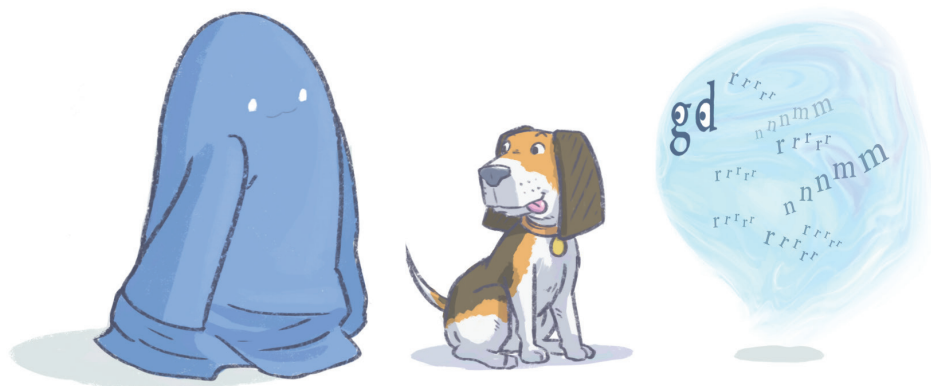


Royal Fireworks Language Arts by Michael Clay Thompson

Book 6 of the Poodle Series

Poodle Knows Clauses



Michael Clay Thompson

Illustrations by Christopher Tice



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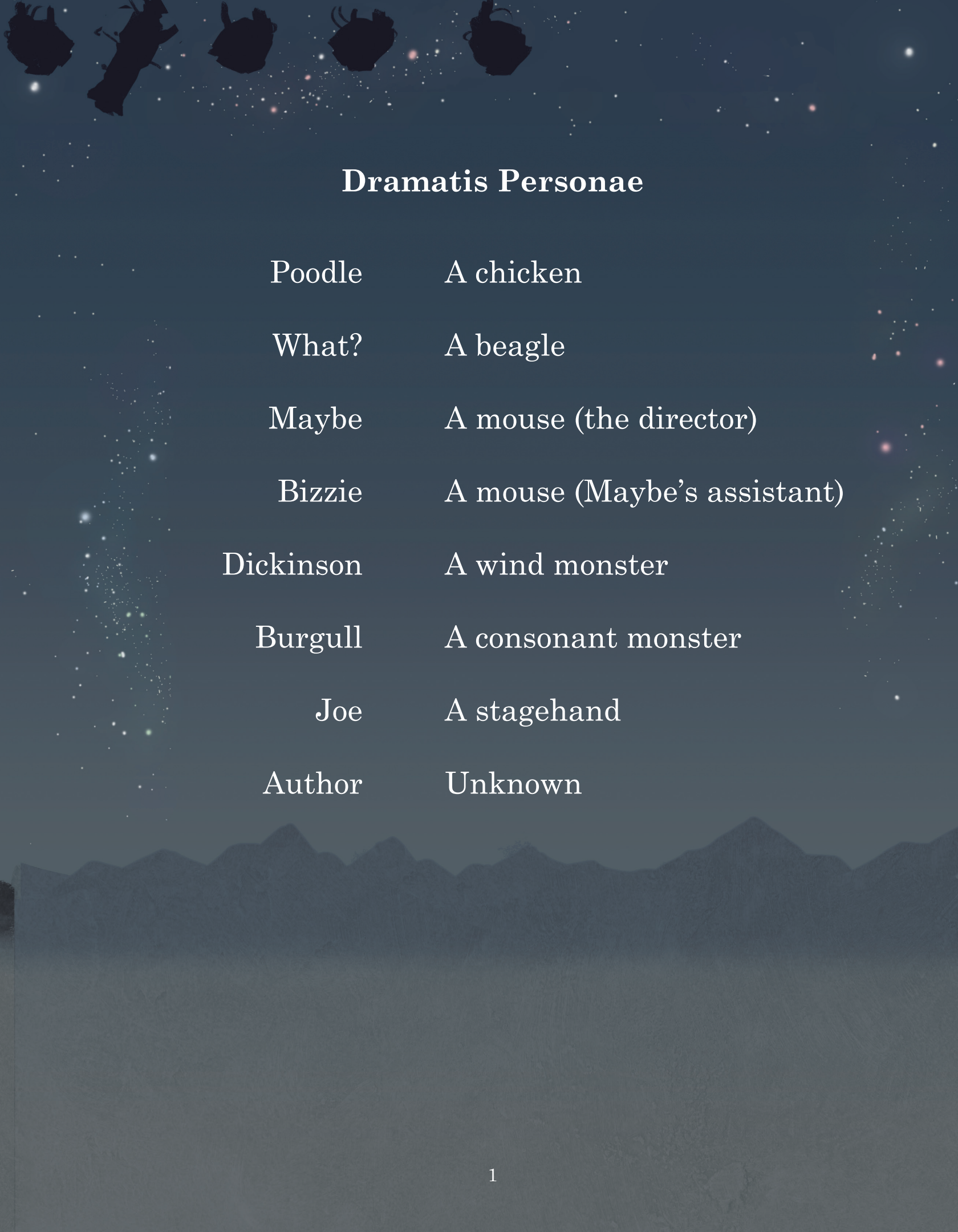
With special appreciation to my wife, Dr. Myriam Borges Thompson,
whose editing and literary mind have made this book better,
once again.

