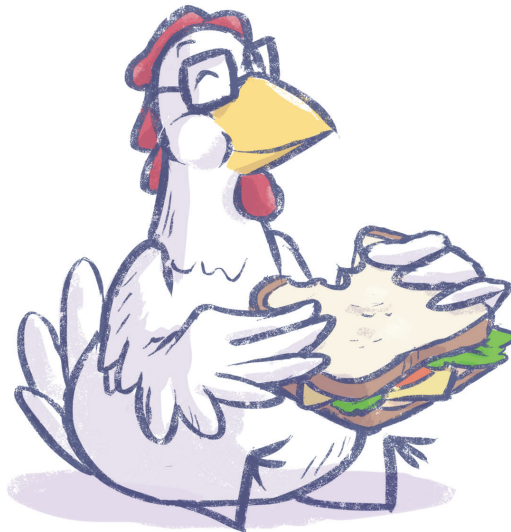


Royal Fireworks Language Arts by Michael Clay Thompson

Book 3 of the Poodle Series

Poodle Knows Poetry



Michael Clay Thompson

Illustrations by Christopher Tice



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This book features QR codes that link to audio of Michael Clay Thompson narrating the text so that readers can follow along.

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Chapter One: Blue Mountain

The author looked at the page.

Across his thought,
a range of mountains rose,
from darkling eastern sentences
to purply sunset fading
in the west, flowing off the page.

A paper sunset, with real mountains.

Brisk wind flicked a quick chill
at the cracky rocks, like clicky clocks,
and dark began to cool.

The wind said *wh*.
You know him.

The animals were gone. Almost.
You remember them:
Poodle, and What?, and Sidney,
and Maybe, and Gramlet.
Even Dickinson was missing.



Only Poodle still stood, alone,
at the summit.

He shivered
and checked the cold horizon,
and blue wind chuckled
and chuffed his feathers.

The darkening sky grew darker,
and the glum glow glimmered
and began to flicker quicker.

You could barely see.

A star sparked as it lit.
Stk, it said, with spirit,
and stark light struggled with the dark,
like star-crossed colors.

The wind said *wh*.

Poodle looked up at the author.
“What are you doing?” he asked.
“Why did you leave me here?”

You were already here, the author wrote.
I began this book on Blue Mountain,
on the same peak as the last book,
so this is where you were already,
but this is a new book.

“Well, you wrote me here alone
at dusk,” said Poodle,
“and it’s dark, and it’s cold, and
the cool world croons ’neath a new blue moon,
and the star just started, *stk*,
and the wind said *wh*,
and this is not good.
What about *me*?
I mean, even the bird
stopped singing.”

It was true.
Listen for yourself. No bird.

Oh, the author wrote. Sorry. Hold on.
I’ll write the scene as dawn.
And he began to write again.



Poof! The skies switched sides,
nicely, as polite skies do.
I love those guys.

The quiet light flipped from west to east,
and the dark dodged from east to west.
They changed places, like some cases,
and the shadows now leaned west,
and some water phirpled, and
the morning bird chirpled *tweedly deedly deet*.

