

*Elephant Hill
and
The Path of Light*

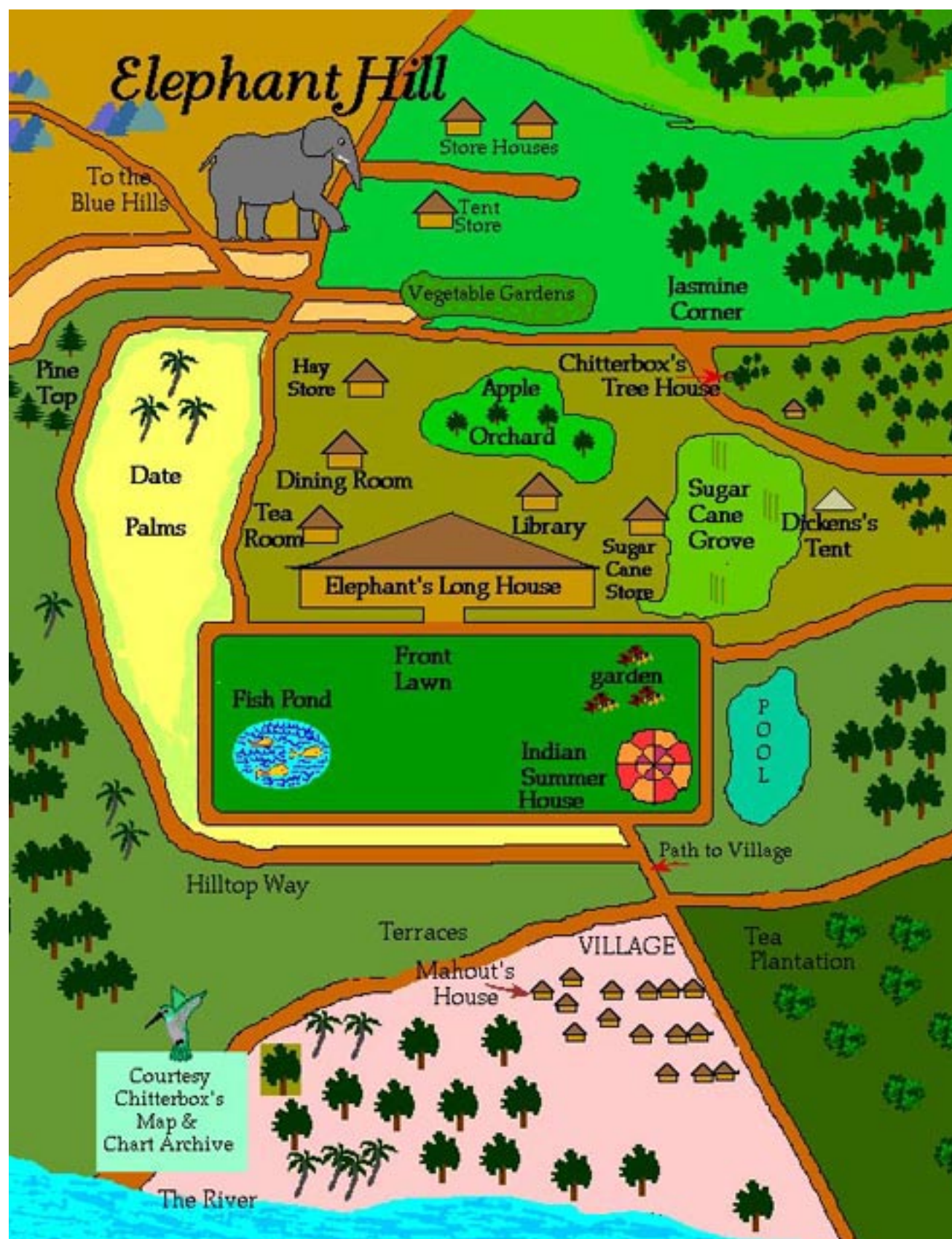
Part One

*by
J. C. Dickens*

With the help of the crew of:



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Our story begins not so long ago on a snowy winter's evening in London...





"I beg your pardon," said the marmalade cat, sidling in the door, "but is this part of Buckingham Palace?"

As he put his briefcase down, a blast of cold air rushed into the room, sending papers flying in all directions.

A tall thin man looked up in surprise. "Well, not exactly. I mean no, it is not. We are publishers of stories and picture books, I mean that is our business. We are called the Undiscovered Worlds Press."

"Whew!" responded the cat, "do you mind if I rest a moment. I thought I would never get out of Buckingham Palace. Do you mind if I sit on this cushion? Thank you very...publishers, you say?" said the cat brushing away a layer of snow flakes from its whiskers.

"Shut that flipping door before we all freeze to death," muttered a bearded

young man as snowflakes started whirling around his desk. The cat quickly obliged and went back to his cushion.

It was a small cramped office, three desks, tables piled with manuscripts,



and bulging bookcases that touched the ceiling. But it was cozy, informal and inviting, particularly on a snowy London afternoon. Suddenly there was a whistling sound and a cloud of steam billowed from a kettle.

"Ah, the water's ready, why don't you join us for a cup of tea? You look like you need warming up."

"Delighted," said the cat, "plenty of milk and two sugars, please. Oh, by the

way, my name is Dickens—Dickens, the Jungle Cat.”

“Here you are, Dickens,” said a lady partner, “this will warm you up. Don’t we have a cake somewhere?”

They were joined by the bearded young man, who turned out to be the art director, and who had mysteriously uncovered a Dundee cake from under a pile of manuscripts.

Dickens, by way of apologizing for his unexpected arrival, asked in his most polite tone of voice, “You all look so very busy, do you have time for me?”

We smiled and said, “We could do with some light relief after spending all the morning with an anxious author fretting and fussing over his manuscript.”



“Nice tea,” said Dickens, as he reached out for a large slice of the cake.

“I have quite a story to tell,” said Dickens in a leisurely way. “It’s the story of how I came from India where I was a Jungle Cat. Ever since Chitterbox, the hummingbird began to encourage me with my writing, I knew deep down that I was really a Literary Cat.”

“Ah,” we said, “so you’re in need of a publisher.”

“That’s one of the reasons I came to London, to find a publisher. And my friend Amber, the elephant, was invited to visit Uncle Arthur, and Chitterbox decided to come along with us,”

“Uncle Arthur?” we said.

