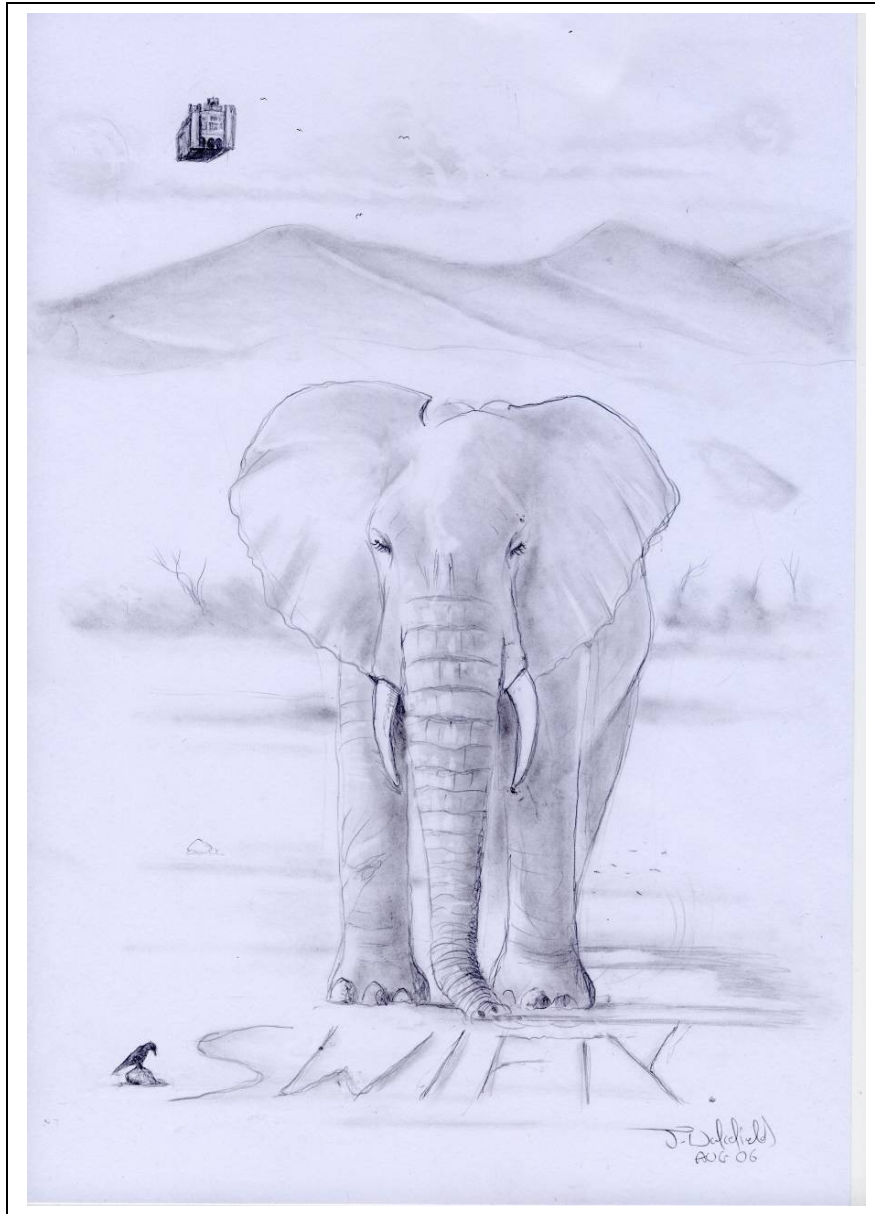
“Right, if that is what they want, that is what I shall do!” and feeling tired anyway he climbed up into the netting and went very quickly off to sleep.

He was awoken some hours later to shouts of, “he’s landed, look he’s landed in the netting. Oh George, George you had us all so worried, but welcome home,” and before long he was surrounded by adoring fans, prepared to believe that he had really been shot into space and had landed in the net.

Well, after all he had done just that; it was just that the rest of the story was difficult to believe. Perhaps after all it had been just a mad dream. This is what Mr Waverly had settled for; it made more sense. But he enjoyed the memory of flying through space, and being rescued by the most unusual group of beings imaginable.



Swiftly the Elephant



Swiftly

Greatlion swished his tail and roared, “steady as she goes!”

“Aye, aye,” called Lucky Jim as the flying castle rose above the thirty-foot waves.