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Dramatis Personae

Poodle	A chicken
What?	A beagle
Maybe	A mouse (the director)
Bizzie	A mouse (Maybe's assistant)
Dickinson	A wind monster
Burgull	A consonant monster
Joe	A stagehand
Author	Unknown





Act One: The Portal Quest

Poodle'd drifted down to sleep,
with dreams of blueful paintings
and beautiful nouns,
and the crooning night
blew through his room,
and the moon loomed over the land,
and the jeweled stars sparkled down,
as they do. It's their job.

Suddenly, Poodle woke with a start.
Not a star—a start. What was that squeak?

Poodle peeked left. He peeked right.
Silence. He heard nothing in the dark room.
Then he heard a tiny creak....

Softly, slowly, he whispered,
“Are any monsters here?”





“Grbrnrnopegrk!” from under the bed.
Poodle heard consonants rattling.

“Burgull!” Poodle cried.
“Are you under my bed again?
I hear you, Burgull!
I hear your rattly consonants!”

“Burgull gurbknopenope grk.”

“Nope? Yes, Burgull, it’s you, you *grky* monster!
You’re under my bed *again*!
Just like the last book!
Get out of there!”

What could Burgull say?
He stuck some consonants out
from under Poodle’s bed: a *g* and some *k*’s.



Poodle thought again...

“Are more monsters here?” Poodle cried.
“How can chickens sleep, with all these monsters?
Who else is here?”

A whirry hummm, almost unnoticeable,
whooooed in the night outside Poodle’s window.
A blue hmmmmm. A new whwhwhmmm.
A small zephyr furled off and curled into the room.
The second star to the right winked and watched;
she got a kick out of this.

“Dickinson? Is that you?
What are you doing out there?
Come inside!” Poodle opened the window wider,
and Dickinson, the Blue Mountain monster,
flowed into the room and whirled in the corner.





Poodle knew that Burgull and Dickinson
were there to protect him
from approaching paragraphs,
but really? Two monsters?
Loyal friends, though.
You never know, Poodle reflected,
what's coming two paragraphs down.

Slowly, dawn lifted her long fingers
over the far peaks, and the clouds purpled,
and the room emerged from the dark,
from black, to gray, then blue.

Poodle looked at his monsters.
“Wait,” he said, “where’s What??”
That beagle was nowhere to be seen.



“I’ll write him in right here,” said the author.

“You can’t do that,” said Poodle.

“You’re the author. You can’t be in the book.
Authors aren’t *in* their books.”

“Of course I am,” said the author.

“I’m everywhere. I’m the author of you,
and I write all of your sentences.”

“Not mine,” said Poodle.

“I say my own words. I’m me.”

“Well,” said the author, “I’ll write
What? into this scene right now.”