“Uncle Arthur is a very famous elephant, who left the jungle to travel the world,” replied Dickens. “He invited all the elephants on Elephant Hill to come

and stay with him in London. Well, none of the other elephants would budge, the thought of leaving the jungle to them was like jumping off the world. Only Amber wanted to go. And of course, Chitterbox, the hummingbird, is a World Citizen and is at home everywhere. "

Dickens, enthusiastically rummaging through his briefcase, pulled out a great sheaf of papers, saying "Why don't I read some of my writing right now."

"Oh, that would be lovely," we said, and everyone made themselves comfortable and waited for Dickens to begin.

After a short pause, Dickens began, "It all started one evening in India on Elephant Hill. The elephants were huddled together in a wide circle, chattering in a grumbling sort of way.

"That boy just has no sense. Did you see the number of logs he gave me to carry?" said one indignant young elephant.

"Logs!" scoffed an older elephant. "Seems to me they were more like the little sticks a baby plays with, if you ask me. You youngsters don't know what a real log is."

"Never mind the logs," said another, "it's all that poking and prodding with the stick that I don't like, to say nothing of his jingling that bell in our ears all day long. It's just not good enough."

"And another thing, why do *they* need all those logs, that's what I'd like to know."

By now the elephants on Elephant Hill had worked themselves up into a complete uproar with much hooting and bellowing. It was a good thing that the youngsters were already in bed.

An elderly and bespectacled elephant shuffled into the center of the circle, "Dearie, dearie me! What a commotion, I can hardly believe my ears. Sounds like we're becoming a herd of fusspots. What would Uncle Arthur say if he could hear us now?"

The mere mention of Uncle Arthur's name was enough to hush the elephants for he was the most celebrated elephant in the history of the herd. Uncle Arthur had traveled across deserts and sailed the seven seas before arriving at the London Zoo. In a post card, Uncle Arthur told them that he was very nicely situated, thank you very much. And he added that he had been given a fine blue umbrella to keep the rain off. 'Umbrella' became an enchanted word with the elephants, although they had no idea what it really meant.

But this did not stop the little ones from saying, "When can I have an umbrella like Uncle Arthur?" And always the answer was, "Later—if you are very good."

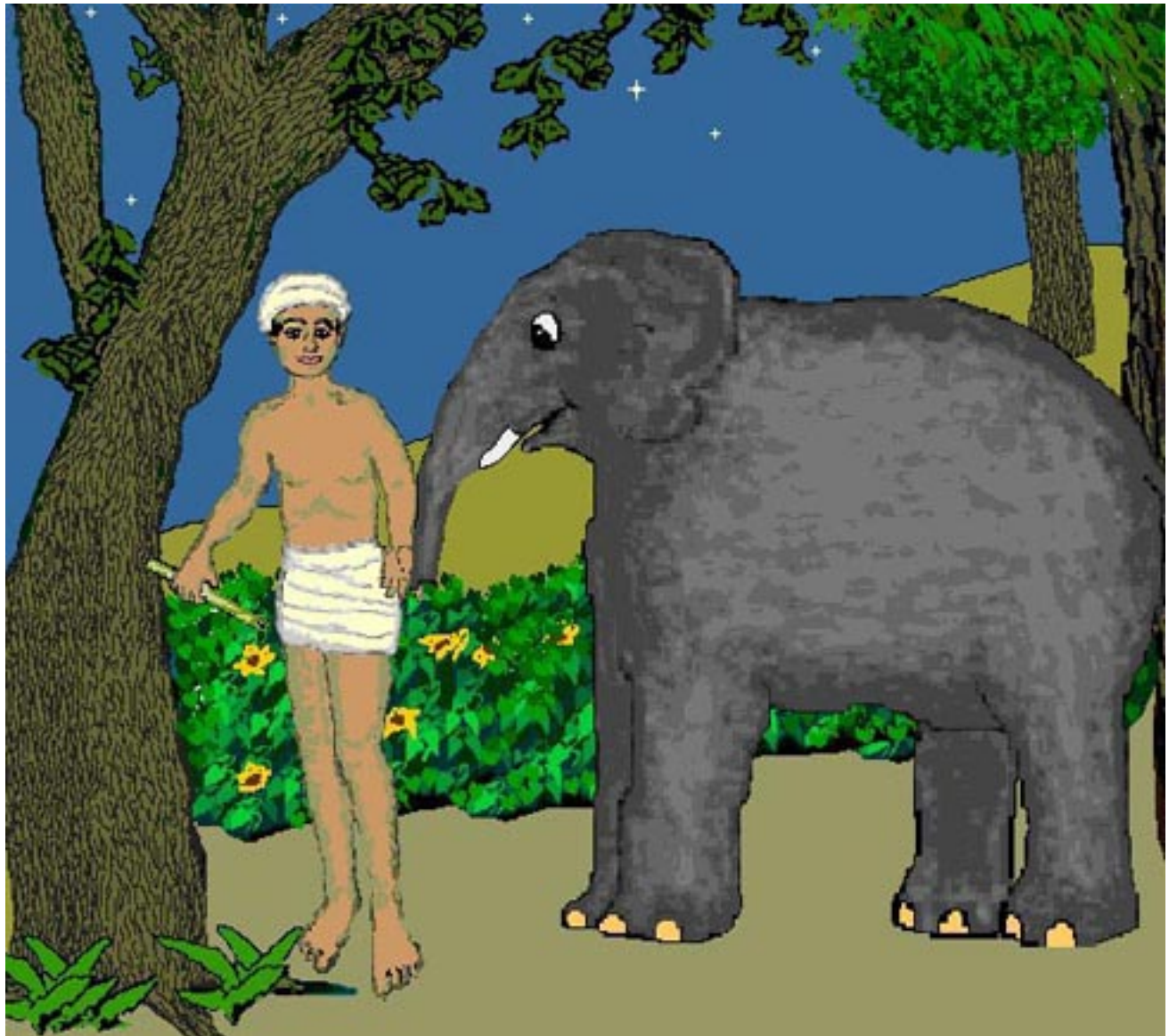
The words of the old timer quieted the elephants, who were now feeling a little shamefaced. One by one, they began twitching their ears and wagging their trunks, which in Elephantese was their way of saying, "Thank you very much, I am now off to bed," and soon the leaves in the trees rustled with their

snoring.