“Are we going to survive?” cried the Ladye Fayre.

“It’s built like a fortress,” growled Barnie the Bear, as the jet engines on the four corners burst into life, and they rose out of danger.

The wind gusted around the turrets and tore at the flag, bravely flapping in the wind.

Greatlion peered out at the raging storm. Nothing was going to deter him, and his tail showed not so much as a twitch. Lucky Jim the Genie looked anxious, his top hat rather lopsided.

“Wouldn’t it be good to know where we were going!” said Lucky Jim.

“We’ll soon know when someone needs our help!” replied Greatlion.

“Woof, woof!” barked Paddy standing on one of the seats, his front paws up against the window, as he peered into the face of the storm. His tail wagged, his ears pricked up and his beady eyes stared intently. “Woof, woof!” he barked again.

Lucky Jim followed his gaze and caught site of a patch of blue sky.

“Greatlion,” he cried, “over there, that’s the way to go,” and the flying castle veered off towards the blue sky.

They came out into bright sunshine. Below lay Africa.

“This is my home,” growled Greatlion.

“What here?” said Lucky Jim.

“Yes, of course, among the elephants, crocodiles, vultures and other such friendly animals. Glad I’ve found another way to spend my life. Had I not made friends with the four of you I would have eaten you all up by now. What a disaster that would have been! You all look pretty tasty to me.”

“Woof!” barked Paddy.

“Yes, even you,” growled Greatlion affectionately. “A Greatlion does not worry about a Ladye Fayre, a bear, a little Yorkshire Terrier or you Lucky Jim, whether or not you are a genie. A little man six inches tall would be a delightful sweet. You’re all food; nice crunchy bones and blood.”

“Alright, Greatlion you’ve had your dream. I must say you do make me feel a little nervous at times,” said Lucky Jim. “Anyway what are we doing here?”

Suddenly there came a scream from below and Rosalinda, the Ladye Fayre, came running up the stairs.

“Look, look down there,” she shrieked, pointing to a spot far below.

Lucky Jim, using his magical powers, increased his vision by just the blink of his eyes. “Hey!” he cried, “there is an elephant stuck in the swamp, and he is sinking fast!”

On hearing these words Greatlion brought the craft to an abrupt halt; Paddy ended up on the floor, Barnie the Bear landed in the corner, a waste paper basket over his head, and with a scream, Rosalinda fell back down the stairs. She ended up sitting with her headdress in all sorts of a mess, draped over her golden locks.

She pulled herself up and ran back upstairs more concerned for the elephant than anything else. “What are you doing Greatlion?” she yelled.

“Saving an elephant,” he replied with a growl.

“You could have given us more of a warning,” replied Barnie the Bear, struggling to remove the basket from his head. After a tussle Rosalinda managed to get it off, but she had to pull so hard that she landed back on the floor again!

“This is not funny,” she cried. “I am going to be all black and blue at this rate.”

“Fiddlesticks!” replied Greatlion, “come and have a look.”

The flying castle had landed not far from the stricken elephant, now gradually sinking out of sight. The stifling heat of the African desert blasted into their faces, as they burst out of the door and raced over to the edge of the swamp, where the elephant was struggling. The more he struggled the more he got stuck.

Throwing out his tail, Greatlion growled, “take hold of this,” and the elephant

coiled his trunk round the tail. Greatlion took the weight but without any success.

“Rosalinda, the fire hose!” yelled Lucky Jim. “It’s in the main hall, bring it down.” The Ladye Fayre belted up the stairs, grabbed the hose and ran back just as fast as her fairy like feet could go. Breathless, she handed the end to Lucky Jim, who performing one of his feats, rose up into the air, and floating over the dangerous muddy area passed the end to the elephant.

“Now keep hold of that my friend,” yelled Greatlion, “and for goodness sake let go of my tail. I won’t have one left at this rate.

Hold on tight, we will pull you to safety.”

Greatlion bound back inside, and within a matter of seconds the flying castle was rising gently into the air. The jet motors whirred as they took the strain. Lucky Jim, Rosalinda, Barnie the Bear, and Paddy looked on in astonishment as a very muddy elephant came out of the swamp. He bellowed and trumpeted fit to burst. The others clapped as he was dragged onto the shore. The flying castle came back to earth once again, and a very jubilant Greatlion strode out swinging his tail, and with a big grin across his face.