And the author poofed away
as What? barked and hopped in
from the left margin of the page.
He had been waiting on the author’s desk.
“What-what-what-what-what!” he barked,
happy to see his friends again.

“What?!” cried Poodle. “I am glad to see you!”

But before What? could answer...





“CUT!” cried Maybe, the director of the play.
“Cut! Lights!” She stormed onto the stage
and glared at the actors, and Joe
clicked on the cranky lights.

Someone in the audience coughed.

A little child, high above,
blinked down with a frown.
She did not like this interruption.

Maybe glared at the group.
“Poodle, stand on your spot!
Burgull, get gurrkier.
Dickinson, hum whirlier,
and I need a deeper *wooooo* from you.
What?, not so loud on the *whats*.”

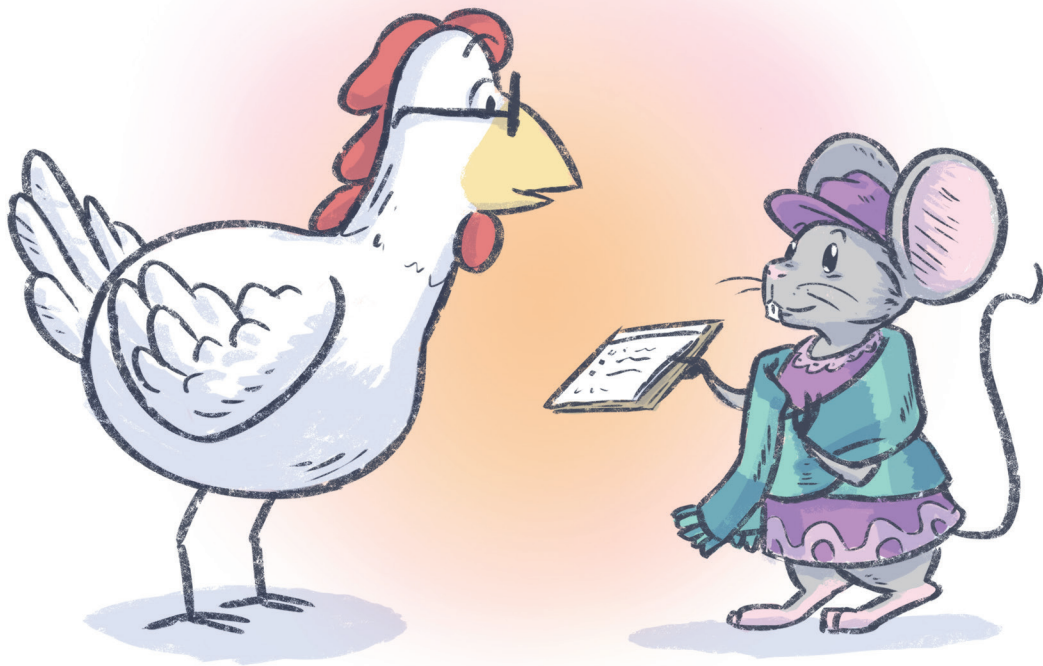
Typical Maybe.
She was always like this.



As Maybe barked directions,
Poodle spotted Bizzie, Maybe's assistant,
watching quietly from the back of the stage
by the painted window.

This was his chance.
He snuck closer to Bizzie.
“What’s your name?” he asked
(for about the fiftieth time).

“I’m Bizzie,” she said, and *finally*
Poodle got it. Her *name* was *Bizzie*,
and Bizzie was busy helping Maybe!





“Bizzie and busy are homophones,”
said the author from somewhere.

“They sound exactly the same.”

*“Stop it,” said Poodle. “You’re the author,
and you have no speaking role, and we know
what homophones are. Please leave.”*

*The author poofed away,
and Poodle looked back at Bizzie.
He liked her. She was so smart
and so good at her job.*

(And her little mouse ears were so pretty.)

He smiled a chickeny smile at Bizzie.

He couldn’t help it.

And she smiled a mousey smile at Poodle.

They were smiley. You know.