Amber, the elephant, was feeling very bored and a little lonesome and wandered away from the herd. Mahout, the elephant boy, saw Amber disappearing into the trees. Where can that crazy elephant be off to? Mahout began to follow Amber down the path to offer him a juicy stick of sugar cane.

"What's wrong, Amber?" he asked.

"Oh," said Amber, "I'm okay, I'm just restless, I guess."



As Amber's trunk curled around the cane, Mahout saw Amber smiling.

Later that evening in front of the fire, Mahout was telling the rest of his family about Amber, "...he turned to me and actually smiled."

"Ah!" said his mother. "It's lucky to see an elephant smile."

The next evening, Mahout looked up to see Amber edging gradually away

from the herd.

"What makes an elephant wander off in the night?" he asked his Uncle, who was thought to be very wise in the way of elephants.

His Uncle scratched his head, "You've heard that an elephant never forgets? Maybe he has had an experience that teaches him to wander off at night where he can be alone."

"Maybe so. But I think Amber is a dreamer," replied Mahout, "I wouldn't be surprised if he followed in the footsteps of Uncle Arthur, after all, he is his grandson."

In the meantime, Dickens, the Jungle Cat, stirred restlessly on his cushion, "Something's up, no doubt about it, my whiskers are all of a quiver. But what could it be?"



He straightened his whiskers and crept forward, low on the ground like a tiger, ready to spring out if anyone gave him any trouble. Dickens felt something nudging his nose, and he sprang forward to find himself gazing into the startled eyes of Amber.

Dickens said, "Hello, Amber, what's going on to-



night, there seems to be a restlessness in the air?"

"Dickens!" gasped Amber. "I wish you wouldn't jump out like that. It gave me a real fright. I was just taking a walk. I like to get away from the herd every once in a while. Would you like to join me?"

"Thank you," said Dickens, "don't mind if I do and sorry I startled you."

The two strolled on past the hay store and up to the meadow on Pine Top.

"I think we need an adventure," said Amber, "nothing ever happens here, we're just kept busy lugging logs down to the river. And everyone is complaining all the time, it's so boring"

"You should meet Chitterbox, he's a hummingbird, and a good friend of mine. Perhaps he has some ideas, I don't know where we might have an adventure around here."

"I'd like to meet him, could you arrange to include me the next time he calls?" said Amber.

"Certainly," responded Dickens, "my pleasure. Would tomorrow be okay? Hummingbirds are always asleep by nightfall."

The next morning, Amber and Dickens waited eagerly for Chitterbox to put in an appearance. Chitterbox was delayed on his daily rounds of the flowers, but turned up eventually.

"Hello Dickens," he chittered, hovering before them. "Who is the elephant?"



"Allow me to present Amber, a good friend of mine," said the cat.

"Happy to meet you," responded Chitterbox.

"Charmed," said Amber.

Matters of etiquette observed, Amber presented his problem, "Nothing ever happens around here, I think we need an adventure, travel, they say broadens one. Do you have any ideas?"

"Hum," said Chitterbox, "Dickens wants to be a writer, and he needs a publisher, I am just restless myself, what say all three of us take a trip to Calcutta?"

Amber heaved a sigh. "Calcutta is just down the road, I've already been there."

"Are you saying then," said Chitterbox, "that instead of bemoaning your fate, you are willing to brave all perils in the quest for your destiny—like Sinbad, the sailor, in the Arabian Nights?"

"Would that include adventures?" said Amber enthusiastically.

"Very likely it would," responded Chitterbox cautiously.

"Why don't you write to Uncle Arthur?" suggested Dickens. "Perhaps he has some ideas on the subject, after all he's traveled the world."

"He's really my grandfather, but everyone calls him Uncle Arthur. And yes, I may write to him. Who is Sinbad the sailor?" said an intrigued Amber.

"Well," said Chitterbox, "Sinbad lived long ago in a faraway land. It's rather

Elephants and Friends
Elephant Hill
India



Dear Elephants and Friends
Greetings! I invite you all to London for a holiday.

Best Wishes,

Uncle Arthur

PS: Please bring winter woolies and sensible shoes

a long story to tell just now, but he had many adventures, and eventually found his destiny and true worth."

But half way around the world, Uncle Arthur had not forgotten the elephants toiling in the jungle. He had thought and thought, and finally, it occurred to him just what to do.