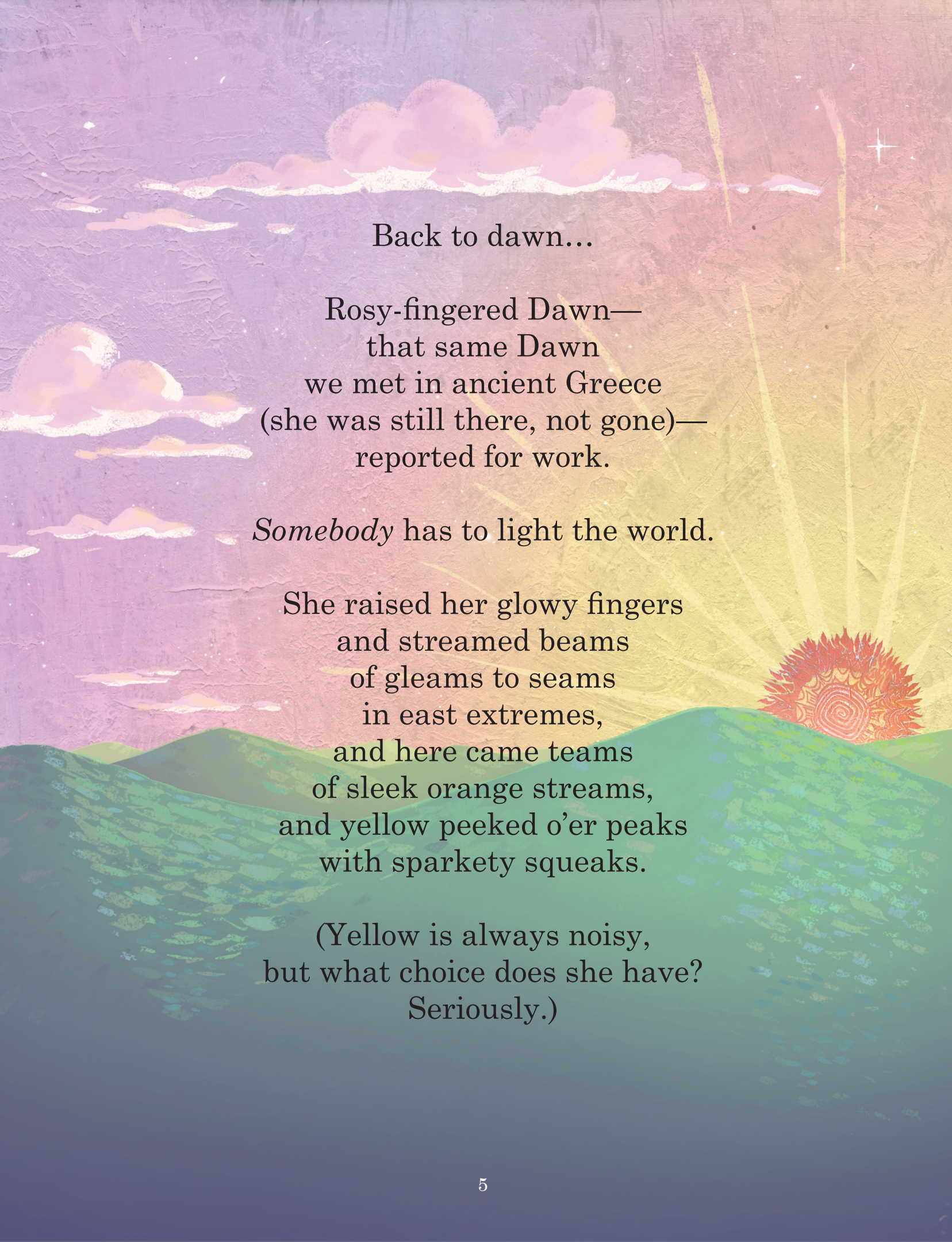
Suddenly, it was warming up,
and the wind said *wh*.

A peaceful morning breeze
puffed Poodle's nose.

Wait...Poodle's *nose*?

It is no use saying that
a chicken has no nose.
On this page, chickens have noses.
Read it for yourself.

(Don't blame us.
We don't make the rules.
They're like jewels.)



Back to dawn...

Rosy-fingered Dawn—
that same Dawn
we met in ancient Greece
(she was still there, not gone)—
reported for work.

Somebody has to light the world.

She raised her glowy fingers
and streamed beams
of gleams to seams
in east extremes,
and here came teams
of sleek orange streams,
and yellow peeked o'er peaks
with sparkety squeaks.

(Yellow is always noisy,
but what choice does she have?
Seriously.)



Crowds of clouds
grew orangey, getting brighter.
The tops of the clouds got purpley, lighter.
New blue beams
now slithered hither like snakes
to climb the sky.
High they swayed up there,
like aches of color.

A bird said something—
crik, I think—so that was good.

The wind said *wh*.
You can't stop him.

All the lights were turning on—
nice day.
You could always count on Dawn.



“That’s more like it,” Poodle mentioned.