“Thank you, my most grateful thanks,” trumpeted the elephant. “A group of hunters was chasing me. I am not called Swifty for nothing, and I outran them. But hey, look over there; here they come. It’s my tusks they are after”.

“They want trouble, we’ll give it to them,” growled Greatlion. “Come on, let’s get going, you as well Swifty. Lucky Jim will get you through the main doorway without any trouble. His magic works wonders.”

The hunters were gaining quickly on their quarry, but to their astonishment they discovered, on arriving at the swamp, that he had disappeared! Intent on their search through the scrubland the hunters had not seen the flying castle rise up slowly and hover above them. After all it was a magic flying castle, and if it didn’t want anyone to see it, then it would vanish, just like that!

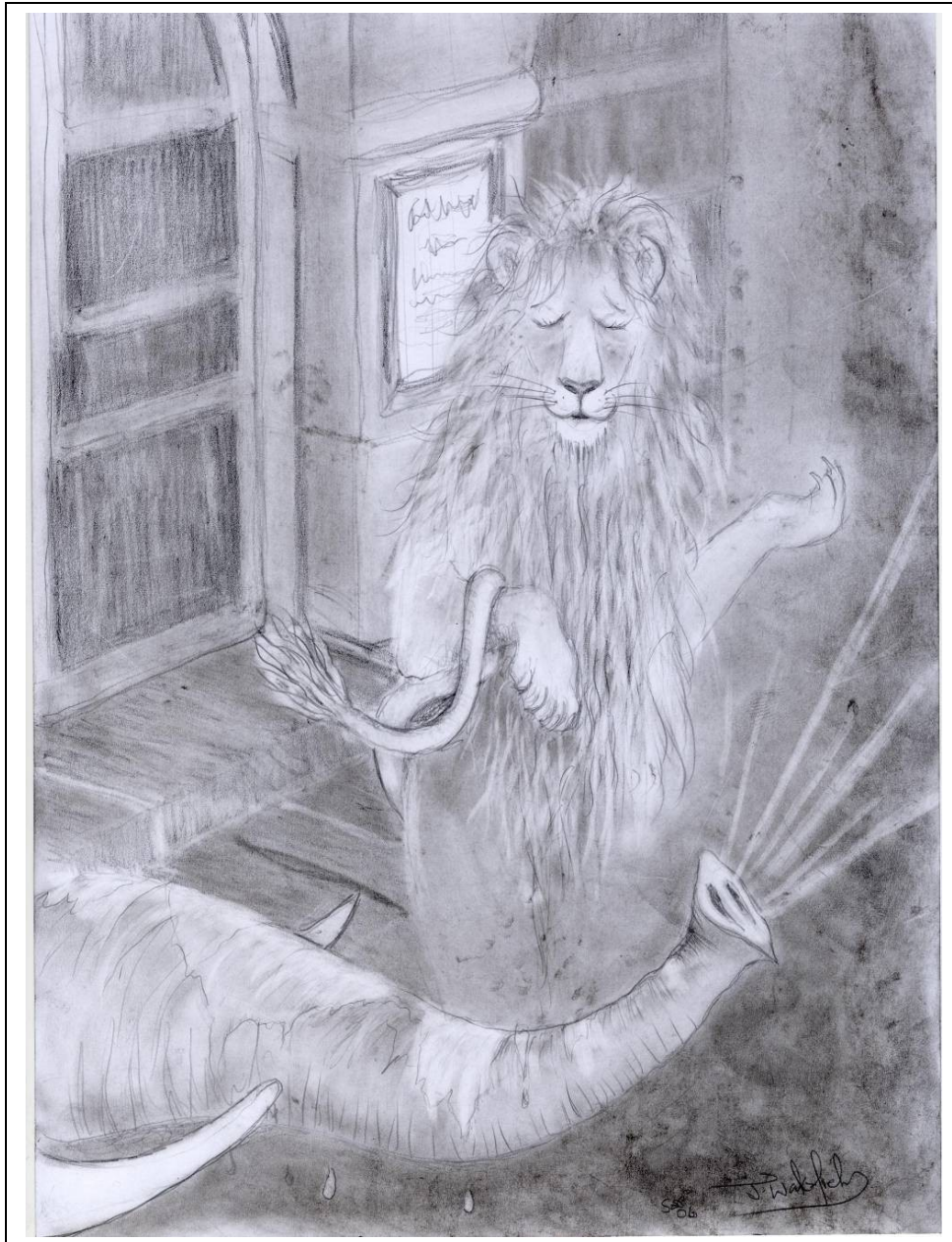
The next moment was one the hunters would not forget in a hurry; they were doused in a powerful jet of water from Rosalinda who was having fun with the fire hose. A Ladye Fayre can be pretty smart!

