CHAPTER



Tilly looked around. She wondered where on earth she was now! Everything looked strangely familiar and unfamiliar at the same time.

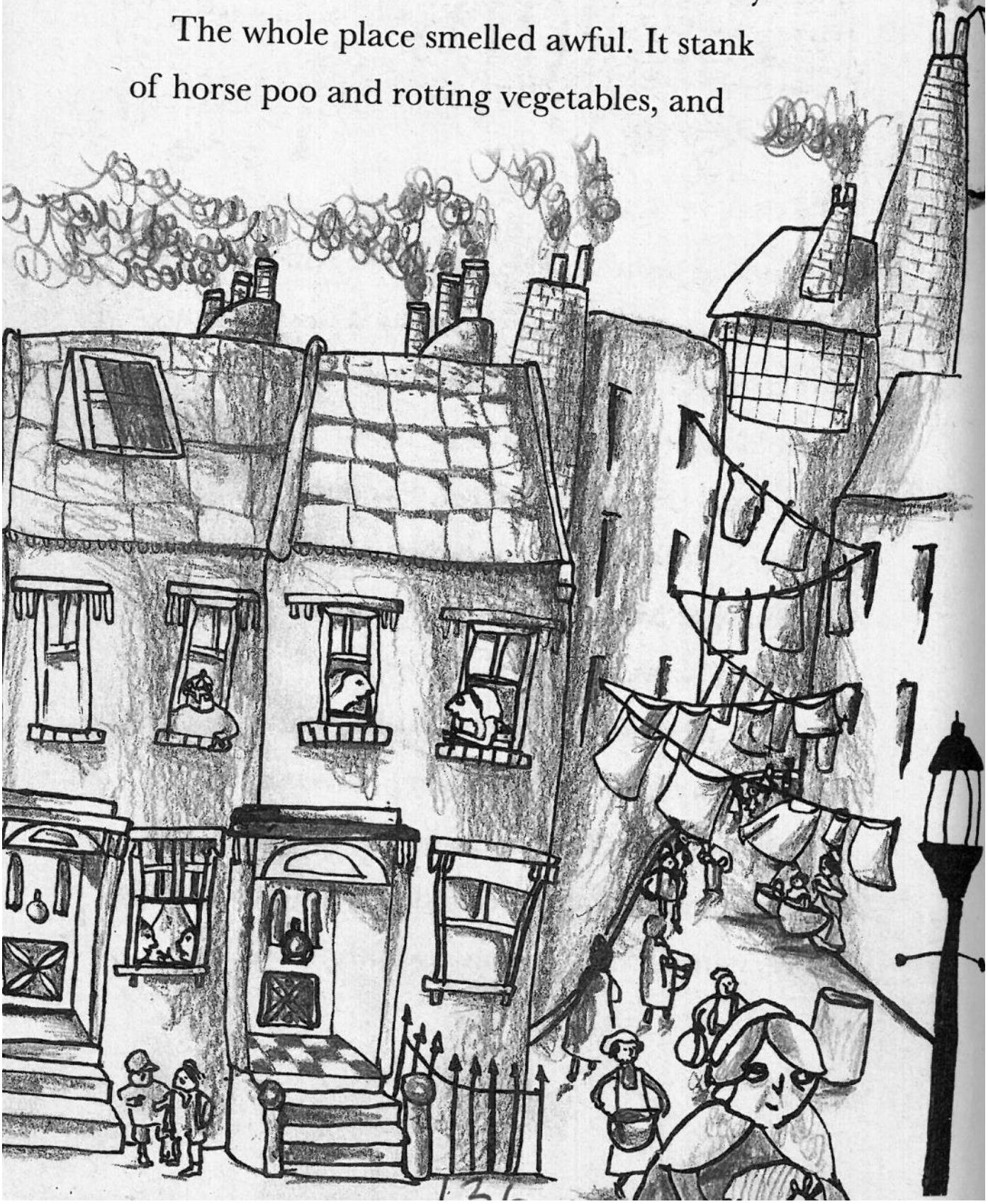
She was sitting on the edge of the pavement in a cramped and busy street. Everything was very dirty. It looked like the pictures of Victorian London that Miss Scarborough had put up on the classroom walls.