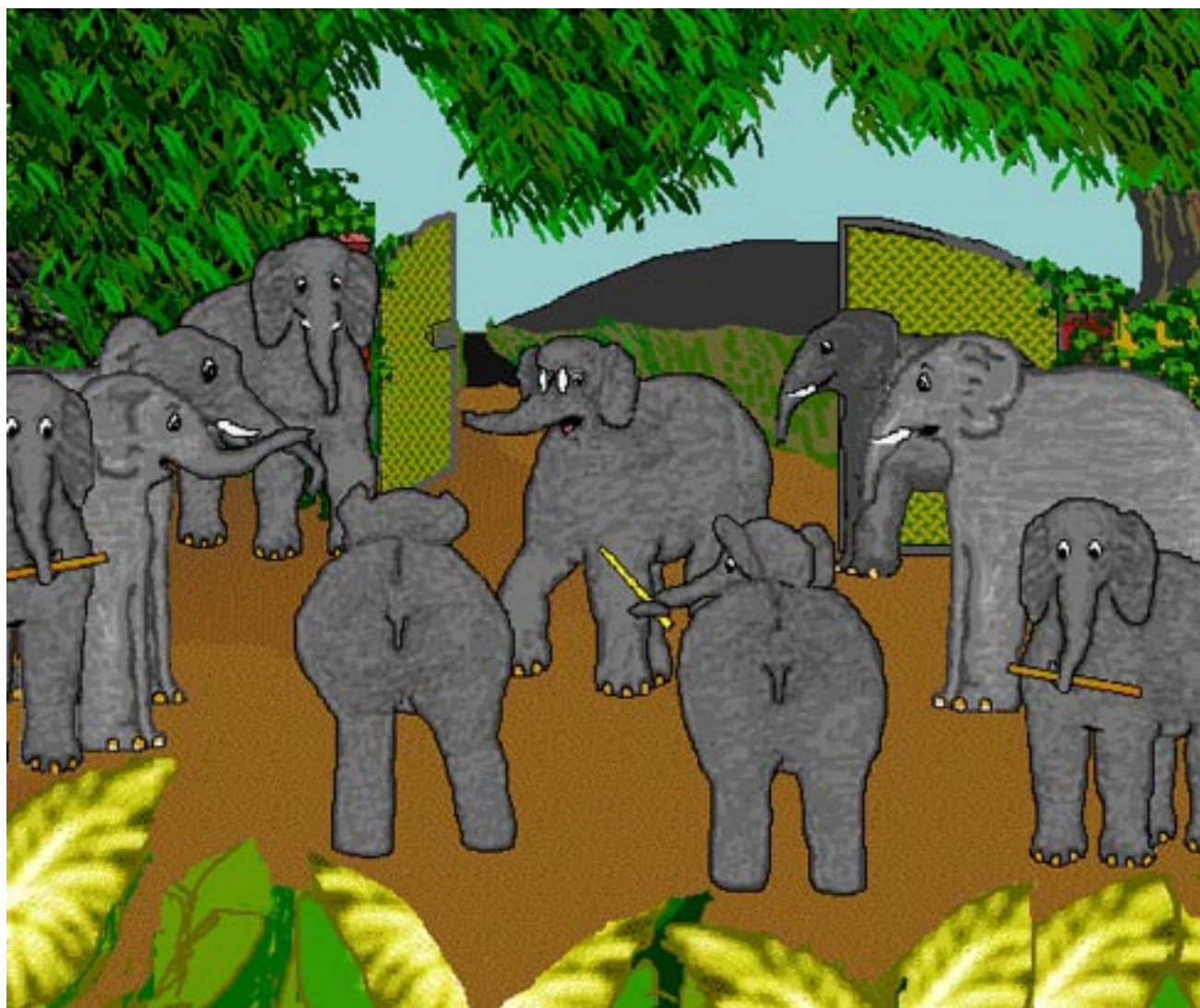
Amber was still thinking about writing to Uncle Arthur, when Mahout came up the path to Elephant Hill carrying a postcard.

The elephants pricked up their ears as Mahout rang his bell and shouted, "Gather round! News from Uncle Arthur, gather round everybody."

The elephants trundled forward and gazed in rapt attention at the enormous card:

Elephants and Friends, Elephant Hill, India: Dear Elephants and Friends, greetings! I invite you all to London for a holiday. Best wishes, Uncle Arthur
PS: Please bring winter woolies and sensible shoes.

The elephants were delighted to receive such a Grand Invitation. It certainly made a pleasant change from, "Please bring your own chair and sugar cane."



They were feeling very pleased with themselves until Amber said excitedly, "When do we go?"

"When do we go?" snorted an older elephant, "I'll tell you when we'll go, my lad, we'll go when we're good and ready to go and not before."

"Quite right," chimed in someone else, "Some of us have responsibilities, important responsibilities. While we're away enjoying ourselves with Uncle Arthur, who will carry the logs?"

"Oh," said Amber glumly, "I never thought of that."

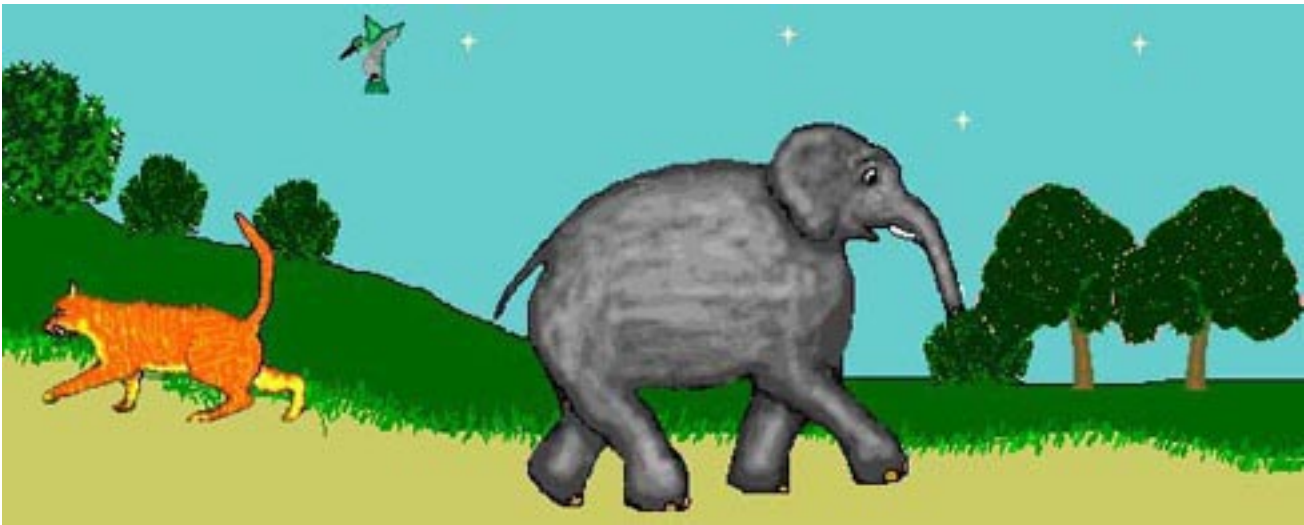
"Well, there you are, you have to think of things like that. Now it may be all well and proper for Uncle Arthur to roam the world, but what would happen to us if we got far away from here and the sugar cane ran out."

At the mention of the sugar cane running out, a ripple of consternation ran through the group of elephants

"That's right," said an elephant mournfully, "it would be a sorry state of affairs."

The initial pleasure of Uncle Arthur's invitation was beginning to dim. In fact, it was becoming a worry, a worry that floated over them like a huge cloud.

Amber wandered away from the herd and was soon on his way to visit Dickens in his tent. He found him with Chitterbox, and announced that they had all been invited to the London Zoo by Uncle Arthur. The news met with a completely different reception by the would-be-adventurers.



"Let's see now," chattered the hummingbird, "it will be winter in England, and I have to get myself toggged out in woolies, hummingbirds are most susceptible to bad weather. I have my maps from the Great Migration so they will guide us."

"Sensible shoes? I have my traveling pads, do you think they will be all right? I could take along a sweater," mused Dickens.