The flying castle landed and out bound Greatlion who soon had the hunters quaking in their boots. They were herded into the castle dungeons. They all sat wet and miserable. It was altogether a frightening experience, not made any easier when they heard Swifty trumpeting, as he lumbered round on the floor above.

Now they had to face the anger of a little man, six inches tall, who wore a top hat and who seemed to think he was in charge.

“Hi midget!” yelled one of the hunters.

Lucky Jim turned and cast a beady eye over the man. There was little warmth in his gaze. The man had no idea who he was taking on.



Greatlion and Swifty celebrating their success!

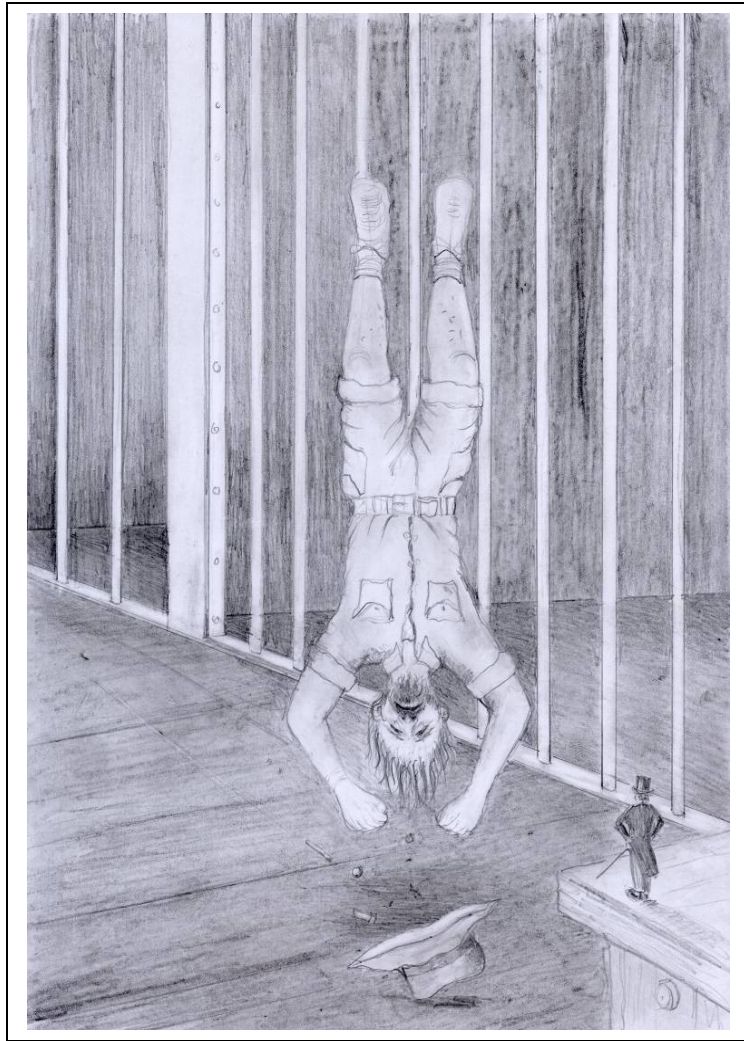
“Midget, huh! Well try the magic of Lucky Jim, the Genie,” replied Lucky Jim.

“Hey presto!” he shouted, and the next second the hunter found himself hanging upside down in mid air.

“Help!” he yelled.

“You have a problem?” asked Lucky Jim, a smile flickering across his face. “Can I be of any assistance?”

“You let me down!”



Rex in a fix!

“Where are your manners? I am small, but I am a gentleman as you can tell from my manners, my clothes and especially my top hat.”

“Please, please let me down!” The other prisoners were staring in amazement at the extraordinary scene unfolding before them. Rex was the leader of their hunting pack, and he always knew how to get out of a fix, and he was in a fix now! They stared in horror as they watched the drama unfold.

“Well what are you going to do about Swifty?” asked Lucky Jim.

“Swifty; who is Swifty?”

“You were trying to kill him for his tusks.”

“But that’s an elephant!” replied Rex.

“Ah, but you are a man.....”

