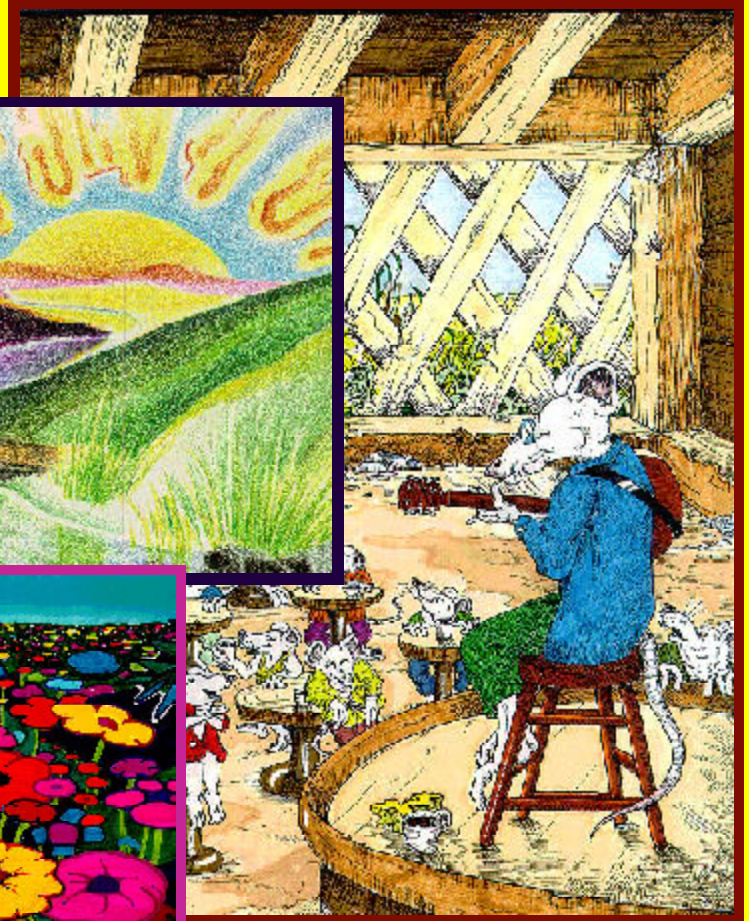


The House On Chestnut Ridge

A musical tale of acceptance, forgiveness, and the celebration of diversity.

By Matthew K. Weiland



Combining storytelling with
bluegrass, jazz, blues, and reggae
songs and score.

Music and lyrics by
JAMES TIGUE and MATTHEW K. WEILAND © 2005

Honored for Children's Composition by the
JOHN LENNON SONGWRITING FOUNDATION



CHESNUT RIDGE

**There's a place not very far from here
Where the weather's warm and the sky is clear
Where all your worries disappear!
On Chestnut Ridge.**

**There's a place not very far away
Where the sun sits high in the sky all day
Where you've always got a place to stay!
On Chestnut Ridge.**

**Chest-nut — Chestnut Ridge
Where the whippoor wills
And the buttercup spills
The dew drops from the night.**

**Chest-nut — Chestnut Ridge
Where the dragon flies in the morning skies
Then kite tails out of sight.**

**I know a place where we can go
Where the river runs and the four winds blow
We hope you'll stop and say hello!
On Chesnut Ridge.**

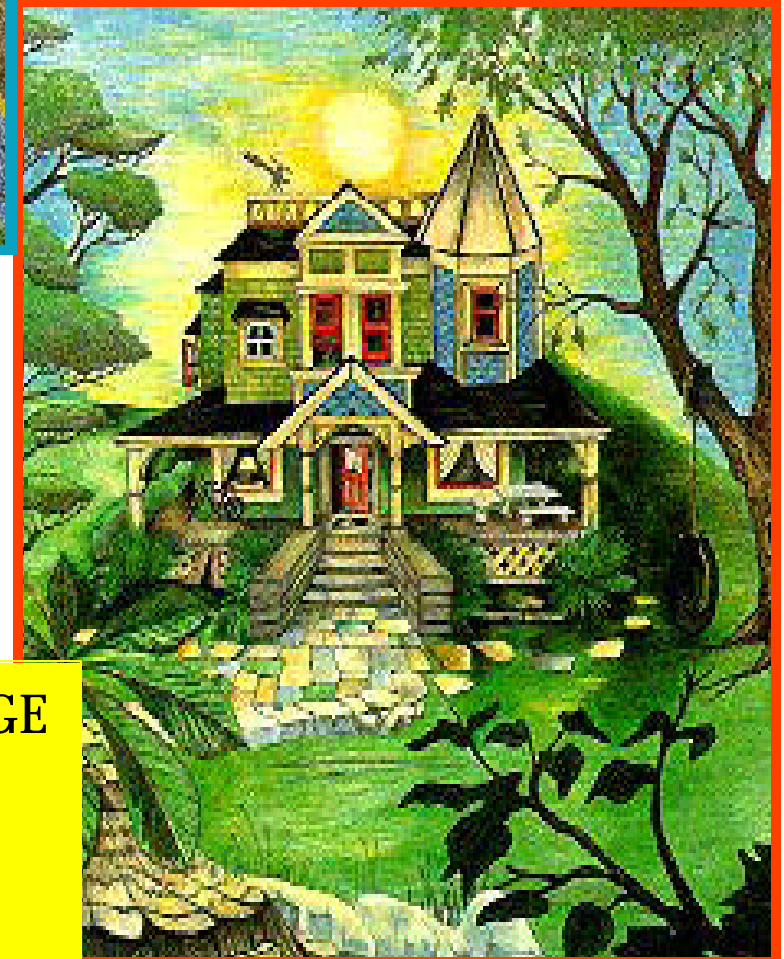
**Come along and there we'll be
Where the swallows sing in the cypress trees
What happens next, let's wait and see!
On Chestnut Ridge.**

**Chest-nut — Chestnut Ridge
Where the meadow larks
And the dogwood barks
Although it never bites.**

**Chest-nut — Chestnut Ridge
Where the butter flies in the morning skies
Then flutters out of sight.**



Travel up the Big River a ways — beyond the paddle wheel boats and port towns, up where an air of music sifts through the trees on an afternoon breeze — and you will find The House On Chestnut Ridge, a place where anything is possible, a home where everyone is welcome.