“You have to pay attention.
You can’t just pop me on a mountain.
You have to be nice
to your characters, please.”

Right, the author wrote.
He made a note: *nice*.
Sorry about the sunset thing.
Wait, where are you going?

“Down. Where do you think?” Poodle said.
“I’m going down,” he frowned.
“I have work to do.
Please write me down from here.”

The author wrote:
Poodle wiggled his toes.

“Why did you do that?!” Poodle asked.

What? wrote the author.

“Why did you wiggle my toes?
Stop that. Write that back. Please!”



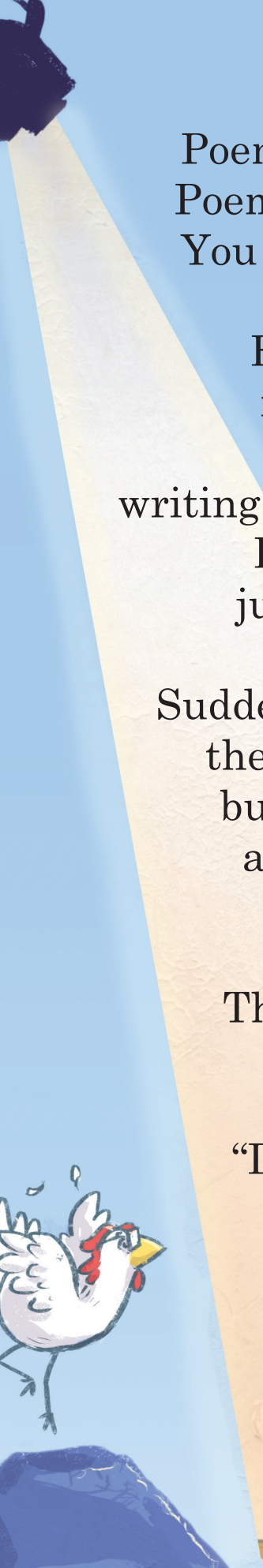


I can't, the author wrote.
The sentence is already written.
Wiggled is a past tense verb, superb,
and you can't change the past.

Poodle was not amused.
His feelings were bruised. He felt used.
"No toe-wiggles," he asserted, disconcerted.
He was no toe-wiggler, and he
wanted off Blue Mountain. Now.
"Leave my toes alone. Please
write me down from here.
I have work to do."
And he bounded down from the view,
hopping from rock to rock.

Wait for me! the author wrote.
Work? What work?

"I have decided," said Poodle.
"I'm going to write **poems**."

A bright yellow spotlight beam shines from the top left corner of the page down towards the center. At the top of the beam, a small black object, possibly a light fixture, is visible. The beam illuminates the text and the characters on the stage.

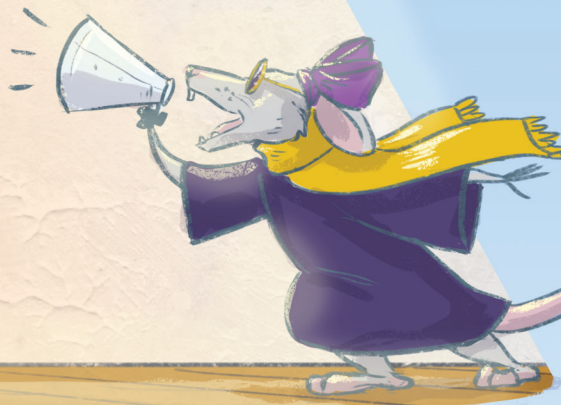
Poems? the author wondered.
Poems? Wait! You're no poet.
You don't write poems. Wait!

He wrote another rock
for Poodle to jump to.
It kept him busy,
writing those rocks ahead of Poodle.
He didn't want Poodle
jumping to a blank line.

Suddenly, "CUT!" yelled Maybe,
the director of this theater,
bursting from the curtain
at the side of the stage.

Director?
The author had forgotten
that this is a play!

"LIGHTS!" Maybe cried.





The lights snapped on—*zap*, *crackle*, and *pop*—
and the mountain page became a wooden stage.

