

Deep in her hole in the forest Jub heard the noise that the children made. Her heart was as sore as toothache. All night long the children cried or asked for the light to be left on or refused to sleep on their own or wet the bed. Jub rocked back and forth in her hole, moaning with sorrow. When dawn came it grew quieter, and poor exhausted Jub fell fast asleep.

As she slept, she dreamed of a Golden Pen which could write on night itself, and when she awoke in the evening there was the Golden Pen on the little table beside Jub's bed. Quickly, without even thinking, Jub seized the pen and set off into the forest.



It grew dark. The stars whispered to themselves in the black sky. When Jub came near to the spot where the witch had snatched her sack she stopped. She wondered what to do. She held the Golden Pen between her fingers and drew a question mark on the night air. It floated before her, a perfect gold?, glowing in the darkness.

Suddenly Jub knew exactly what to do. She would write her own Happy Ending on the night! She held tightly to the Golden Pen and began. Every word she wrote shone out in perfect golden handwriting ...





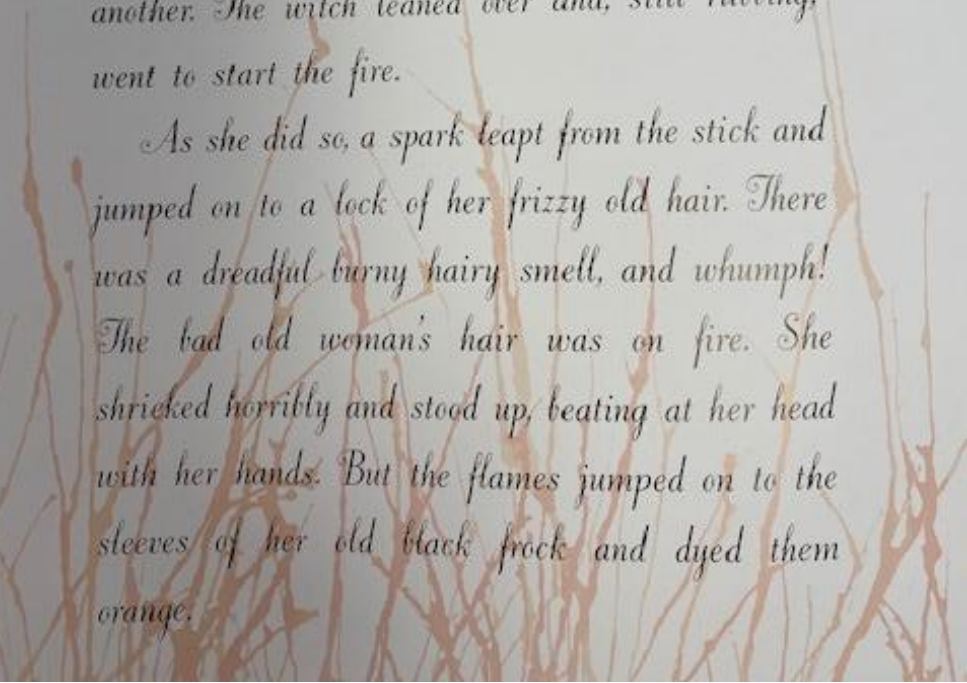
The witch lived in the trunk of a dead tree in the darkest, thorniest part of the forest. When she had first opened the sack of Happy Endings she had been furious. They were worthless to a witch. They were boring and stupid. She had flung the sack into the corner of her lair and gone out again to bite the head off any small bird she could catch and crunch its beak between her long yellow teeth.

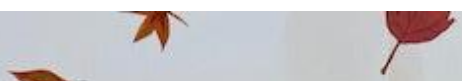
But tonight the witch had decided that she was going to burn the sack of Happy Endings to make a fire for herself. She was going to dance around that fire and shout out terrible bad words and then drink poison-berry juice (her favourite tippie) and smoke a clay pipe.



So she lugged the sack outside, added a few dried leaves and twigs, then squatted down and began to rub two sticks together to make a spark to light the fire. Her straggly white hair hung in front of her walnut face as she did so. Before long the rapid movement of her witchy hands had made a spark. Then another. And another. The witch leaned over and, still rubbing, went to start the fire.

As she did so, a spark leapt from the stick and jumped on to a lock of her frizzy old hair. There was a dreadful burny hairy smell, and whumph! The bad old woman's hair was on fire. She shrieked horribly and stood up, beating at her head with her hands. But the flames jumped on to the sleeves of her old black frock and dyed them orange.