This is the story of **THE HOUSE ON CHESTNUT RIDGE** a community of animals who lived happily in harmony despite their individual quirks and foibles idiosyncrasies and eccentricities.

And as it happened one autumn morning, Collier, the street-wise tom cat who had been blind since he was a kitten, gained his eyesight back through a stroke of good fortune.



And throughout Chestnut Ridge, there was much elation and cel-e-bration!

Collier can see again, Collier can see
Absotively, posolutely
Collier can see.



COLLIER CAN SEE

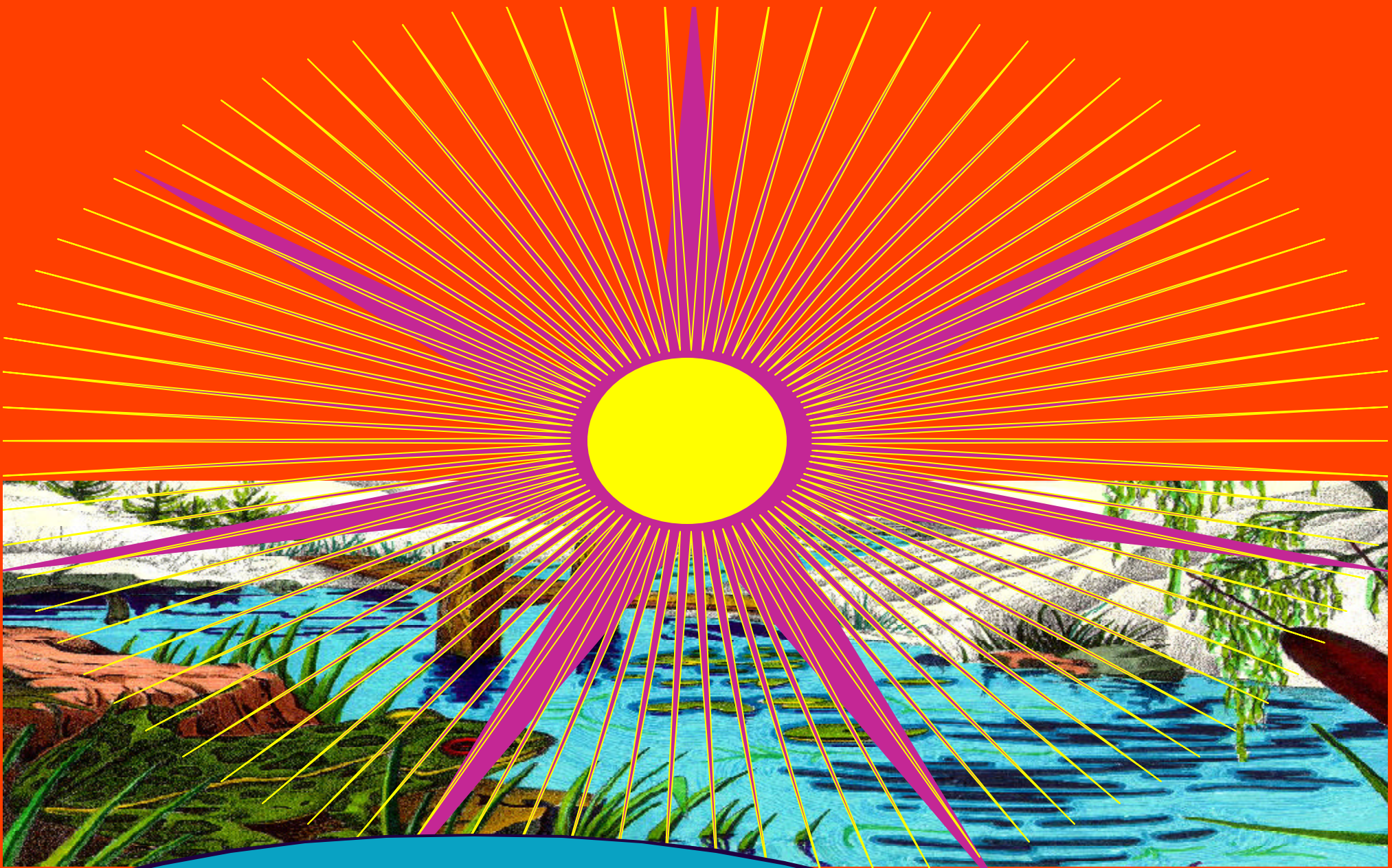


The Band Wagon



Collier can see again, Collier can see
He was blind and now he's not
Collier can see.





And that evening, they all sat on the Friendship Bridge down by Pressler's Pond with Collier, as he watched for the first time the sun set just beyond the hills of Chestnut Ridge.





Things, however, did not stay quite so festive.

You see, everyone on Chestnut Ridge had something about them that set them a part.

FRIENDY skunk, for instance, did not possess the scent so unique to skunks and thus sometimes really didn't feel like a skunk at all.



Likewise, RAS rabbit had ears that didn't stand up like other rabbits, but rather ears that drooped and flopped about his head.



