

# THE WATERTOWER

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*Nobody in Preston could remember when the  
watertower was built, or who had built it,  
but there it stood on Shooters Hill — its iron  
legs rusted, its egg-shaped tank warped and  
leaking — casting a long, dark shadow across  
the valley, across Preston itself.*

*for Janet*



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Summary: On a scorching hot

summer day in Preston, Australia, Spike

and Bubba go for a swim in the old water

tower which casts a long dark shadow

across everything in the area.

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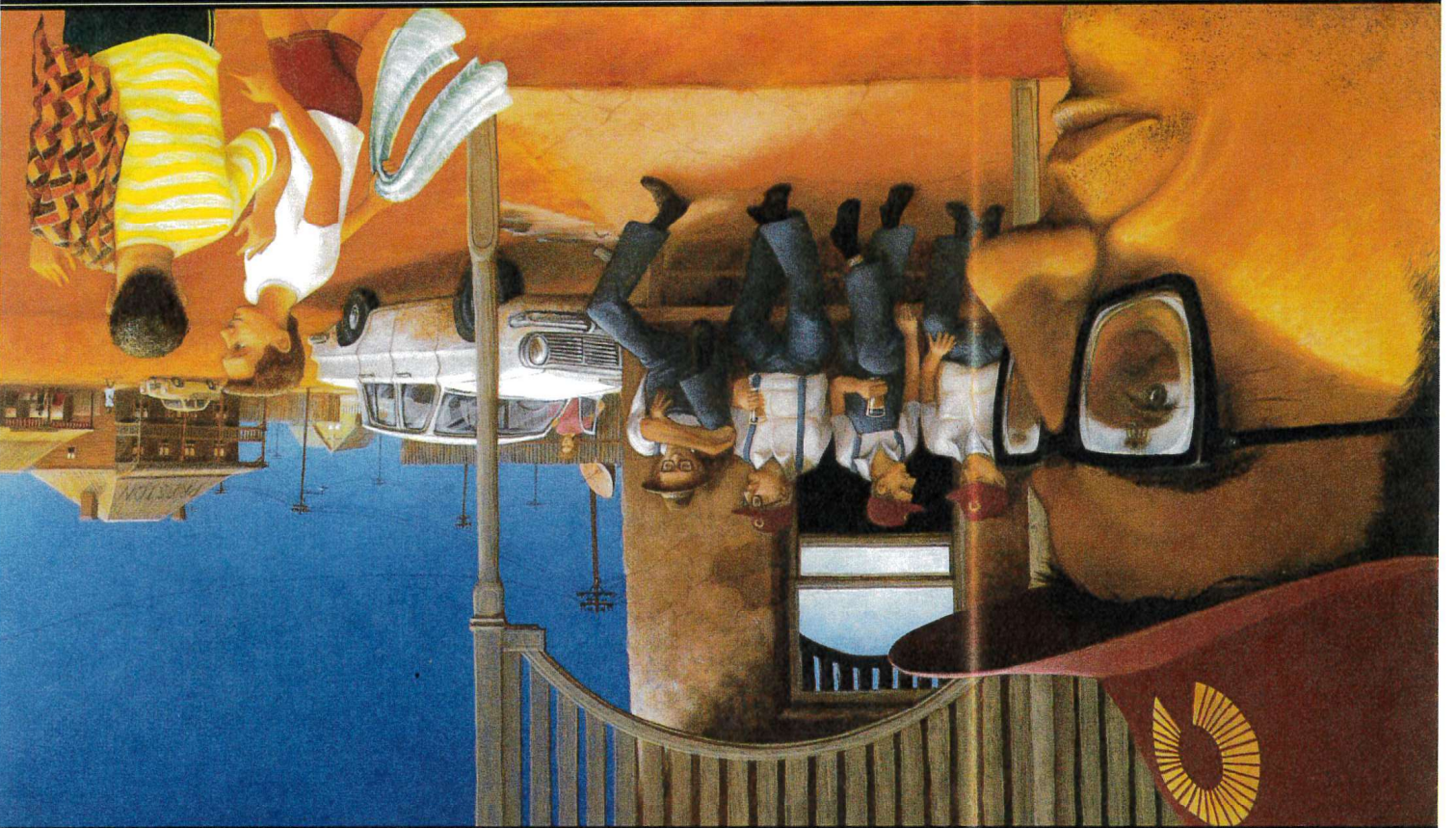
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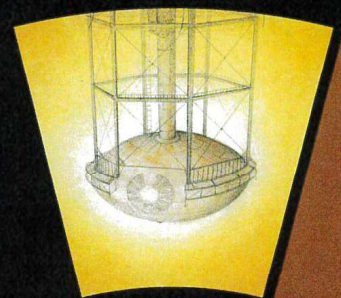
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One summer afternoon, Spike Trotter met  
Bubba D'Angelo by the service station and  
together they went up to the tower for a swim.  
Spike led the way, as usual.  
"My mother says it's dangerous up there,"  
he said, "but it's worth it, hey?"  
Bubba puffed on behind. His mother couldn't  
have cared less where he went.



At the summit, Spike stopped to look down on the sweltering town. "Suckers," he grinned, and headed for the tower. Last summer, a security fence had kept trespassers out, but now the metal posts were twisted and flattened and barbed wire lay coiled on the ground.



"You reckon vandals done that?" Bubba asked, recovering his breath. But Spike was already on the top. "Hurry up," he yelled, throwing open the access hatch. "It's scorching up here." He pulled his shirt over his head, dropped his shorts and clambered down into the tank.



It was dark inside. "The dark's got a sort of a color," Bubba said, squatting on the bottom rung of the ladder. "It's sort of green. Like moss. Like slimy, dead moss." Spike didn't answer. Except for the ghostly wailing he kept up for the fun of hearing the echo, he might not have been there at all.

"Spike?" Bubba called. "Spike?" Still no answer; so Bubba whistled for a while, then splashed a bit — but only up to his knees. He didn't particularly like the water. He wasn't keen on slipping down, naked, into its murky dark. And from time to time he glanced up at the shaft of sunlight angling in from the open hatch, imagining.