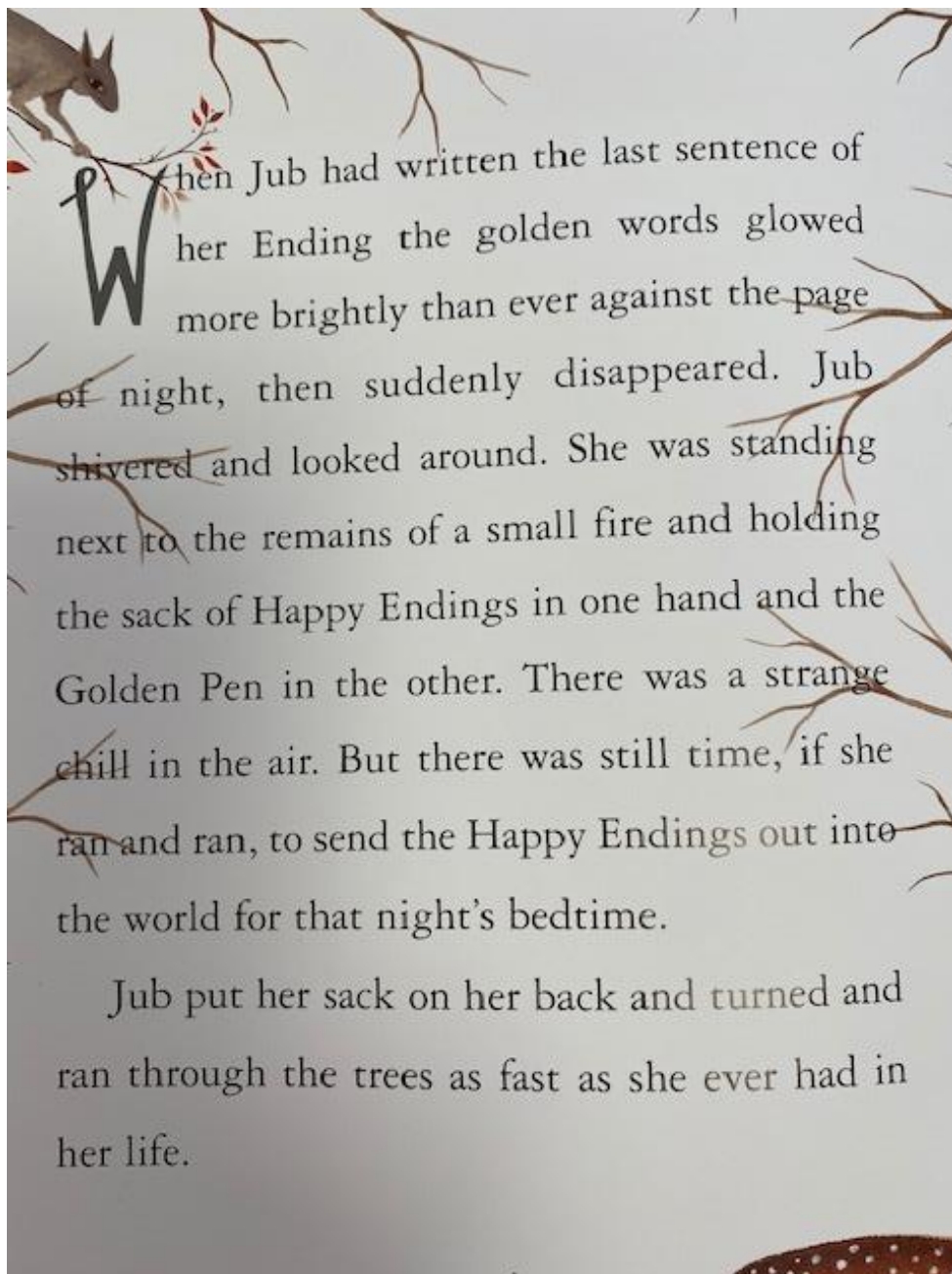


The witch danced crazily around the fire, singing hideously. The flames danced with her, cheek to cheek, step by step, arm in arm, 1-2-3, 1-2-3. The witch's screams scattered the sleeping birds from the trees in a panic of wings. Jub heard the awful noise and smelled a strange, salty, burning smell drifting through the trees. She followed her nose and it led her to the middle of the forest.

At first she thought she had stumbled upon a fire, spitting and crackling like the breath of a dragon. But then the fire opened its jaws and roared and she saw it was the witch burning to death.