“I am, I am Rex the ace hunter...”

“...who cannot tell his head from his feet, at the moment,” replied Lucky Jim.

“What’s up?” said Greatlion shouldering his way into the cramped space; his tail all a’twitch. “Any problems?”

“Rex here, finds himself out of sorts,” said Lucky Jim pointing at the hunter suspended in mid air. “He is not very polite.”

“Well if I were to behave like you,” growled Greatlion to Rex, “I should now be hearing only the sound of your bones being crunched up as I eat you all up. That

would be the only sound I would hear coming from the likes of you Mr Rex. Now all we are requiring from you is that you ask Swifty to forgive you. He is waiting upstairs, and we advise you all to go and say you are sorry, because otherwise he has thought of a dastardly fate for you all. He has just been whispering it into my ear. Not nice! Do you know I thought Swifty was a gentleman,” said Greatlion turning to Lucky Jim. “He is more of a bandit from the type of revenge he has in mind for the likes of Rex and his friends.”

“Mates,” yelled Rex, “we are all agreed, we go and apologise to Swifty.”

“Yes boss,” they replied as one.

Rex collapsed onto the floor, and the cell doors opened. They trooped into the hall above and found Swifty lying on the floor, looking a lot cleaner after Rosalinda had given him a good bath with her hose.

Swifty raised his head and trumpeted.

The hall echoed with the sound, and the hunters stood quaking in their shoes. Rosalinda sat by his side and Paddy lay at his feet watching events unfold.

“Greetings Swifty, we have some very repentant hunters who have come to ask forgiveness,” explained Greatlion.

“Don’t believe it!” bellowed the elephant. “Don’t believe it for a moment. They want my tusks. Well I shall give them a taste of what they are like. Bring them over here. Now you miserable creatures; these are what you are after. Feel these tusks. The next time I promise you there will be no mercy, just a nice juicy morsel of a hunter on a tusk!”

“Really Swifty,” cried Rosalinda, “you are a beast!”

“You are quite right,” he replied. “Now if you hunters promise to give up hunting for ivory tusks then you can go.”

Quaking in their boots, the seven hunters nodded their heads so eagerly that you would think they were about to fall off. Then they were herded out of the door and left on the outskirts of a town.

Free at last, they turned round and watched as the mysterious flying castle slowly rose up and disappeared, to the accompaniment of a triumphant elephant trumpeting over the roar of the jet engines.

“Who is going to believe that?” said Rex.

“No one,” they replied.

“Well least said, soonest mended,” said Rex, “let’s not say a word, alright,” and mumbling in agreement they stumbled towards the town.



[The Sundial](#)

Jack was drinking his milkshake. He had just come back from the dentist, and he had some thinking to do.

The dentist had looked at Jack with a merry twinkle in his eye and said, “Well Jack what are we going to do? Have you any ideas?”

Jack looked up, shrugged his shoulders and said, “I don’t know; you see I chew my thumb when I am sleeping.”

“I know...” continued the dentist, “...you have smelly socks, don’t you?”

Jack’s eyes grew wide in disbelief, “yes,” he said, “when mum forgets to wash them,” and he looked up at his mum who tried to shake off her embarrassment with a nervous giggle.

“Why not wrap one of your socks round your thumb before you go to sleep?”

“Dad’s socks are worse. That’s what mum says anyway.”

The dentist laughed, “Well perhaps you could persuade your husband to let Jack have one of his socks.”

“Huh, yes but they are really bad!”

“What about wearing gloves then?” replied the dentist, and they all laughed. So the conversation went on, and it was finally agreed, that Jack and his mum would have a good think about what to do.

So it was that sometime later Jack was sitting on the large sundial, in the warm sunshine, while his mum sipped at her milkshake anxiously watching her son from her seat outside the coffee shop

‘What was he to do; all the wishing in the world couldn’t get rid of his so-called problem? How on earth was he going to stop chewing his thumb when he was asleep? Was he supposed to have a little sentry on guard by his bed ready to blow a bugle when the thumb went in?’

Jack watched the world as it passed by; no one else seemed to be troubled by big problems like this. The breeze rustled the nearby trees and cooled his fevered brow. He was enjoying the milk shake. It was after he had taken his final gulp that he glanced over the large sundial; it was big, rising up a good six foot above him. There were great lengths of metal curving round and arching over him. The sundial was a deep bronze colour. There were carvings, circles, numbers and letters marked out in gold. Jack began to think that the sundial was a flying saucer and with just a nudge it would suddenly whirr off and vanish into the deep blue sky.