"How will I get across the ocean?" mourned Amber.

"Easy," chittered the hummingbird, "we'll take a ship! I happen to know of a ship called the Bombay Star, sailing soon for England."

"What!" exclaimed Amber in astonishment. "How do you know it sails for England?"

"We have our ways, I just happened to be listening when the destination and the time was mentioned," said Chitterbox, "you can rely on me. To catch the Bombay Star, we must leave very early, before sunrise tomorrow. So don't forget to set your alarm clocks tonight."

They all agreed to meet just before sunrise at the summer house.

"Let's get on with our packing," cried Amber.

"Don't forget to bring several lunches, you're the large one, you can carry quite a supply," chittered the hummingbird, as he flew off to take care of his own preparations.

In the early morning hours, Dickens and Chitterbox arrived at the summer house with their bags.

Dickens said, "I hope everything is all right with Amber, he's late."

Half an hour passed and still no Amber and Dickens said, "I think you had



better go and find Amber, maybe he's had second thoughts about going."

Chitterbox whirled up and away, heading for the Elephant Long House.

He flew in the front door and in the gloom, he saw Amber surrounded by a glorious confusion of clothing, household items, traveling trunks, suitcases and bags.

"Oh, Chitterbox," puffed Amber, "I've been up all night doing my packing and I'm still not finished. Do you think I will need my folding chair and table?"

"No," said Chitterbox firmly, "all you will need is one bag of essentials."

And a few minutes later, Amber had his bag packed and they were ready to go.

Some of the other elephants were beginning to stir and a sleepy voice said, "What's all the hubbub about."

"We're off to London," said Amber.



"London?" said a chorus of sleepy voices and thinking they were dreaming the elephants pulled their blankets over their heads and dozed off again.

Amber and Chitterbox hurried up the path to meet Dickens and a few minutes later, they were closing the gate of Elephant Hill behind them.

As they took the path to town, an elephant shouted over the fence, "You'll regret it, Uncle Arthur was always a bit barmy, things are peaceful now that he's not here."

But Amber, Dickens and Chitterbox took the long dusty path down to the harbor where the Bombay Star was docked. It was an uneventful trip to Calcutta but the friends made it merry and lively with excited talk.

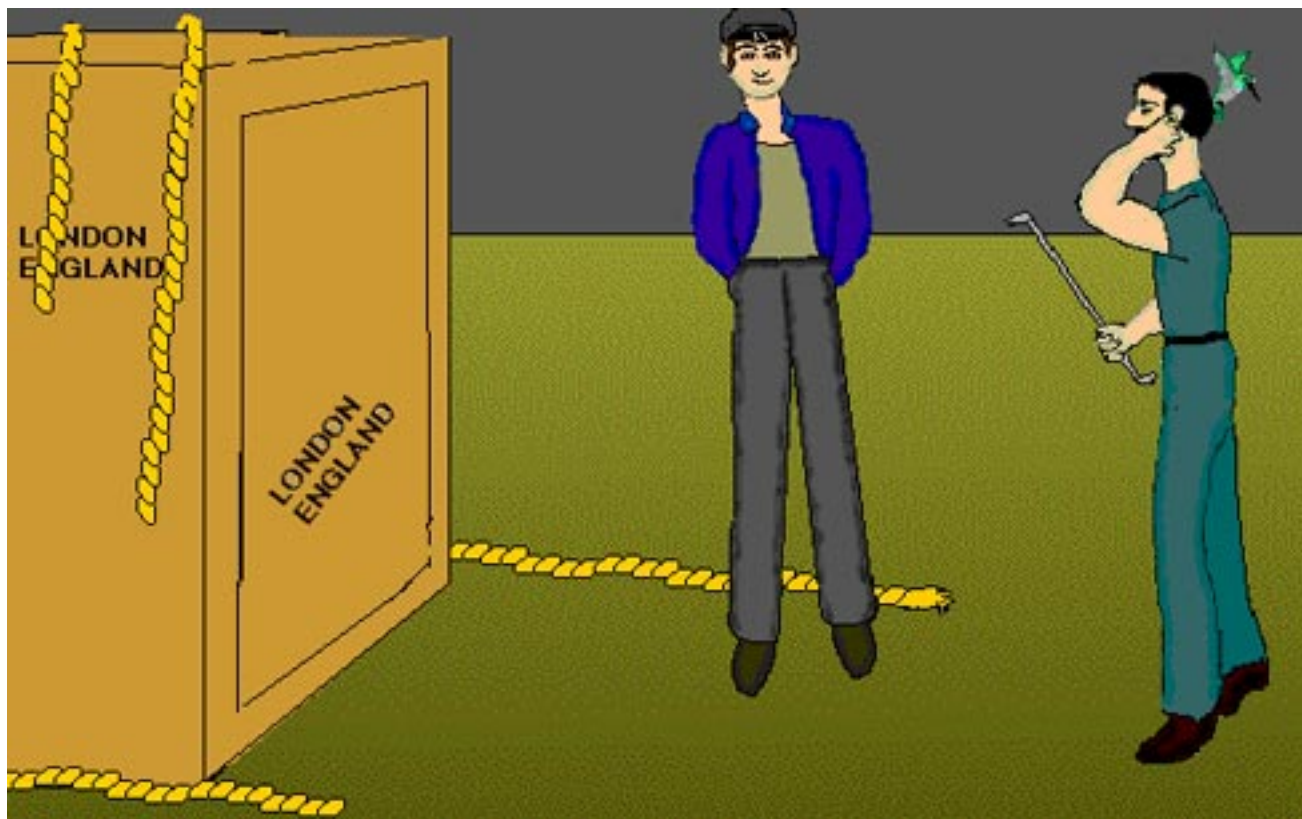
At the harbor, Amber could see packing crates clearly marked London, England and felt a small thrill. "I think I could just fit in one of those if I squeezed down and folded my legs," he whispered.

"Quick, let us find an empty one marked London. It's easier for us, no one would notice one cat, more or less, and Chitterbox can easily fly aboard," said Dickens.

Chitterbox and Dickens managed to get Amber safely into one of the crates. They then sat patiently behind a wall of crates waiting for Amber to be loaded on to the ship. A man came up and tried to hoist the crate aboard but the rope snapped and the crate fell to the ground.

"Ouch," they heard Amber cry.