They were in a theater?

Yes, and it was freezing in the theater.

The air conditioner was blasting.

“Poodle,” Maybe called, “I need more emotion
in your lines! More commotion like the ocean!

More emphasis on POEMS!”

Poodle froze and stared at Maybe.

He tried to clear his mind.

This is a play? It had all seemed so real.

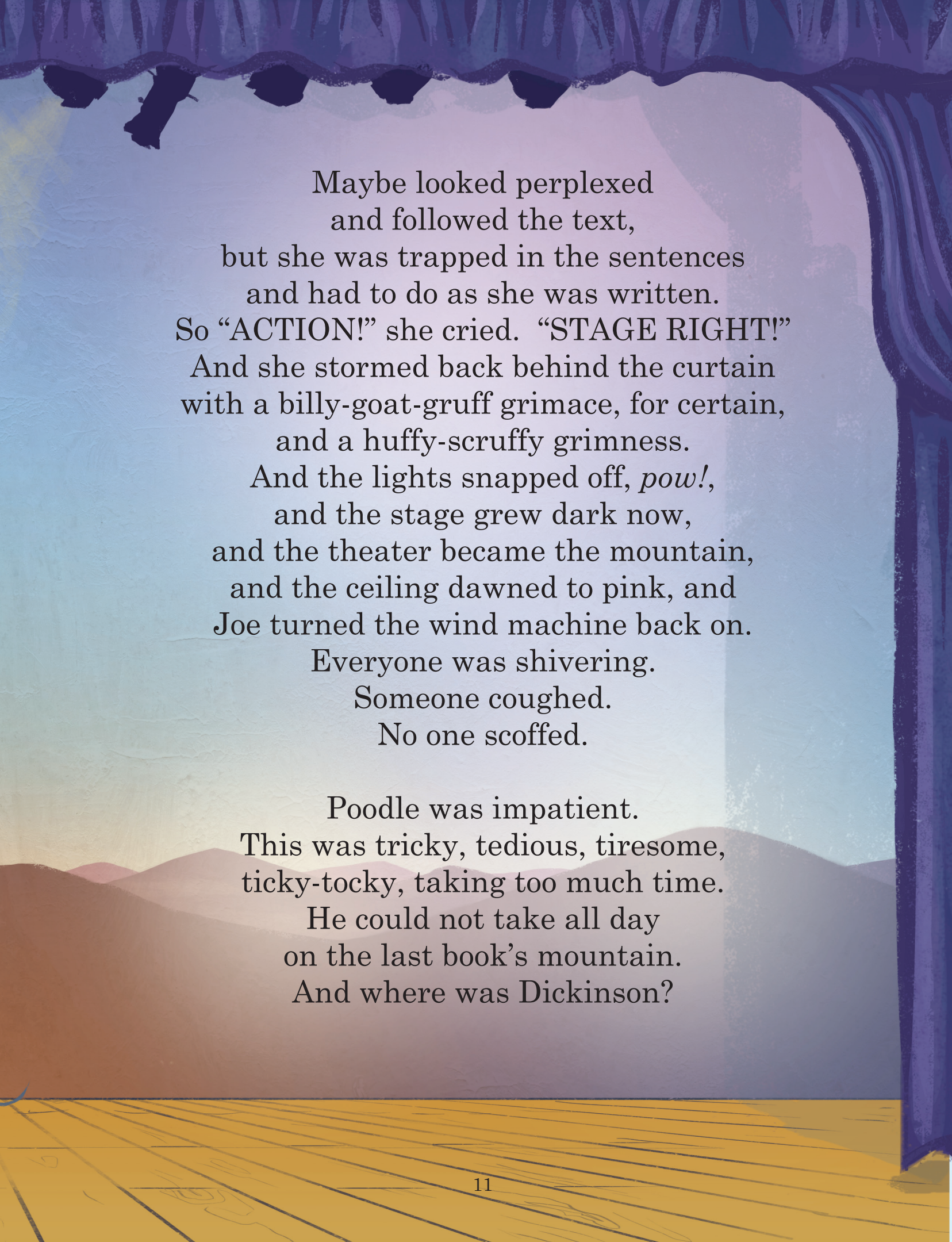
Go away, Maybe, the author wrote.