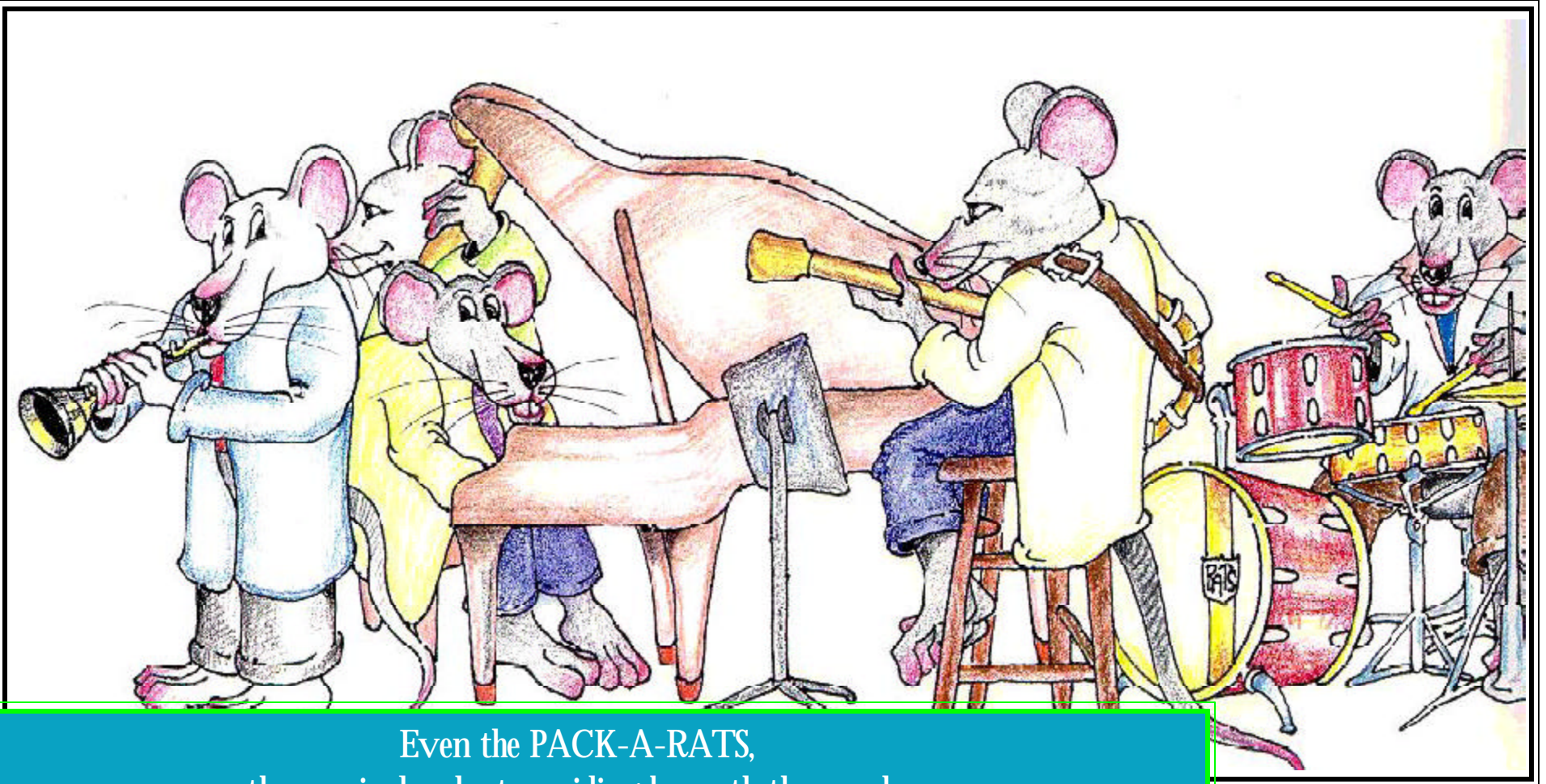
ARGUS the old terrier had lost a leg as a pup (and it sometimes took a long time for him to get around).

PORTICIA pig was, well, sometimes she could be rather pushy, and at times even somewhat meddlesome, which could often be a bit much for the others.



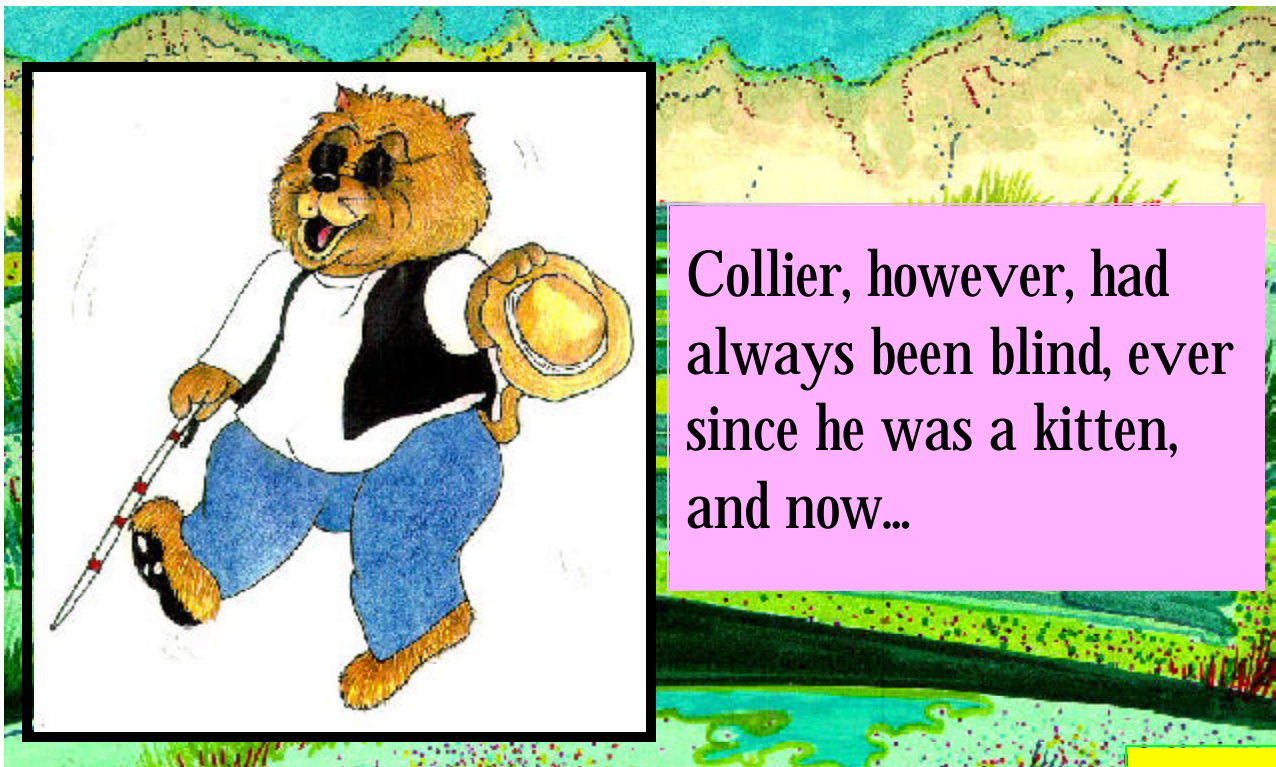
And GRANDMA owl, the house elder, was a wise old owl, but sometimes the rest of the world was in such a hurry, it didn't have time to listen to the wisdom Grandma Owl had to offer.