‘I wish it would take me,’ thought Jack, ‘where would thumb problems be then?’

He looked across the large square; people were hurrying across, while others were messing about on skateboards, bikes or roller skates. Jack could hear the fountains tinkling away and the sound of children playing.

Then he noticed the church steeple was getting smaller! He looked down, and his mouth dropped open; the sundial had become a flying saucer! The town, the trees, the fields and his mum were all getting smaller and smaller as well.

One moment there had been a sundial, and the next it was gone; and Jack went too!



This was fun!

Jack's mum finished her milk shake and got up to collect her son and take him back to school; perfectly timed so as to arrive back in time for play! She looked over and called out his name. It was then that panic set in; the sundial and her son had disappeared!

"Oh my goodness where has he gone?" she screamed. People turned and looked at her; puzzled expressions on their faces. It was as though they were in a different world, and could not understand her problem. They just shrugged their shoulders, and walked on.

"My little boy; he has gone. He was sitting on the sundial one minute and the next, whoosh he vanished!"

"Just like that!" added a voice close by.

"Yes!" replied Jack's mother, spinning round to see who it was, "yes, just like that! Anyway where are you?"

"Over here," came the reply and there, sitting in one of the raised flowerbeds, sat a pixie.

"My name is Seamus. I know where your son has gone."

"You do," said Jack's mother, "well where, and the sundial as well?"



“My name is Seamus.”

“Oh, he made a wish and that sundial is full of magic; it took off and Jack went with it.”

“What did he wish?”

“He wished it was a flying saucer and that it would take him away from all his worries.”

“What worries?”

“His teeth problems.”

“Oh,” said Jack’s mother. “So you know about that as well.”

“Oh yes,” exclaimed the pixie jumping down and looking up into her face, “He will be alright; there are magic forces round here, and it being a full moon tonight there will be lots of comings and goings, but I can assure you, you will find your son sleeping peacefully in his bed tomorrow morning, and his problem will be all gone!”

“This you can promise?” asked Jack’s mum who felt she could trust him. “If this is true Seamus then it would be wonderful, my son would be such a happy boy. He was told to wrap a smelly sock...”

“Oh no, not that trick,” said Seamus, “as if there was any chance of it working.”

No your son is in very capable hands,” and with that he threw a handful of fairy dust over her; and with all her worries gone she walked away a large smile on her face.

As for Jack he was having a wonderful time; day was turning into starry night, and as the full moon rose up he was able to sit back and marvel at the clouds and countryside and the stars whizzing past.

This was fun, and his thumb was enjoying the fresh air too. It was then that he noticed a small castle floating in space, outlined against the full moon: every now and again its four rockets bursting into life, as though it was showing the universe just what a flying castle could do. The sundial was heading in that direction. As it drew closer Jack saw a fair lady, with a beautiful headdress, waiting to greet him!

“Hello Jack,” called the Ladye Fayre, “I am Rosalinda, come on board!” The sundial manoeuvred itself alongside the craft, and Jack jumped across. Then with an extra burst of speed the sundial zipped off into the darkness.

“Time gets stuck when sundials disappear for too long,” explained Rosalinda as she guided him downstairs and into the main hall.

What a sight met his eyes as he entered the hall; a grinning lion flicking his tail, a brown bear cleaning out a honey jar, a little man, no more than six inches high, wearing a tall top hat, and a little Yorkshire Terrier sniffing at Jack’s feet.

“Meet Greatlion,” said Rosalinda, “this is Barnie the Bear, Lucky Jim the Genie, and the little dog is Paddy.”

“Pleased to meet you all,” said Jack.

“Now,” said Greatlion, always one to get to the point, “what is your problem?”

“My thumb,” said Jack, “I can’t get it to stay out of my mouth when I sleep.”

“Have you heard the one about putting a smelly sock over it?” asked Barnie the Bear from the depths of the honey jar.

“Yes of course he has,” said Lucky Jim. “Everyone has heard that one.”

“I’ve had a thought,” said Rosalinda. “Now Jack, have you ever been on a railway journey?”

“Yes,” replied Jack.

“Well,” continued Rosalinda, “say you know someone you don’t like. You would rather like them to go on a long train journey.”

“Yes,” said Jack, as the others looked on curious to know what bizarre story she was about to come up with.