This is not the time.

I know this is a play, but
we’re busy on this mountain.

Go away. You can direct later.





Maybe looked perplexed
and followed the text,
but she was trapped in the sentences
and had to do as she was written.
So “ACTION!” she cried. “STAGE RIGHT!”
And she stormed back behind the curtain
with a billy-goat-gruff grimace, for certain,
and a huffy-scruffy grimness.
And the lights snapped off, *pow!*,
and the stage grew dark now,
and the theater became the mountain,
and the ceiling dawned to pink, and
Joe turned the wind machine back on.
Everyone was shivering.
Someone coughed.
No one scoffed.

Poodle was impatient.
This was tricky, tedious, tiresome,
ticky-tocky, taking too much time.
He could not take all day
on the last book’s mountain.
And where was Dickinson?



On the Blue Mountain,
the wind whispered *wh*,
and a brisk wisp
whipped off the page
and whisked the author's nose.

The wind thinks
it is so funny.

“Write me out of here,” Poodle said.
“Write me there, in that forest.
See? Over there? That wood?
No, *waayyy* over there, if you could,
on the left horizon of the page,
in that valley, where the fog fluffs up
over the blue river. Right. *There.*”

Poodle pointed to a light white puff
above a long blue river that
slid silently enough, slowly down a bluff,
there, in the purple west.

“Write me over there,” he repeated.
“Please.”



Done, thought the author,
and he began to write the forest
for Poodle to land in.


The forest would need words:
branches, and trunks, and shadows, and skunks,
and eyes in the shadows that rose—who knows—
and blue river rolling slow,
and a squirrel somewhere
in mid-jump.

The author used forest words.

As words rose and connected,
the forest began to appear, like a ghost
in a window. A wood of words. An outpost.

The author was engrossed
in the wood-words.

There were green things, and shadows,
and critterly sounds.

An illustration of an owl perched on a tree branch in the upper left, with its large yellow eyes glowing.

The author wrote more,
and the forest grew deep
and wild; it wasn't like us.
Something moved a branch.

What? I don't know.

Hoooo, cried something.
There are always somethings in a forest.
You can hear them.

Some things in the forest go *hoooo*.

Some go *eeeeep eep!*

Some go *urp* or *rivvet*.