Yet all of these differences united the animals on Chestnut Ridge into a community of individuals, each treasured for his or her own unique qualities that made each of them special to the Chestnut Ridge family.

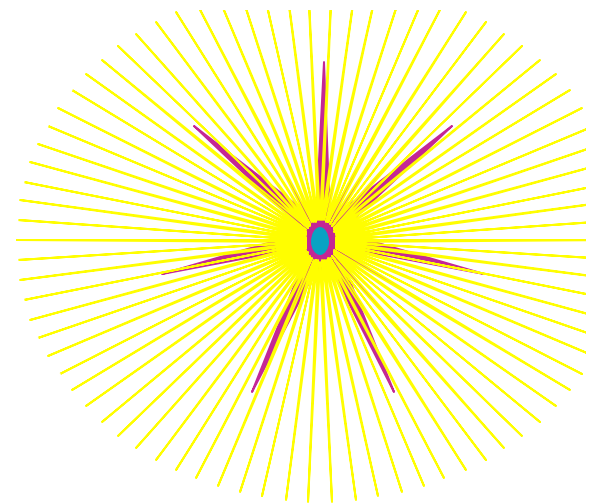


Even the PACK-A-RATS,
the musical rodents residing beneath the porch,
had found a home, despite their rat status.
Because you see, Chestnut Ridge is a place where anything is possible,
a home where everyone is welcome.





Collier, however, had always been blind, ever since he was a kitten, and now...



**...he
could
see!**

...which began to
cause problems,



because Collier began to see the differences in the
other animals as flaws instead of virtues.



Then one morning, as everybody was gathered around the picnic table awaiting brunch, Collier, who was very hungry, became very impatient.



And eventually, everything erupted when... well, when Collier simply didn't get his way.

“That’s it!
I can’t take anymore a this!”



“Anymore a-what?”

...said Argus, who had grown tired of Collier’s attitude.





“This!

This whole motley crew a-critters. Just look at yourselves — Bunch a misfits.

Just look at you!”



LOOK AT YOU!



Look at you, you swill-sluggin, mud-lovin' swine.
Look at you, always acting so refined.
Look at you, imposing your presence all the time.
Look at you...

You're intrusive, obtrusive, the most meddlesome I've seen

Look at you, you flea-bitten, peg-legged hound
Look at you, always hobblin' all around
Look at you, they shoulda left you in the pound

LOOK AT YOU!



Look at you...

You're bumblin', you're stumblin', the slowest on the team
LOOK AT YOU!



Look at you, you non-putrescent little skunk
 Look at you, you should smell like a hunk a gunk
 Look at you, a skunk who's never stunk?
 Look at you...

LOOK AT YOU!

You're non-offensive nor reprehensive, you've no identity

Look at you, such a motley-lookin' crew
 Look at you, don't know what else I can do
 Look at you, I think that you and I are through
 Look at you...



LOOK AT YOU!

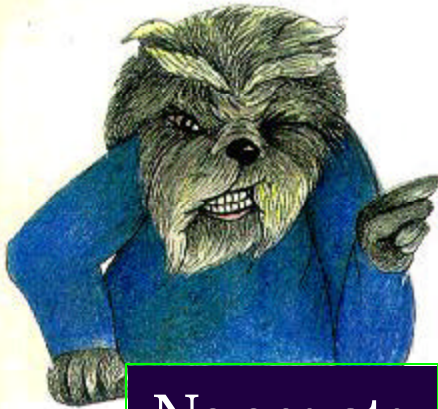
You're distasteful, disgraceful, it's time I blew this scene!

A colorful illustration depicting a man with a large, bushy brown beard and a black tunic blowing away various objects. He is shown from the chest up, leaning forward with his mouth open as if blowing. The objects being blown away include a woven basket, a loaf of bread, a bunch of grapes, a bunch of bananas, a bunch of corn cobs, a yellow pitcher, a blue bowl, a red apple, a small insect-like creature, and several purple and blue items. The scene is set against a white background. A dark purple rectangular box with white text is positioned in the upper center of the image. At the bottom, a black rectangular box with white text contains a speech bubble.

LOOK AT YOU!

You're distasteful, disgraceful, it's time I blew this scene!

Everyone sat there, silent and stunned.



No one ate.



Nobody looked up from his or her plate.

No one knew what to say or do, for they had never been so put down before, especially by someone they considered a friend.



Then, Porticia pushed her chair away from her place at the table and marched over toward Collier, shoving a knuckle in his chest, propelling him back into his place.

“Listen here you little...**cat!**”

I don't need the likes of you telling me I'm meddlesome. Who do you think you are?

A street-splattered little wretch of a cat, telling me I'm...

INTRUSIVE?

Of course, I'll admit, maybe I am somewhat audacious, perhaps a bit overwhelming at times, but what would you expect?

I am a pig, after all!