“Before you go to sleep put your thumb on a train journey. Imagine a train puffing past your bed, with a lot of carriages; it’s rather like counting sheep. Your thumb boards the train when you put it under your pillow. Let the engine and carriages rattle away carrying your thumb with them. In next to no time you will be asleep and the thumb will be nice and safe.”



Ros and Jack

“My that sounds good,” said Greatlion.

“Yes,” said the others, and Jack smiled a great smile.

“Cool,” he exclaimed, “I will try that.” Then he stopped and looked at his five friends, and went on, “but what is this all about?”

“Of course how silly we are. Come on Jack, come up to the bridge,” said Bernie the Bear, and off they trooped.

“Wow!” exclaimed Jack as stepped into the steering room and saw the twinkling stars, the luminous moon and the sight of the world, his home, floating in an ocean of darkness. “We are in space, and this really is a flying castle!”

“Sit down over there,” said Lucky Jim, “and we will explain.”

“We come alive every time there is a full moon to help anyone who needs us,” added Rosalinda.

“Your wish was sent to us by Seamus the pixie, who was close to the sundial,” said Greatlion.

“So, the sundial is a flying saucer! That is what I was thinking when I was sitting on it. Then everything happened just like that,” replied Jack. “But I didn’t know castles could fly!”

“One day you might see it again!” replied Greatlion mysteriously. It was at this point that exhaustion set in, and Jack slumped down in the chair, fast asleep.

“Poor lad,” said Rosalinda, putting a pillow under his head and a blanket over him.

“He’ll have no problems now,” said Bernie. “I wonder if he will ever find the castle?”

“Who would believe him?” said Lucky Jim.

“Perhaps his mum might put two and two together,” added Rosalinda.

“Perhaps,” echoed Greatlion, as he brought the craft to land. “Well ladies and gentlemen it’s been a good night’s work, and the clock is chiming four. What about Jack?”

“He’ll be ok, just leave him there,” said Rosalinda. “He will wake up in his own bed. Sweet dreams Jack,” and so the castle once again became as quiet as a mouse.

•••••

Jack’s mum stayed up most of the night sitting in the armchair until she dropped off to sleep. She woke up at about four and went up to Jack’s bedroom, and there he was fast asleep, as Seamus had promised! She could not see his thumb, but relieved that Jack was now back, she was able to go to bed at last.

The following morning she tiptoed downstairs, made herself a hot chocolate, and sat down. A little while later she heard a jubilant boy come thundering down the stairs.

“Mum, mum, I didn’t chew my thumb last night. Look, it is nice and dry. It was hiding under my pillow when I woke up.”

“That’s good Jack isn’t it? We won’t bother with smelly socks then will we? Dad will be pleased.”

“That will be a big surprise for him,” said Jack sitting down at the table for his breakfast. His mum looked at him nervously over her drink to see if he was going to say anything more. She wasn’t too sure what to say herself, but the pixie seemed to have been telling the truth.

After a couple of mouthfuls Jack said, “Mum, I had a funny dream last night about a train taking my thumb away on a long journey. On the train was a little man with a tall top hat, and there was a little Yorkie called Paddy. There was a pixie called Seamus and a lady with a lovely headdress. There was even a lion and a bear; they kept telling each other jokes!”

“That sounds an interesting dream, doesn’t it Jack?” said his mum just managing to prevent herself from choking at the mention of the pixie Seamus.

“I’m looking forward to going to bed tonight. I like train journeys like that,” said Jack enthusiastically.

“Particularly if your thumb goes on a train journey as well,” replied his mother.

“I’m sure it must be something to do with the sundial,” continued Jack.

“It’s a nice sundial though isn’t it Jack?” replied his mother, once again almost choking on her drink at the mention of the sundial.

“Just like a flying saucer,” said Jack finishing off his breakfast and jumping down, “Be nice to have a little dog though wouldn’t it mum?” and he ran upstairs.

Jack’s mum just sat; she was feeling dazed, and her head was spinning. In her mind she saw a whole galaxy of shapes whirling around her; a flying saucer, a little dog, a lion, a Lady Fayre, a bear, and a little man with a ridiculously tall hat. She wondered whether she would ever be able to think straight again.



‘she saw a whole galaxy of shapes’

Some days later Jack and his mum were walking through town. She had bought him an extra special milkshake because his thumb had been behaving itself! They were both very pleased, but at the same time rather puzzled; their memories stretched back to Jack sitting on the sundial, but apart from that they couldn’t remember very much else.