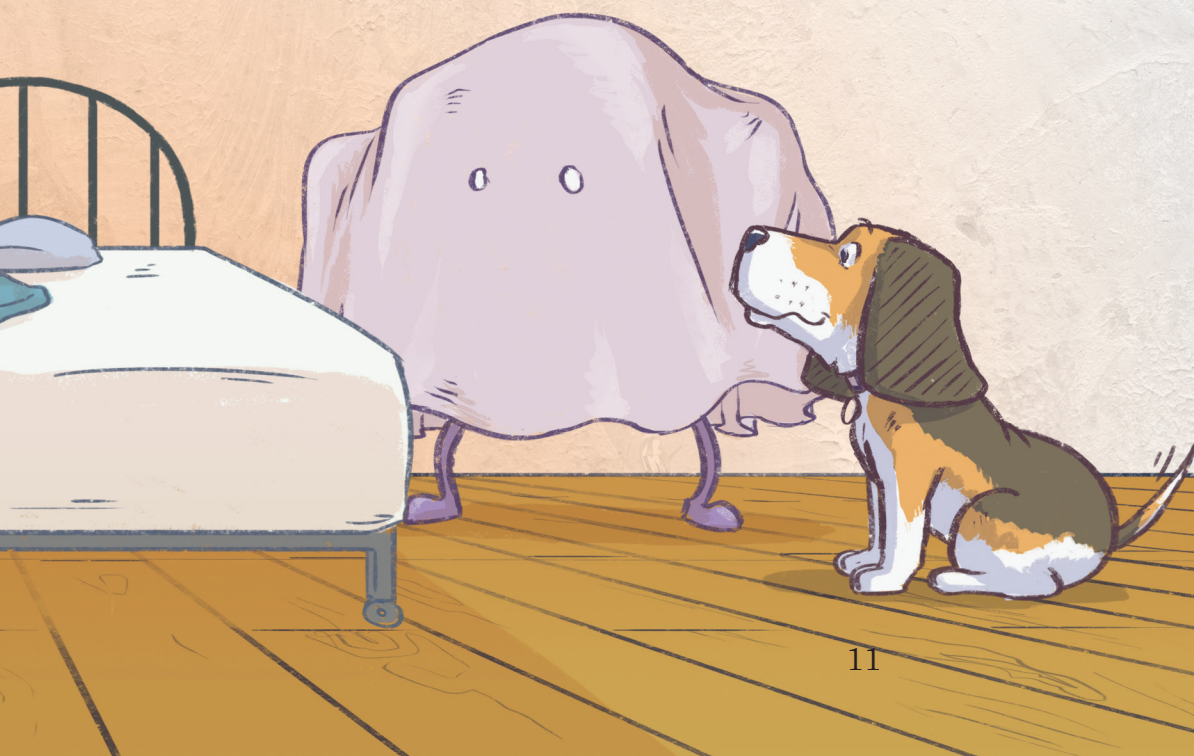


Maybe glared at Poodle,
who was not paying attention—obviously.

“Poodle,” growled Maybe to Poodle,
“snap out of it. You have to show clauses now.
You’ve been through all of these adventures,
with **parts of speech**, **parts of the sentence**,
and **phrases**, and now we can finish
our exploration with **clauses**. Right?
It’s the fourth level.”

“Right,” Poodle thought. He had been
so distracted with the monsters and Bizzie.
It had already been a big morning.
“Right,” he said.

“Good,” said Maybe. “So explain
the magic portal we’ll find in Act Two.”



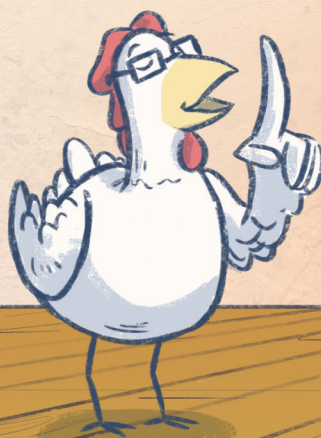


Portal? Burgull did not know
what a portal was. Nor did Dickinson.
Even What? did not know what a portal was.

“Right,” said Poodle, and he looked
at his friends, who were mostly monsters.

“A portal’s a gate, an entrance.
We’re going on a Portal Quest.
We’re going through portals.”