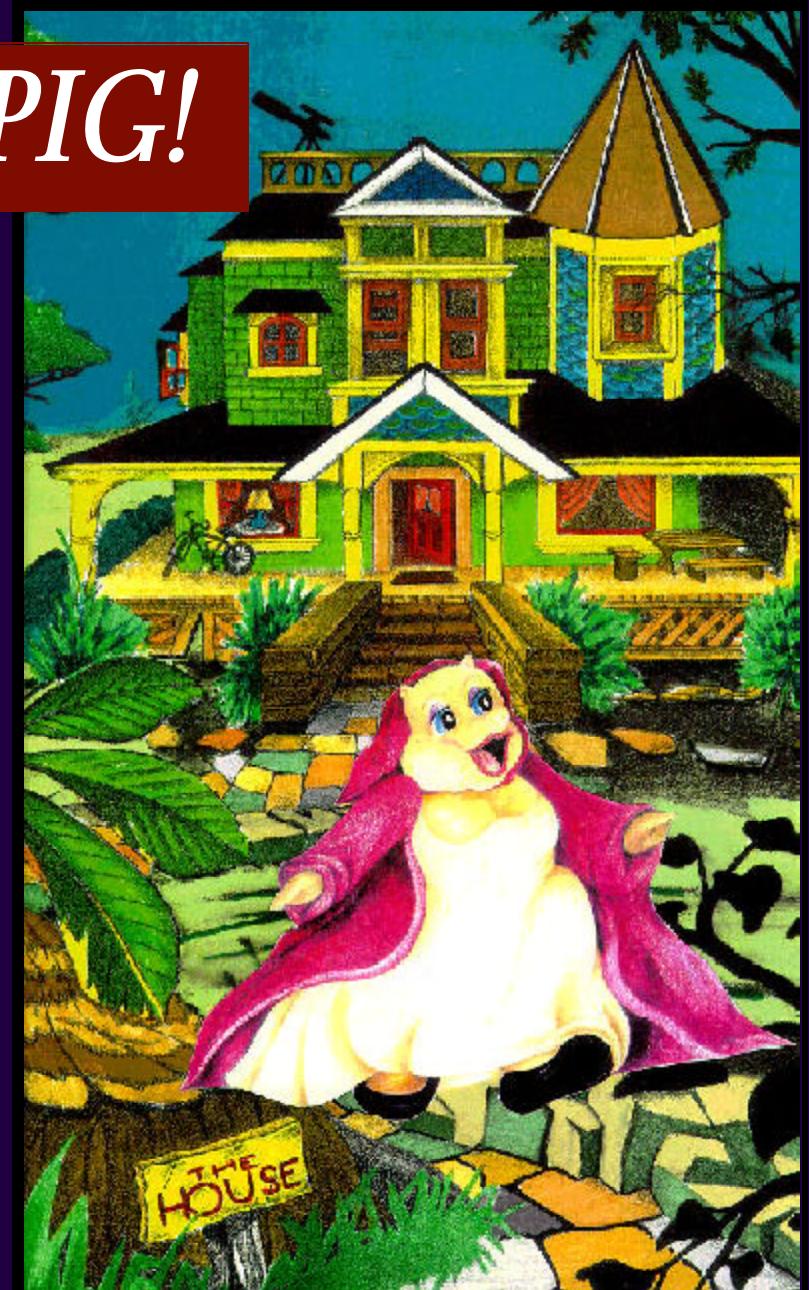
I'm a pig and I'm proud
I am big, I am brass, I am loud.
I'm a pig, I'm a swine
I am brash, I am bold, I'm divine!

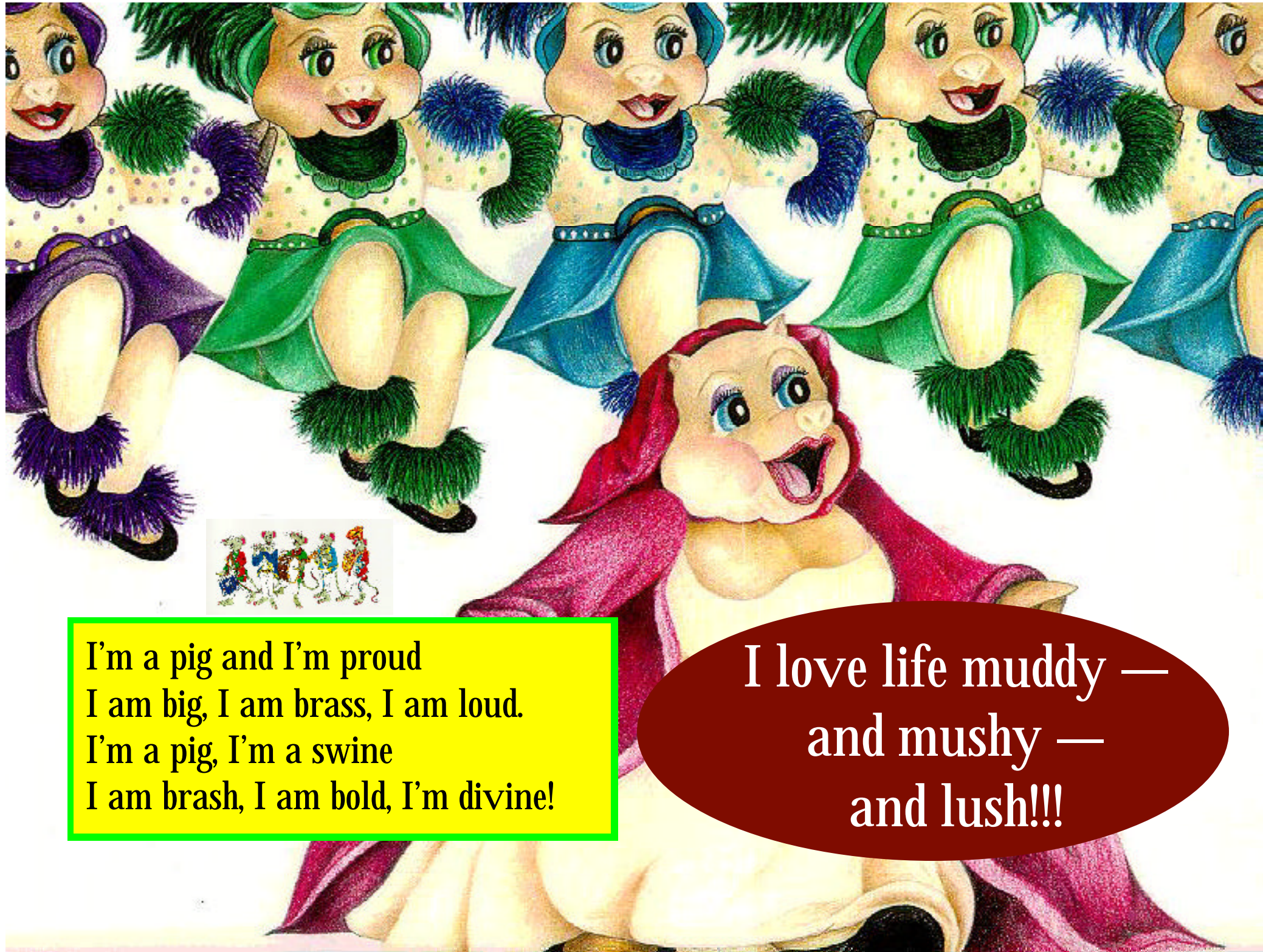
I'M A PIG!