Dickens and Chitterbox looked at each other in dismay.



"What on earth have they got in these crates," said the man, "this one weighs a ton."

Another man came up and they both starting examining the crate.

"Did you hear something? It sounded like it was coming from inside."

Dickens anxiously peered out and saw that they were beginning to pry open the crate.

All of a sudden, Chitterbox was whirring around the men like an angry bee.

"Ah," said one of the men, dancing up and down, "I think a bee just stung me on the ear."

"Bees!" declared both men, backing away from the crate and laughing.

"That's one crate, I think we had better not open," said one man, "It's a shipment of bees. What you heard was the hum of bees, angry bees."

The two walked away chuckling to themselves. But no one tried to lift the



crate again. In fact, one of the men—Dickens could see this by his gestures—warned another about the crate.

Dickens and Chitterbox waited patiently for a few hours. Dickens was about to give up hope when all of the crates, including the one that contained Amber, were hauled into a net. They watched while a big crane lifted them aboard the *Bombay Star*.

“Whew, that’s a relief,” remarked Dickens and added, “I never knew you could imitate a bee.”

“It’s nothing,” said Chitterbox modestly, “it’s all part of the training of the average hummingbird.”

Later on, Dickens sneaked up the gangway and disappeared below decks. It was simplest for Chitterbox to get on board, he just flew up to the crow’s nest.

Little did the captain realize when he left port, that he was sailing with an elephant, a cat, and a hummingbird. Deep in the hold, Amber was holding his breath. In fact, he could hardly breathe at all. He heard the rumbling of the



engine and surmised that they were under way. Timidly, he poked his trunk out and saw that the hold was packed with crates.

"Amber?" whispered Dickens, "where are you?"

"I'm here," answered Amber, stepping out of the crate.

All that day the Bombay Star chugged peacefully across the Bay of Bengal and through to the calm waters of the Indian Ocean. Down in one of the holds, Amber and Dickens were becoming acquainted with their new surroundings.

They had dismantled Amber's crate and set up a little table and were now tucking into their lunch boxes which Chitterbox had insisted they take with them. The food cheered them up, and as Amber said to Dickens, "life on the ocean waves is quite jolly."

Suddenly in the murky darkness, they heard a familiar whirring sound. It was Chitterbox, joining the party. "How are you fellows doing down here?"

"We're fine, come and have something to eat, we've set up the hummingbird feeder like you said."

Chitterbox happily sipped from the feeder, Amber and Dickens went on munching in the gloom of the lower decks.

After several days at sea, high up near the bridge of the ship, Sparks, the radio operator, was twiddling the dials of his radio receiver when a faint voice said: "Attention all shipping...urgent weather report for all ships in the area of 12.00 S 50.00 E." Sparks sighed, and looked up the given latitude and longitude of the ship's location.

"Jumping Catfish!" said a trembling Sparks, "that's where we are."

He jumped up from his chair, rushed along the passageway and up the steps to see the captain on the bridge.

Meanwhile, down in the hold, Amber, Dickens and Chitterbox were just finishing off a most excellent tea.

"Very good indeed," said Dickens licking his lips, "now what say we all go off for a little bit of an explore."

"A very good idea," chorused Amber.

The two of them sauntered off, with Chitterbox flitting back and forth.



Chitterbox hovered by a large porthole, gazing out over the blue and green waters. In the distance, he saw a swarm of black clouds gathering on the horizon. Larger and larger the clouds grew until all the sunbeams scattered in panic.

Chitterbox started chittering so excitedly that it was difficult to understand what he was saying.

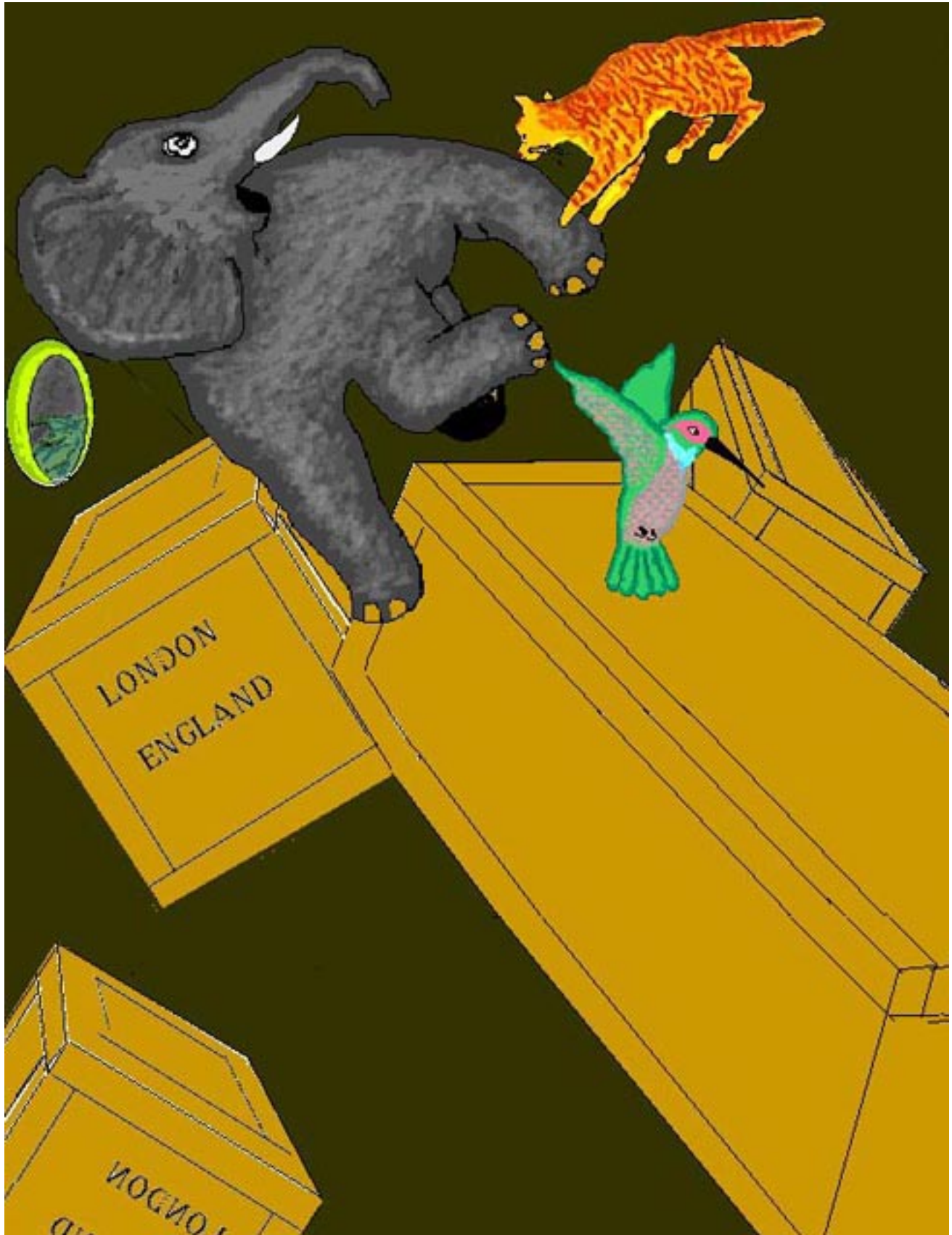
Amber, a little alarmed said, "What is it?"