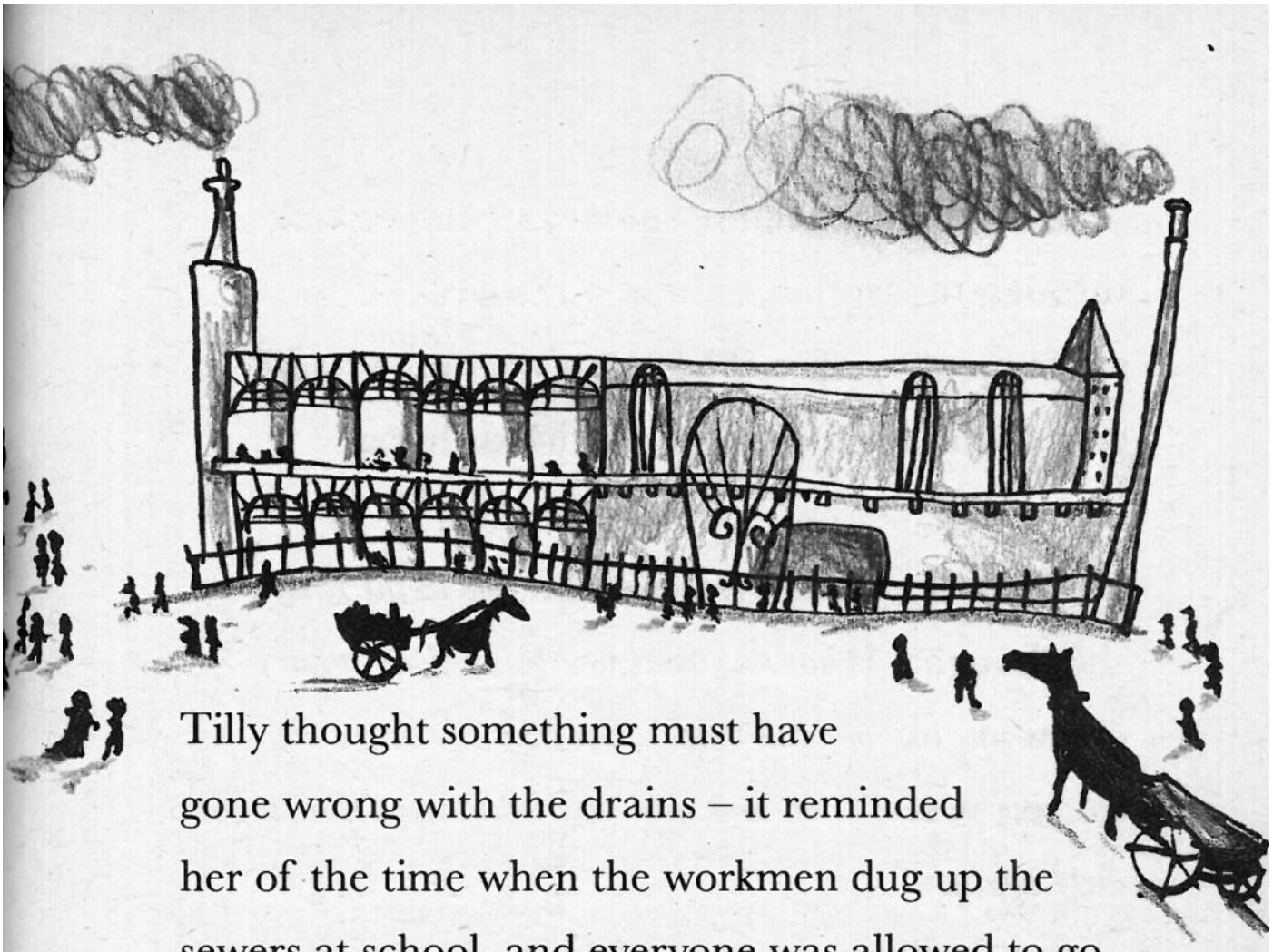
There were lots of horses pulling carriages and carts. On the pavements women were washing clothes and bed sheets in large tin buckets. Children in rags ran up and down the street; the very smallest were playing with hoops and

spinning tops, but many were carrying bundles, or selling things, or sweeping the street.