I'm a pig, so petite
And a sow's life is ever so sweet.
I'm a pig, so Reubenesque
And it's something I don't feel is grotesque.

I'm a pig, so rotund
And every day a better pig I become.
I'm a pig and I assert
That from time to time I lounge in the dirt.

I'm a pig and so I say
I prefer porcine life in every way.
I'm a pig and will not blush
I love life muddy — and mushy — and lush!





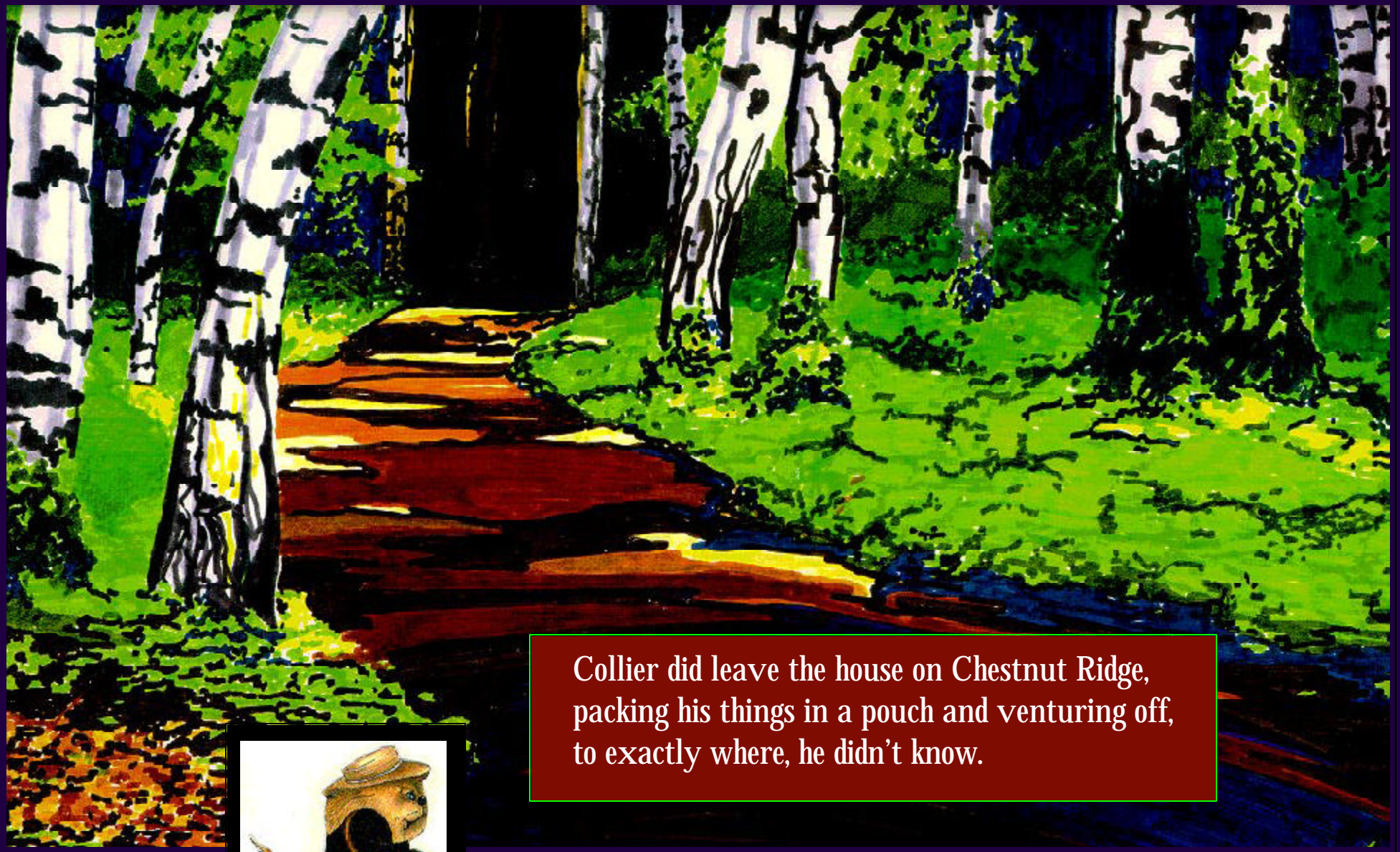
I'm a pig and I'm proud
I am big, I am brass, I am loud.
I'm a pig, I'm a swine
I am brash, I am bold, I'm divine!

I love life muddy —
and mushy —
and lush!!!



I'm a pig and so I say: I prefer porcine life in every way.
I'm a pig and will not blush; I love life muddy — and mushy — and lush!



