

Below is an extract from the story 'Leon and the place Between.' Written by Grahame Baker-Smith.

"I don't believe in magic," said Tom as he settled on the grass in the show tent. Around him the crowd waited impatiently for something to happen. "It's not real," hissed Pete. "It's only tricks." Little Mo looked disappointed.

"Shh now," whispered their brother Leon. "It will be magic. You have to believe. Look, it's going to begin." The lanterns went out. In the darkness the crowd fidgeted with excitement. There was a cough, a whisper and then a loud hush. At last a soft, blue glow lit the stage and the curtains twitched.

With a ripple of gold braid...the curtains slowly parted...

BANG! Three jugglers tumbled onto the stage to the pounding beat of a drum. Skittles flew, fast and furious, back and forth, up and over. Tambourines rattled, loud and louder; skittles spun, high and higher; the jugglers twisted, fast and faster. Then BANG the skittles went up but they didn't come down! Everybody cheered and clapped. The jugglers bowed and bounced away.

Once more there was only darkness.

Now one dim spotlight found a barrel organ, still and silent on the stage. Everyone held their breath. The handle began to turn but there was no hand upon it.

Note by note the tinkling song of a carousel started to dance from the pipes...

Up jumped a barrel organ monkey, all made of wood and tiny hinges. He beckoned the moon to light the mechanical toys...a red-eyed crocodile snapped at a running boy's heel. A ballerina turned on her pink satin shoe. Painted animals paraded into the ark and a flying machine lurched through the air, up, up and over the moon.

At last the barrel organ fell silent. No one stirred. For a moment the tiny creaks of the mechanical toys cast their own spell. Then they slowly jerked awkwardly and were still.

The solemn monkey took a stiff bow and the curtains closed to loud applause.

"Now," said Leon, edging forward in the dark. "Now it's going to happen." Outside in the night an owl hooted. With a swish the curtains opened...