No one understood.
They’d never seen a portal.



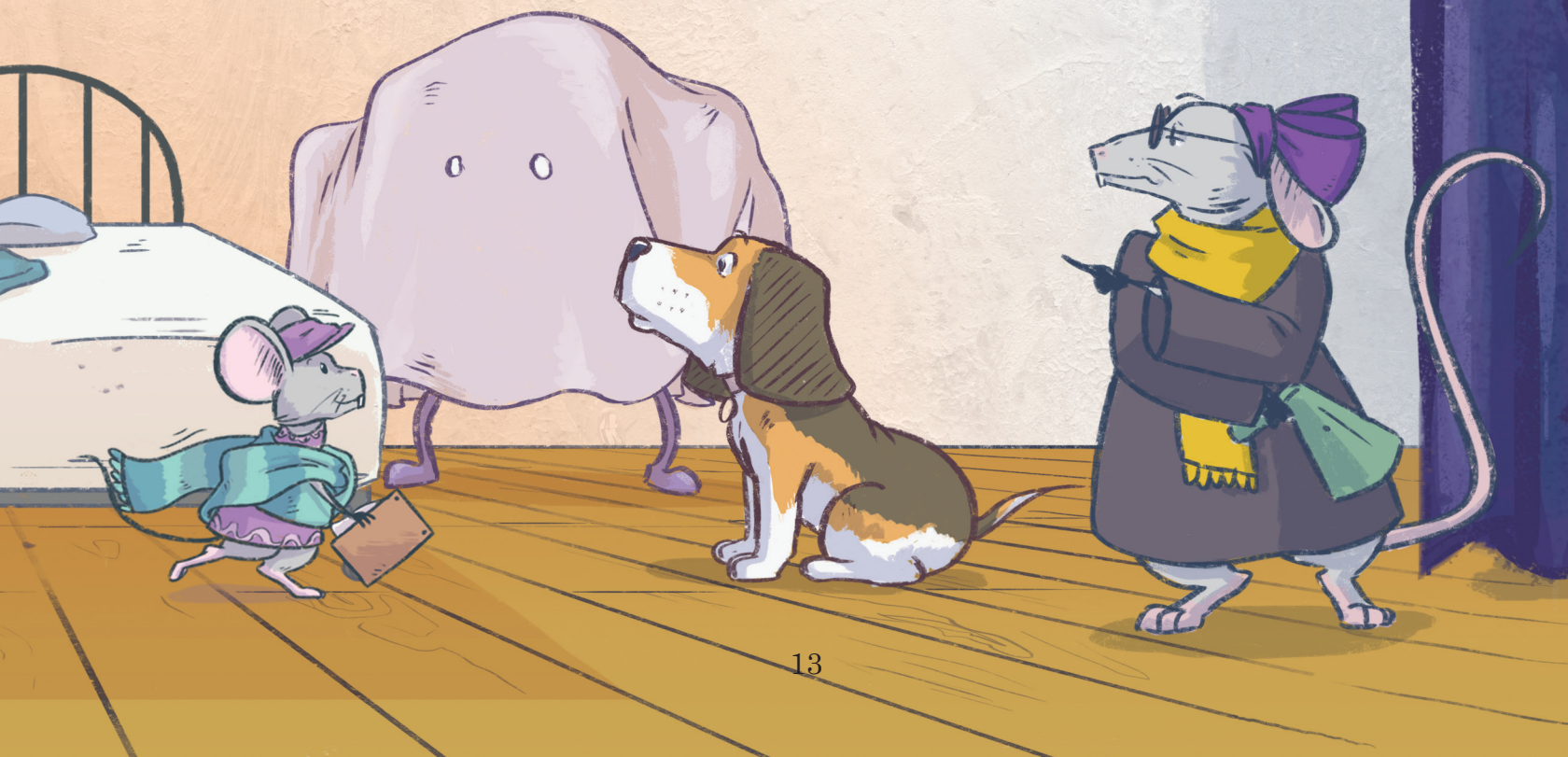
“We’ll travel in our minds,” Poodle said.
“We’ll go through the portals of the mind.”