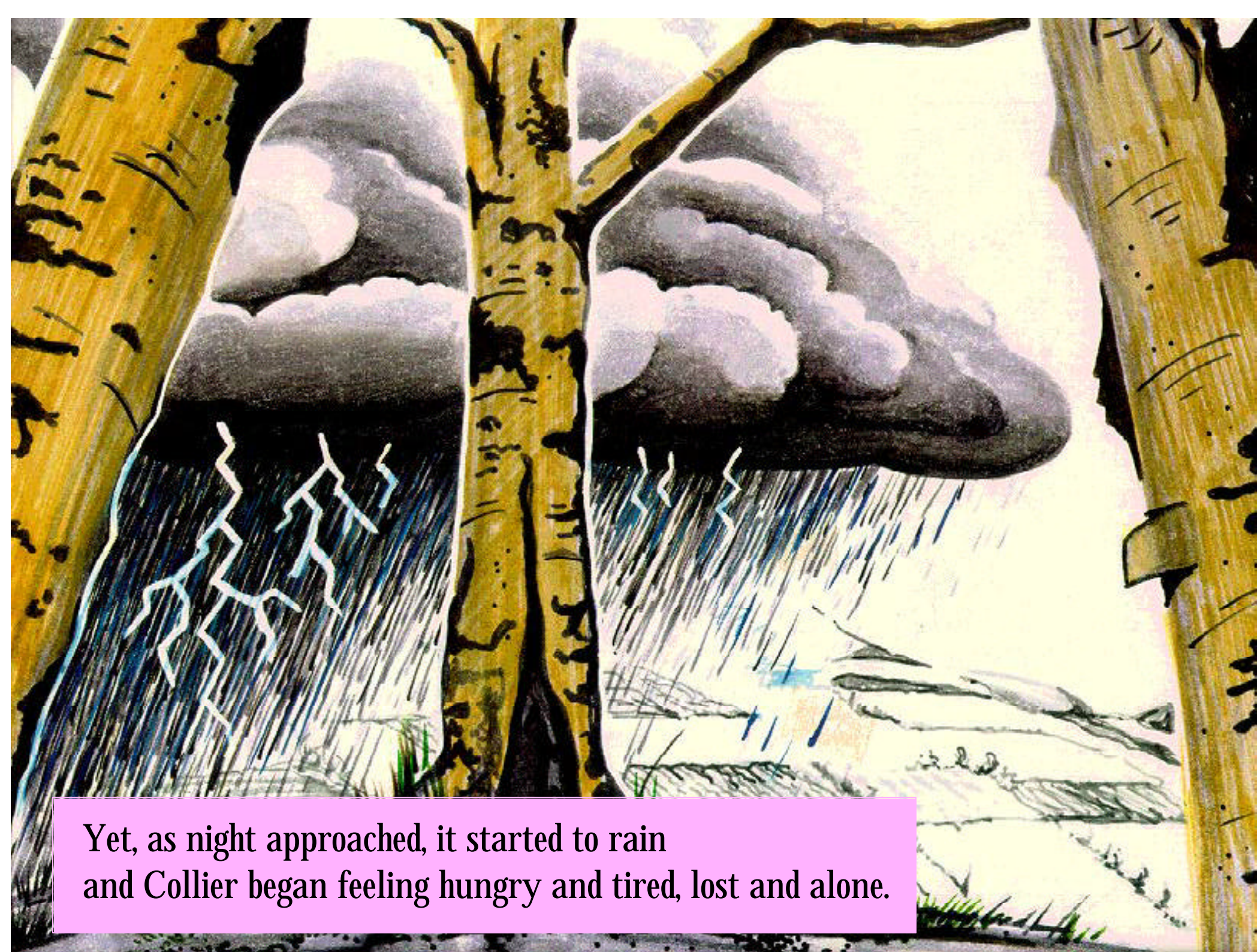


Collier did leave the house on Chestnut Ridge,
packing his things in a pouch and venturing off,
to exactly where, he didn't know.