“That was a lovely milkshake mum, thanks.”

“Glad you liked it dear, though it did break the bank,” said his mother scrabbling around to see what money she had left in her bag. They turned the corner, and it was then that Jack came to an abrupt halt.

“Mum,” he said, “that’s it, that’s the place.”

“What is dear?”

“The flying castle!”

“Jack, it’s an old hall, you must have been dreaming.”

“I might have been dreaming, but look, there is the bear,” said the boy pointing at the big brown bear standing outside the pub.

“And look mum, there is Rosalinda. It only says Ladye Fayre on the shop sign, but she was called the Ladye Fayre. Yes mum, and there is Greatlion,” said the boy pointing excitedly at the lion set in stone in the front of the building. “They are all here!”

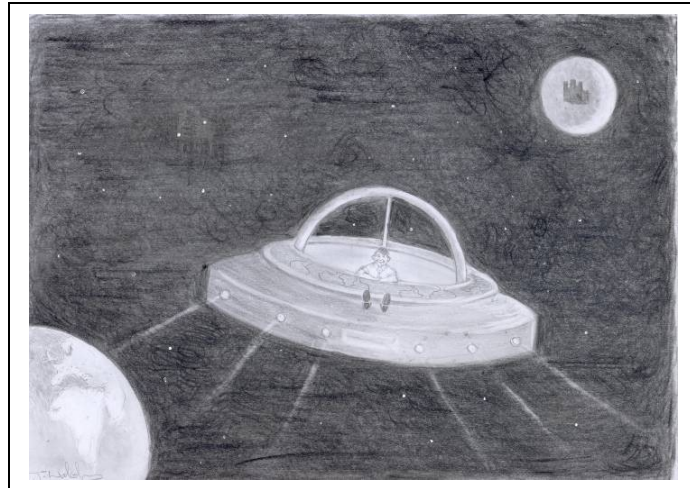
“What all of them?”

“No not all of them,” said Jack on reflection, “there is no little dog called Paddy and there is no Lucky Jim, with a top hat!”

“I don’t blame you Jack, because I have a funny feeling that I was standing talking to a pixie man, by the sundial, and his name was Seamus. Something happened, both of us know that, but.....”

“.....I am no longer chewing my thumb,” cried out the boy with glee, “and doesn’t my thumb look good.”

“Yes Jack, now we’ve got to get to the bank, you have run me out of money as usual!”



Jack in flight



Hope you enjoyed something of the inspiration that fired me up to write these stories woven round my home town with all its history, heritage and landscape. A brief visit to the website

<http://www.flyingcastlestories.co.uk>

will show you the flying castle its setting and the locations of some of the characters in the stories. Some of these cannot be found like my little dog Paddy, and Rosalinda was inspired by the name of a shop. Unfortunately however one character is well and truly remote from reality and that is Lucky Jim. He found his way into these stories from my story The Time Chase, about Robin Aide and the great wizard Ubiquitous, which I wrote in 1983 The inspiration for The Time Chase came about when teaching history, and I wanted to make things like the Ice Age a bit of fun It was just a way of taking history and giving it a bit of a squeeze! In those days the name Harry Potter was just a name!

Two of the next 'Flying Castle stories

Sarah's Pumpkin.

Sarah's mum and dad run a veg shop in Middle Street. As Halloween approaches Sarah sets up a large pumpkin in the shop window with a candle inside. The candle starts to fade, but when the ghostly Dan Roberts from the Town Hall just around the corner taps his large nose he casts a magical spell over the pumpkin much to the delight of Sarah and her parents.

Blackie and Tottie

Jack's mum tries to save a baby blackbird (Blackie) by placing it in a nest of straw where the tortoise has created a nice bed for itself. Unfortunately the tortoise (Tottie) decides that this is just the place to go to sleep. So the plans to nurse the little bird do not work out, but after hearing what Seamus the Pixie and Lucky Jim have to say life becomes much brighter. After all how can you keep a straight face when a little man standing barely taller than a bottle of fairy liquid, and wearing a ridiculously tall hat, starts spouting words of wisdom?

Full details at:

<http://www.smashwords.com/profile/view/lucky4jim>

Stories four, five and six are available for only \$.99 cents, or you can get a free download voucher when you sign up to receive priority notifications when new books are launched, or other news about the author:

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