Tilly saw that a lot of the people didn't have any shoes, and that their clothes were filthy.

The whole place smelled awful. It stank of horse poo and rotting vegetables, and





Tilly thought something must have gone wrong with the drains – it reminded her of the time when the workmen dug up the sewers at school, and everyone was allowed to go home early.

She was sitting outside a house that looked a lot like her own house at 10 Railway Sidings. In fact the whole street reminded her of Railway Sidings, except there were houses on both sides here.

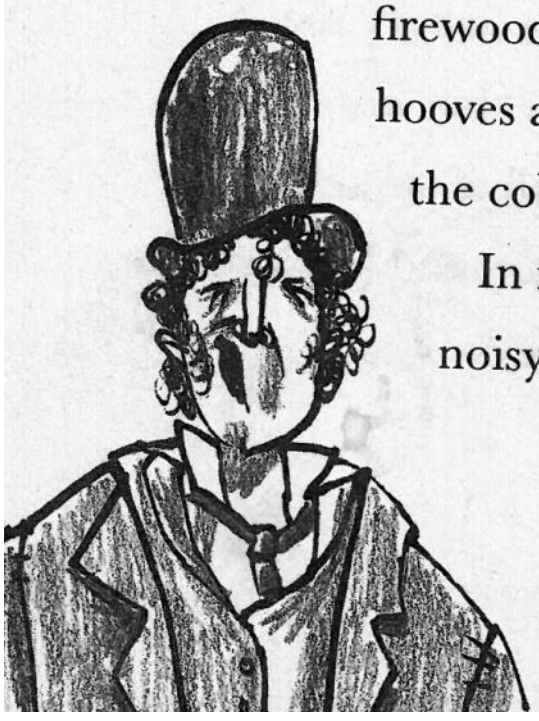
At the top of the street was a factory that looked just like the one at home, but instead of being closed this factory was full of noise and people and machines, with steam and black smoke billowing out of the big chimneys.

Tilly could smell the smoke; it was blowing through the clothes lines that crisscrossed the street up above her. The clean washing was getting dirty again as soon as it was hung out to dry.

What they need is a rotary clothes line in the back yard, she thought. *What they need is a 'souped-up' rotary clothes line like my dad made, then they could dry the washing in next to no time and take it indoors before it got dirty again.*

But thinking about her dad made her wonder where he was, and that made her a bit sad, so she tried not to think about him.

The whole street was very noisy: the factory was making a roaring sound and people were shouting out, selling pots and pans, or pies, or firewood; and the clatter of the horses' hooves and the metal cartwheels on the cobbled street was deafening.



In fact it was all just a bit too noisy, smelly and confusing for

Tilly, and for the first time since her mummy had died she started to cry.

Her dad didn't really like crying. 'Crying's not going to get us anywhere, is it? Best put on a brave face and get on with it,' he usually said.

Tilly thought he was probably right, but sometimes she just wanted a really good cry, and right now that's exactly what she did. She hadn't had a proper cry for so long, and once she got started she really let go. She had a real 'boohoo' of a cry, and before long her face was wet with salty tears and her nose was running.

'What you crying so hard about?' came a voice.

Tilly looked round. It was a boy about her own age. He was dressed in filthy ragged clothes and had no shoes. Any bits of his body that showed were covered in coal dust and soot. But he had a kind face.

'I never seen anyone cry so hard. If you cries any harder you'll likely start a river right here in the street!' he said with a cheeky grin.



Tilly could see that he was trying to cheer her up. She looked at him and he smiled broadly and put his hand on her shoulder to comfort her.

'My name's Jack. Can I help at all?' he asked.

His kindness made the world seem a better place, and slowly but surely Tilly stopped crying. Once she'd stopped completely she wiped her face on her sleeve.

'My best friend at school is called Jack,' she said.

'You go to school, do you? Cor, you're lucky. I never been to school. I'd love to learn reading and writing. Here, what's your name?'