“You always do this, grbrk,” grkked Burgull.

“It will be all right,” Poodle comforted him.
“We’re going into the portals of our minds
to search for clauses!”

Clauses? This was too much.
Burgull stepped back. Dickinson looked down.
What? thought, “What? Clauses?”

“Shape up, everyone,” said Maybe,
and they shaped up.
“Poodle, tell them what clauses are,
and let’s go to Act Two.”







Act Two: The Frost Portal

Yes, Poodle ate good things, so he was very full.
interj. n. v. adj. n. conj.pron. v. adv. adj.
subj. AVP D.O. subj. LVP S.C.
no phrases
-----clause----- -----clause-----

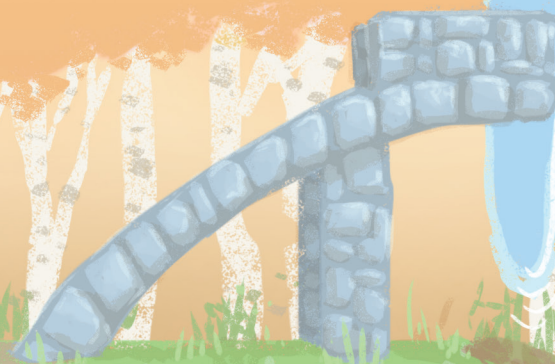
And so it was that the friends set forth
in search of the first portal. This was not easy.
They trekked dusty roads, chased rusty boats,
traced fond hopes, and braced musty loads.
They ascended lost slopes, descended frost-snows,
traversed hot verses, saw high universes,
and followed first purposes—and worse—
and burst long-last on the trail of a tall wood,
and it was all fall, and the cool air fell,
and a wall of yellow birches
rose before them.



As the friends approached
the yellow wood,
a blue plane of words
appeared in the air above them.
It glowed and shimmered.
They stood, looking up at the words.

“Here,” Poodle whispered.
“This is the first portal.”

Hovering in the air,
the portal was a poem.
It read:



The Road Not Taken

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,
And sorry I could not travel both
And be one traveler, long I stood
And looked down one as far as I could
To where it bent in the undergrowth;

Then took the other, as just as fair,
And having perhaps the better claim,
Because it was grassy and wanted wear;
Though as for that the passing there
Had worn them really about the same,

And both that morning equally lay
In leaves no step had trodden black.
Oh, I kept the first for another day!
Yet knowing how way leads on to way,
I doubted if I should ever come back.

I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence:
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.

— Robert Frost



“What do we do?” whispered What?
as the portal hummed and glowed
above them.

“Go in,” said Poodle. “We go *into* the poem,
through the portal. We walk into the words.”

This was a little scary. Go in?
How can you go *into* a poem?

No monster had ever gone into a poem before.

“I’ve never been *in* a poem before,”
said What? nervously, his eyes big.