Both Dickens and Amber peered anxiously through the porthole.

"Cyclone," shrilled Chitterbox.

"Is that good?" Amber said hopefully.

"That depends," said Chitterbox, "the ship should avoid it. But it seems aw-



fully close.”

Dickens started to say— “And what do we do now?”—when the invisible hand of the storm lifted the ship high in the air and twirled it around. Down in the hold, Dickens and Amber somersaulted through the air along with the crates and even Chitterbox momentarily lost his bearings. The invisible hand tossed them carelessly down and the crates bounced recklessly along the floor of the hold.

“Ooooooooooh,” cried Amber as he sprawled on his back. The Cyclone reached out its windy hand and pummeled the sea, sending waves spiraling into the air. Wave after wave swept over the ship, and the wind whistled and howled. Water was beginning to swish and swirl around Amber’s feet when something nudged him.

“Come on, matey! Quick!” said a grizzled old rat in bell bottoms and sailor’s cap. “Up on deck, as fast as you can!”



And the rat sped through the crates with practiced ease with the three of them trailing behind. All around them, they could hear doors banging, plates crashing, and the cries of alarmed voices, "Abandon ship, abandon ship."

The captain, who was organizing the lifeboats, stared in amazement as the rat, Chitterbox and Dickens tumbled out the hatch and onto the deck.

"Help, help," cried Amber, "I'm stuck."

His trunk was on deck, but the rest of him remained stubbornly below. The captain and half a dozen sailors sprang forward and grasped Amber's trunk and pulled.

"Ouch," shrieked Amber.

"One last pull," ordered the Captain, "and we should have him out."

With a final effort, the rest of Amber was pulled up on deck.



The Captain rubbed his eyes in disbelief and said, "Well, if this don't beat the cat's whiskers, a cat, a rat, well, of course, a rat. But an elephant and a hummingbird?"

The ship began listing badly, and the Captain roared above the howling wind, "Get the elephant into the lifeboat with the second mate, the hummingbird, cat and rat can come in with me."

A few minutes later, everyone was safely lowered in the lifeboats. There was a mighty roar and the Bombay Star slid beneath the waves down to Davy Jones Locker.

The Cyclone rushed to another part of the ocean and the lifeboats bobbed about on a calm sea. Everyone was now beginning to take stock.

Amber sat hunched over in the lifeboat, flapping his ears wildly, crying, "Marooned, marooned in the prime of my life!"

"Steady on shipmate," said the second mate kindly, "no time for that now, pick up an oar and start rowing."

Dickens shrank down at the bottom of the lifeboat clutching his briefcase. Only Chitterbox was calm and unaffected by it all. Suddenly, he flew high up into the sky and was soon completely out of sight.

Seeing him go, Dickens sighed, "I wonder if he has abandoned us."



But far up in the sky, Chitterbox pulled out one his tiny maps, made a few calculations and flew back to the lifeboat. He fluttered down onto the shoulder of the Captain.

"According to my observations and calculations, Captain, uh?"

“Captain Briggs,” answered Captain Briggs. “What is it? I have no time for tomfoolery or chattering hummingbirds. I have to get us all to land safely, and I have no idea where land is.”

Chitterbox said, in his most business-like manner, “There should be an is-



land about” and he pointed with his long beak to a point on his tiny map, “there.”

The Captain squinted hard, but could not see the map because it was so tiny. He thought hard and hesitated, but for some odd reason, he had faith in the sincerity of the little bird.

“A hummingbird navigator, eh?” he said. “Well, let’s hope you are right.”

Captain Briggs gave orders for the lifeboats to follow Chitterbox’s directions. They rowed and rowed until everyone was exhausted. Captain Briggs finally called for a break, and the men pulled in their oars and rested. Amber, who had taken to rowing at such a furious pace that the other lifeboat had trouble keeping up, was looking a little anxious.

“Take it easy, my little elephant friend,” Captain Briggs called. “Let’s not get

too far ahead of ourselves.”

Amber looked crestfallen and mumbled, as he seen the sailors do, “Aye, aye, Captain.”

Suddenly, Chitterbox got very excited and cried out, “Look! Look!” as he flew high above the lifeboats. There in the far distance, he had seen the waving branches of palm trees and a sparkling rim of golden sand.

“Land Ahoy,” called one of the men, who had also seen the same sight.

“I see it, I see it,” said Captain Briggs using his spyglass, “pull hard for shore, shipmates, there’s a long row ahead.”

As they reached shore, Captain Briggs and the other sailors leapt into the foaming water and pulled the lifeboats up on the beach. Everyone rested now, it



had been a long rough haul.

The warmth of the sun finally revived their spirits. Captain Briggs set Amber to pulling off palm fronds, and the sailors made rough shelters where they could rest and sleep. Disappearing into the trees, Chitterbox and Dickens were off to see what they could find in the way of food. Captain Briggs became alarmed, seeing that they had gone on alone, and was about to send two of the sailors after them. But the pair returned quite soon, their quest had been a huge success. They returned to get Amber to help haul a pile of coconuts, pineapples, bananas, and even some wild sugar cane. One of the sailors fishing off the surf, caught a small fish for Dickens, which delighted him. It was a relief to find that this island had sufficient food stuffs.