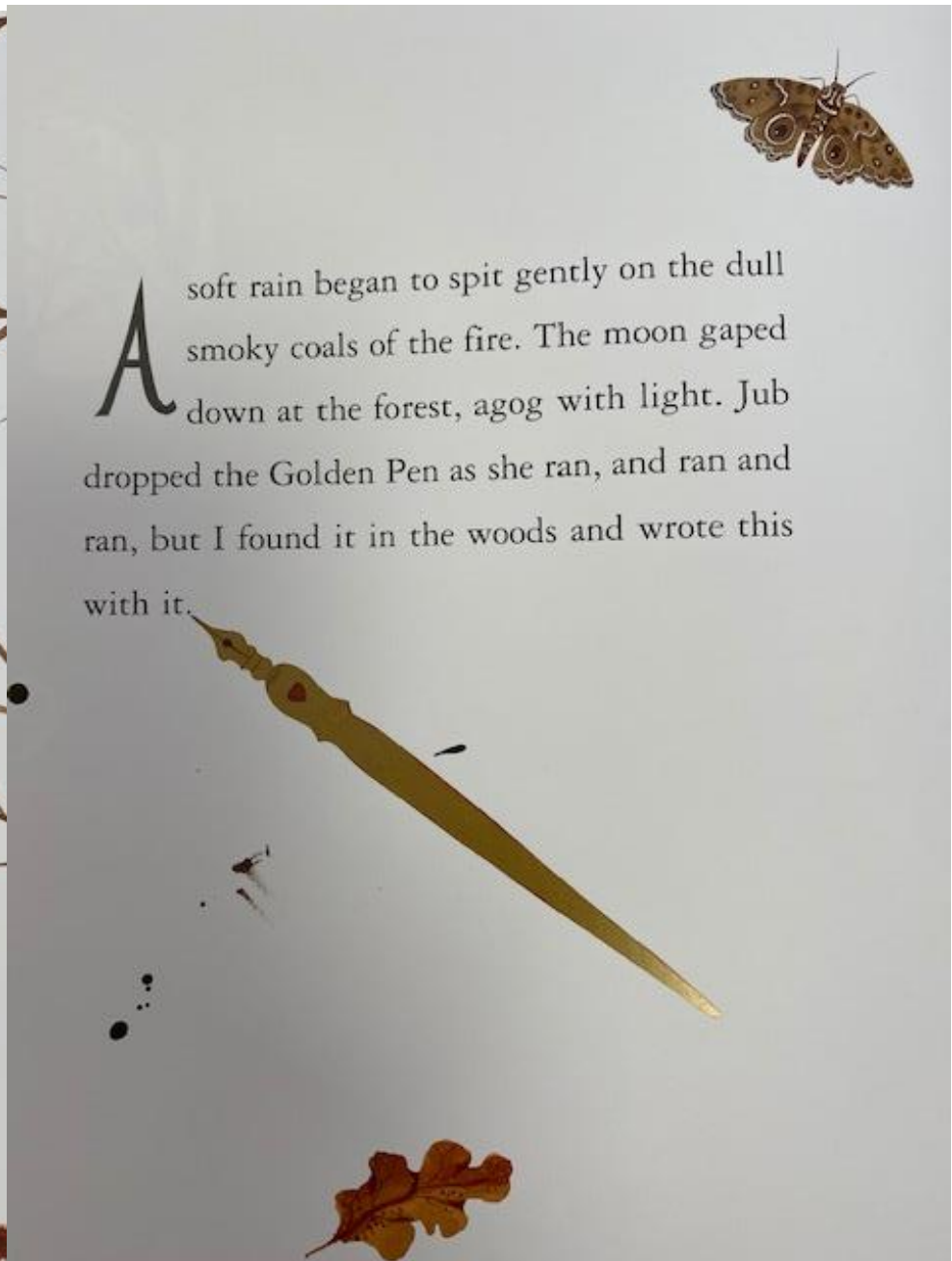


There was nothing Jub could do, even if she had wanted to. She stared in horror into the witch's small red eyes until they were burned completely black and the witch collapsed in a sullen hiss of ash and glowing cinders. The sack of Happy Endings lay on the ground beside her, covered in leaves and twigs but otherwise completely untouched. Jub grabbed the sack and ran as fast as her short legs could carry her towards the huge old oak tree on the other side of the forest ...



When Jub had written the last sentence of her Ending the golden words glowed more brightly than ever against the page of night, then suddenly disappeared. Jub shivered and looked around. She was standing next to the remains of a small fire and holding the sack of Happy Endings in one hand and the Golden Pen in the other. There was a strange chill in the air. But there was still time, if she ran and ran, to send the Happy Endings out into the world for that night's bedtime.

Jub put her sack on her back and turned and ran through the trees as fast as she ever had in her life.



As soft rain began to spit gently on the dull smoky coals of the fire. The moon gaped down at the forest, agog with light. Jub dropped the Golden Pen as she ran, and ran and ran, but I found it in the woods and wrote this with it.