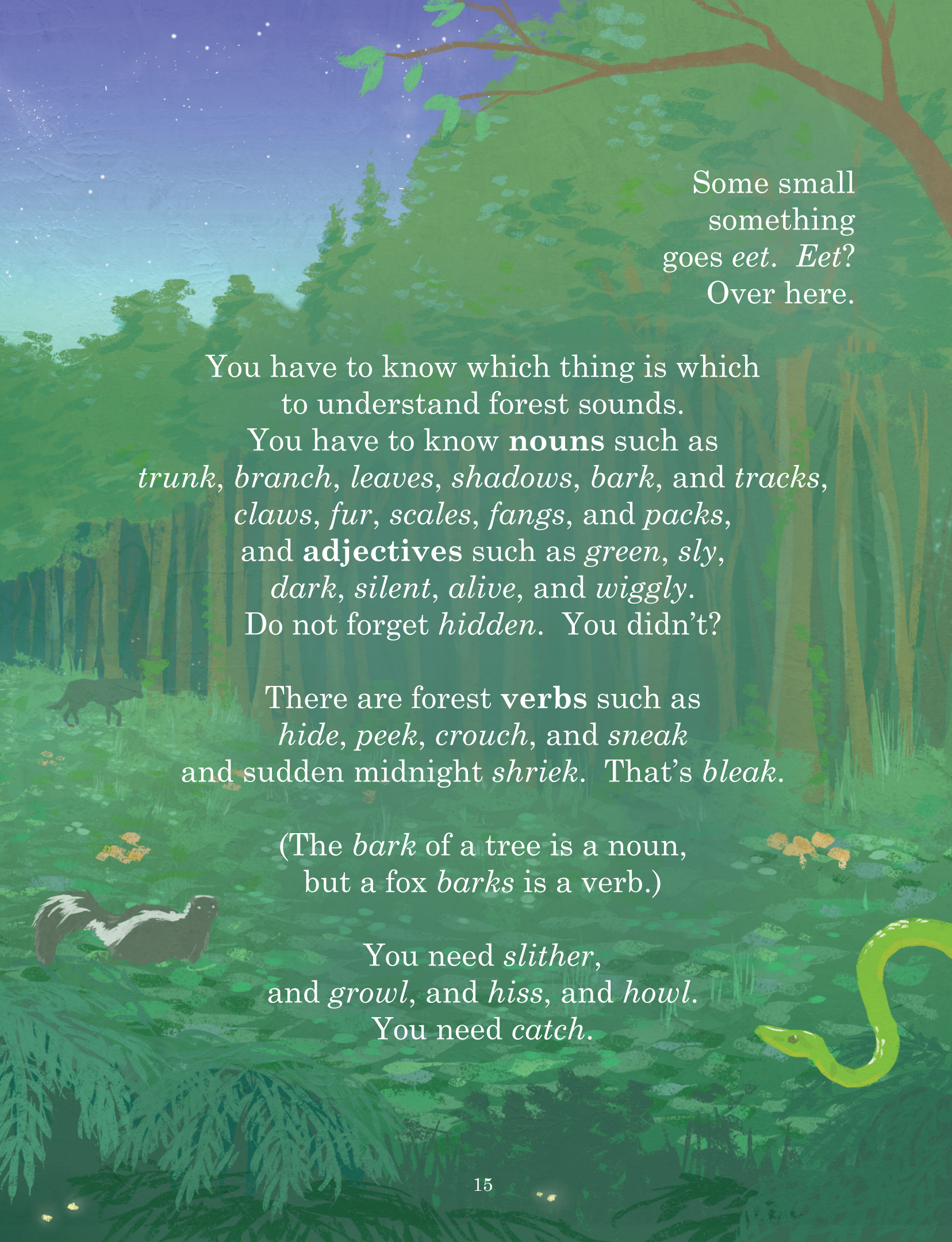
Some go *sssssssss*.

Rowp, maybe?

One goes *screeeee!*

Little birdies go *sweet sweet sweet*.





Some small
something
goes *eet*. *Eet?*
Over here.

You have to know which thing is which
to understand forest sounds.

You have to know **nouns** such as
trunk, branch, leaves, shadows, bark, and tracks,
claws, fur, scales, fangs, and packs,
and **adjectives** such as *green, sly,*
dark, silent, alive, and wiggly.
Do not forget *hidden*. You didn't?

There are forest **verbs** such as
hide, peek, crouch, and sneak
and sudden midnight *shriek*. That's *bleak*.

(The *bark* of a tree is a noun,
but a fox *barks* is a verb.)

You need *slither,*
and *growl,* and *hiss,* and *howl.*
You need *catch*.




You need forest **adjectives**
such as *gloomy*, and *umber*,
and *scratchy*, and *thorny*, and *lumber*,
and *squishy*, and *soft*, and *aloft*.

Always, hidden somethings watch you.
You never see them.
They are back there,
between the words,
in the shadows behind the sentences,
or under that fern.

One blinks.
One snaps a twig.
One of them is in this sentence.
You never see them. They see you.

As the author wrote,
ferns crept up from the bottom
of the page, and the pine
boughs fell low, so you
had to duck.



But back to Poodle.
He had asked the author
to write him here,
in this forest, remember?

Done, the author thought,
and he turned to the next chapter,
and high above, an eagle—a raptor—
sailed silently over the tree top.
It saw everything
perfectly.

But something was wrong.
Somewhere far beyond
the western mountains,
a low umble-rumble bumbled.

*baBOOM daDOM taPOW baKOR daWHAM
aBLAM aCRACK aDUM aBUM aBAM*

Far away. Neither of them noticed it.