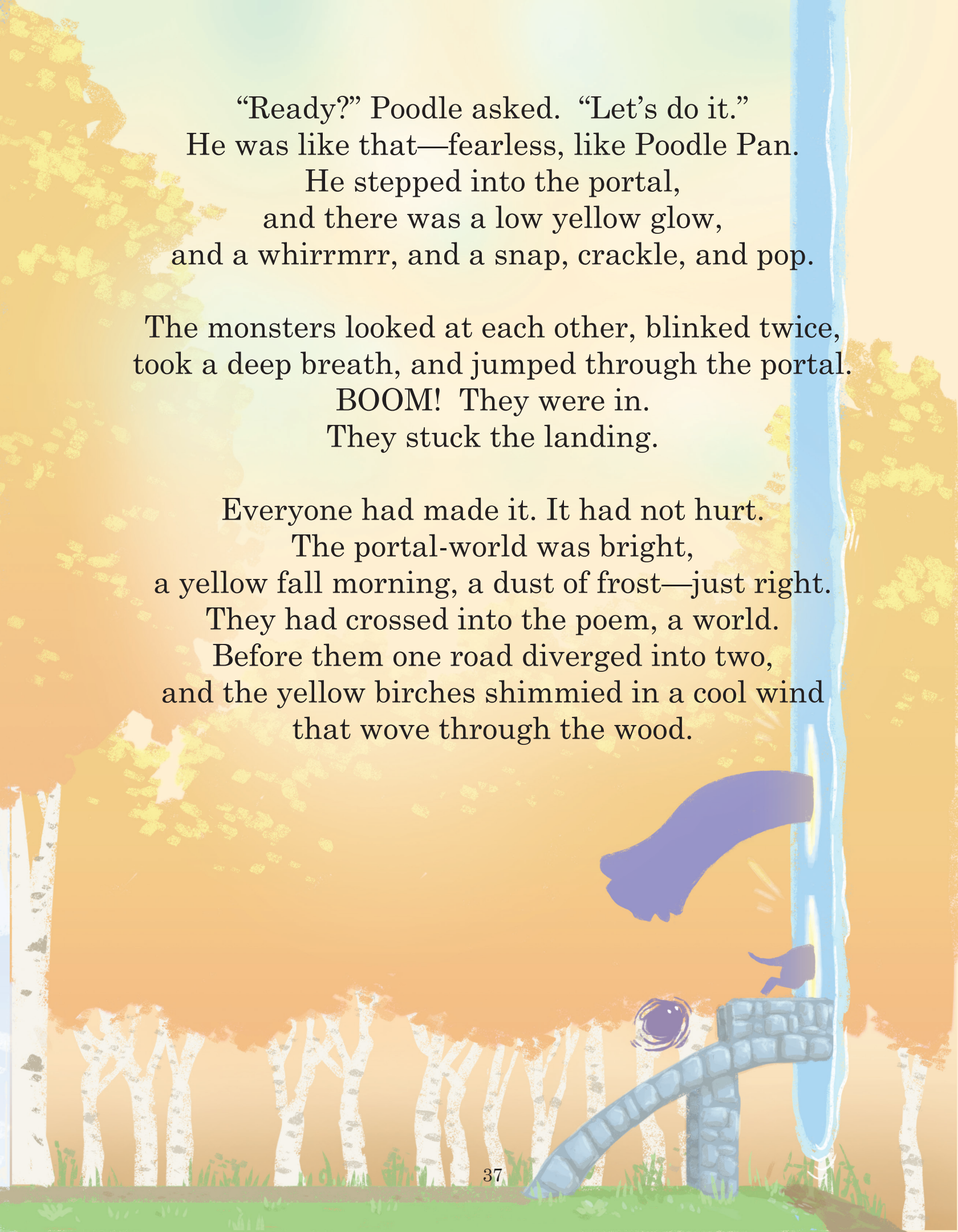
“Too bad,” the author thought.

Poodle pretended not to notice him.

“Ready?” Poodle asked. “Let’s do it.”
He was like that—fearless, like Poodle Pan.
He stepped into the portal,
and there was a low yellow glow,
and a whirrmrr, and a snap, crackle, and pop.

The monsters looked at each other, blinked twice,
took a deep breath, and jumped through the portal.
BOOM! They were in.
They stuck the landing.

Everyone had made it. It had not hurt.
The portal-world was bright,
a yellow fall morning, a dust of frost—just right.
They had crossed into the poem, a world.
Before them one road diverged into two,
and the yellow birches shimmied in a cool wind
that wove through the wood.





“What do we do?” asked What?,
looking at the two roads.

“It’s a choice,” said Poodle.
“We can’t choose both. The right road is good,
and no one has trodden it black,
but the left road is grassy; it wants wear.”

They crept to the left and looked
at that road, which few had traveled on.
New grass grew through the old grooves,
cool and comfy to their toes.
No one had walked there for a long time.



“Grbrkr, lookr, grkbr,” said Burgull,
who had moved close to the yellow branches
at the right side of the page.
Or stage. Or wood.

Dickinson hummed over to see.
Burgull was looking, with all of his consonants,
at a long yellow branch that hung low
near the left road, like an ancient painting,
and the yellow leaves aglow
against the purple shade below,
and the purple and the yellow
were like a dream of happiness.

They could have stood there forever.

Everyone looked; no one spoke.