That night under a tropical moon, the lucky survivors either slept or sat qui-



etly talking around the comforting fire. Everyone was saddened by the loss of the Bombay Star, particularly the Captain, but as he said philosophically, "At least me shipmates are safe and sound."

Captain Briggs leaned contentedly back against a palm tree and puffed away on his pipe as if he didn't have a care in the world, "It reminds me of a time on the old South China Sea run, when our ship—the Princess o' the Isles—ran aground on a desert island. We lived in a grass hut and survived on a diet of coconuts. They didn't find us for nearly two years."

"Two years!" gasped Amber, "but this wasn't in our plan at all, we should be having adventures."

"Oh, I don't doubt it," said Captain Briggs, sympathetically, "I'm all for adventures myself, but it will do no harm to prepare yourself for a long stay, just in case of the worst."

"Oh dear, oh dear," muttered Amber, who then lapsed into a worried silence. Dickens, who never wasted good sleeping time on worrying, was dreaming he was back in his tent on Elephant Hill.

Of all the survivors, only Chitterbox was completely unmoved by it all. He



sat talking with Captain Briggs about Trade Winds, Cyclones and Tornadoes.

Until at last the Captain said, "You don't seem at all worried, my little friend. There's no guarantee we'll be picked up soon, you know."

But Chitterbox, most probably understood their situation better than anyone.

"I know this island, we stopped here many years ago on the Great Migration. There are many places like this, that's why we hummingbirds never get lost, we have our maps," but the hummingbird was fast falling asleep. "I think the people...call it Madagascar..." and he drifted off, completely rigid, into a state near hibernation, which hummingbirds do when they sleep every night.

"Madagascar, I recall taking shore leave on Madagascar," said the Captain, and he was about to launch into one of his tales of the sea and ports, when he suddenly exclaimed, "MADAGASCAR! Did you say Madagascar?"

But the hummingbird would not wake, not until morning. And understanding this, the Captain woke the other sailors.

"Boys," he said, "the hummingbird says this is Madagascar. I thought this was an unknown desert island. There's a port in either direction we go in, I say, we waste no time, I'm for moving on tonight."

Dickens woke up, as cats usually do, but Amber slept on. Let him sleep, Dickens thought, the sailors have no ship, if they find one, we would only be a burden.

"Goodbye," he called, "I guess this is the parting of ways. It's been a real pleasure to have met you."

The sailors hesitated, but reluctantly agreed and they glanced at Amber.

"I'll tell him you said Goodbye," said Dickens, "Let him sleep."

"If I get a ship," called Captain Briggs, "I'll be back for you. I say if..," Captain Briggs looked a little sad.

The sailors departed and scurrying after them, he saw the rat who had warned them to get on deck. I guess he is, after all, a sea faring rat, mused Dickens, and yawning elaborately, was soon soundly asleep again.

Amber woke in the morning and was halfway through breakfast before he missed the sailors. Dickens told him what had happened the night before.

"I guess we're on our own in Madagascar," said Amber, "isn't it exciting?"

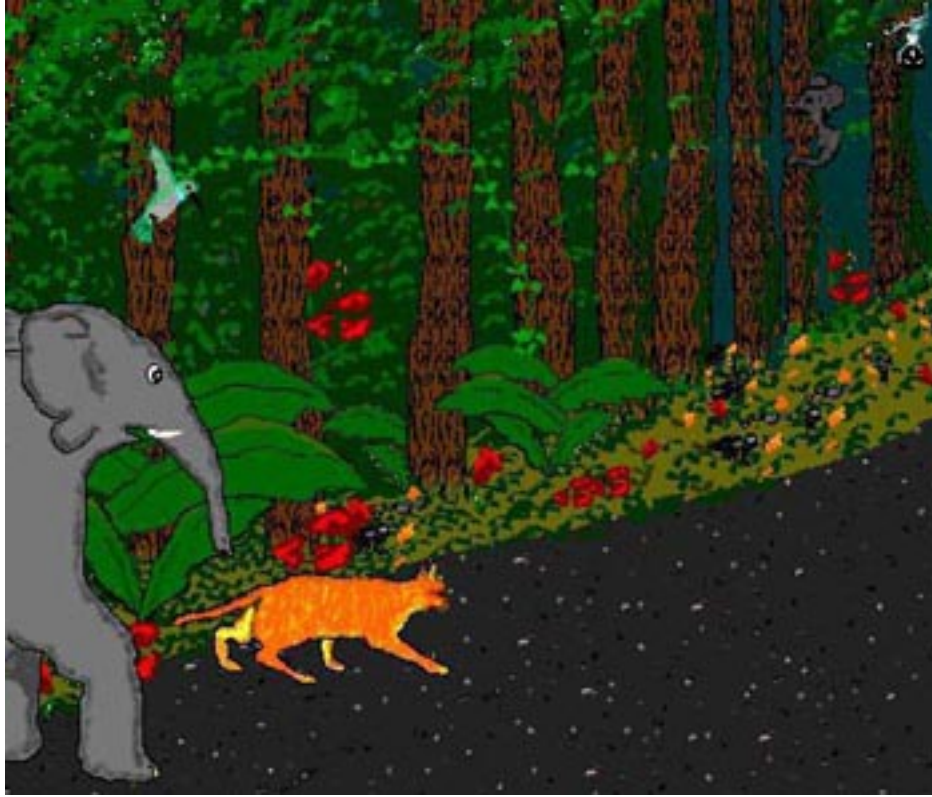
Dickens was not sure about this, he felt somewhat uneasy, he would rather be on board a ship sailing safely to England.

"If we stay here, we'll never get to London," Dickens said. "We need a plan."

Amber sighed, "Well, you have to admit it is romantic."

Chitterbox whirred up and landed on a nearby twig. "There's plenty of flowers on Madagascar, lovely nectar in all of them, it's a hummingbird's paradise. I saw a road while I was having breakfast, it's not far from here."

"A road," said Amber scrambling to his feet, "I wonder what's at the end of it."



*Welcome to Part One of
Elephant Hill and The Path
of Light. Our story continues when
our heroes encounter some dark forces
and, for the first time, actually see the
"path of light." But in the meantime,
Uncle Arthur is having some unforeseen
problems at the London Zoo. See what
happens in Part Two of Elephant Hill.*



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