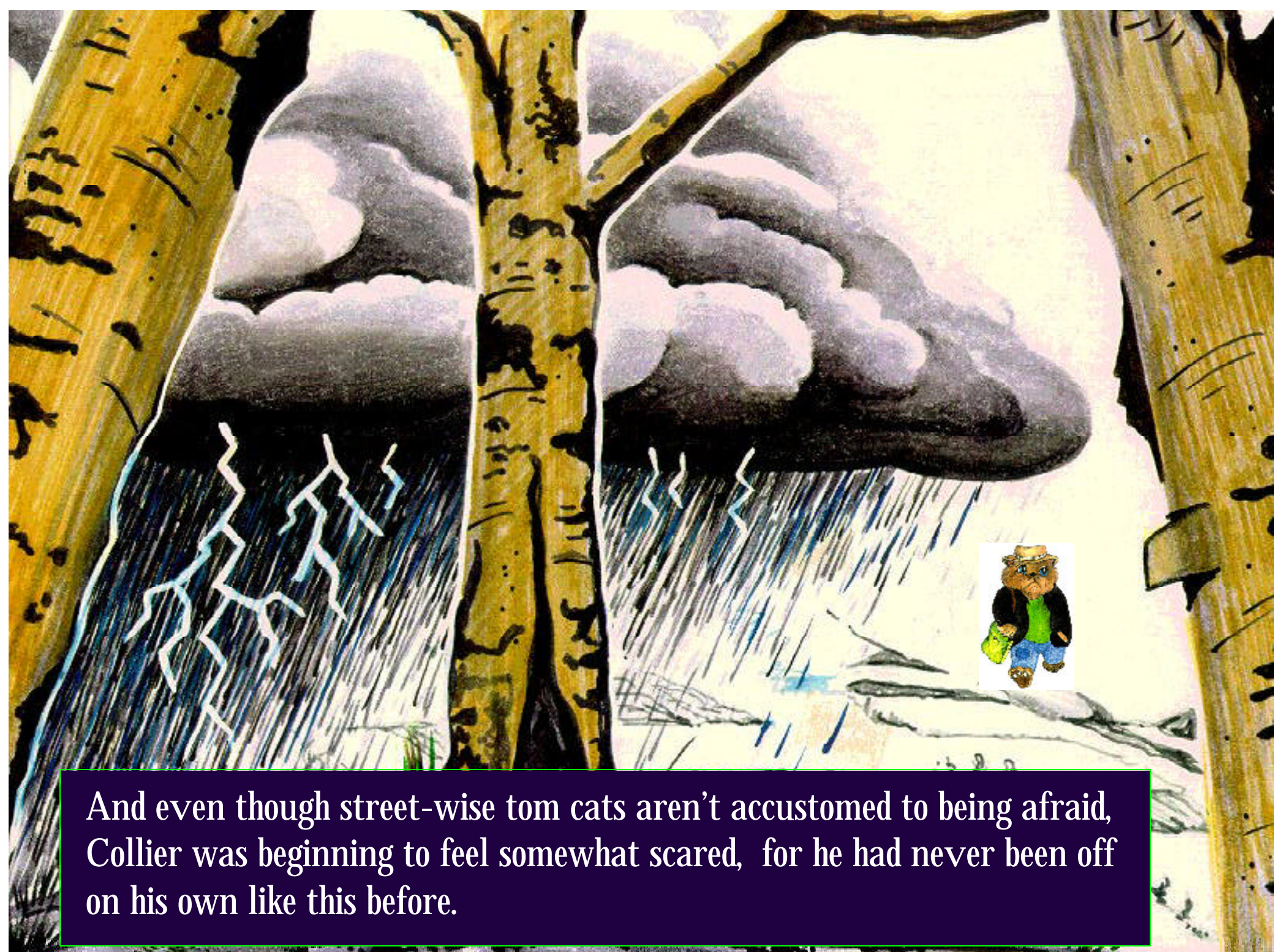




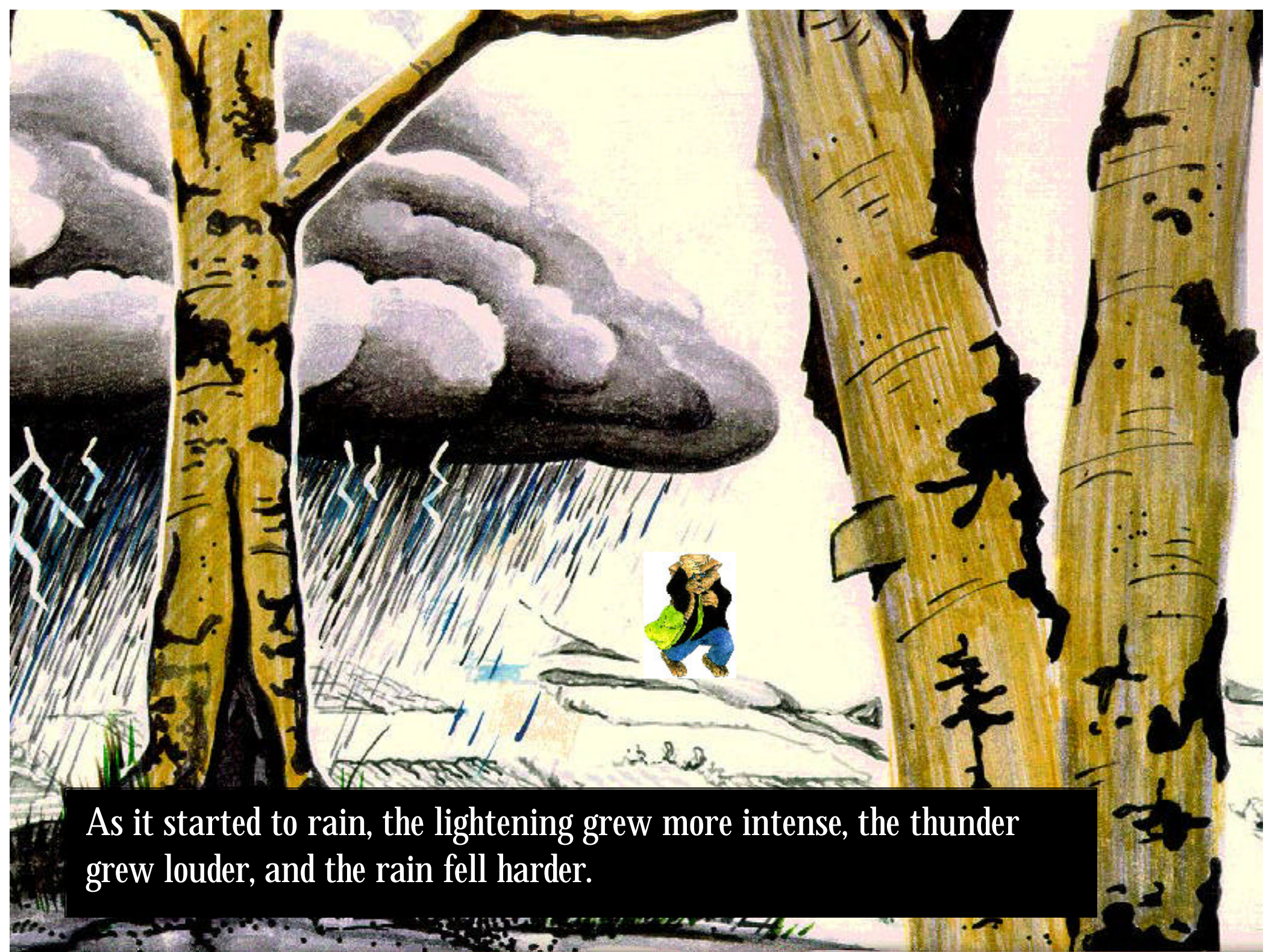
He walked all afternoon and into the evening,
his restored eyesight leading him faithfully.



Yet, as night approached, it started to rain and Collier began feeling hungry and tired, lost and alone.



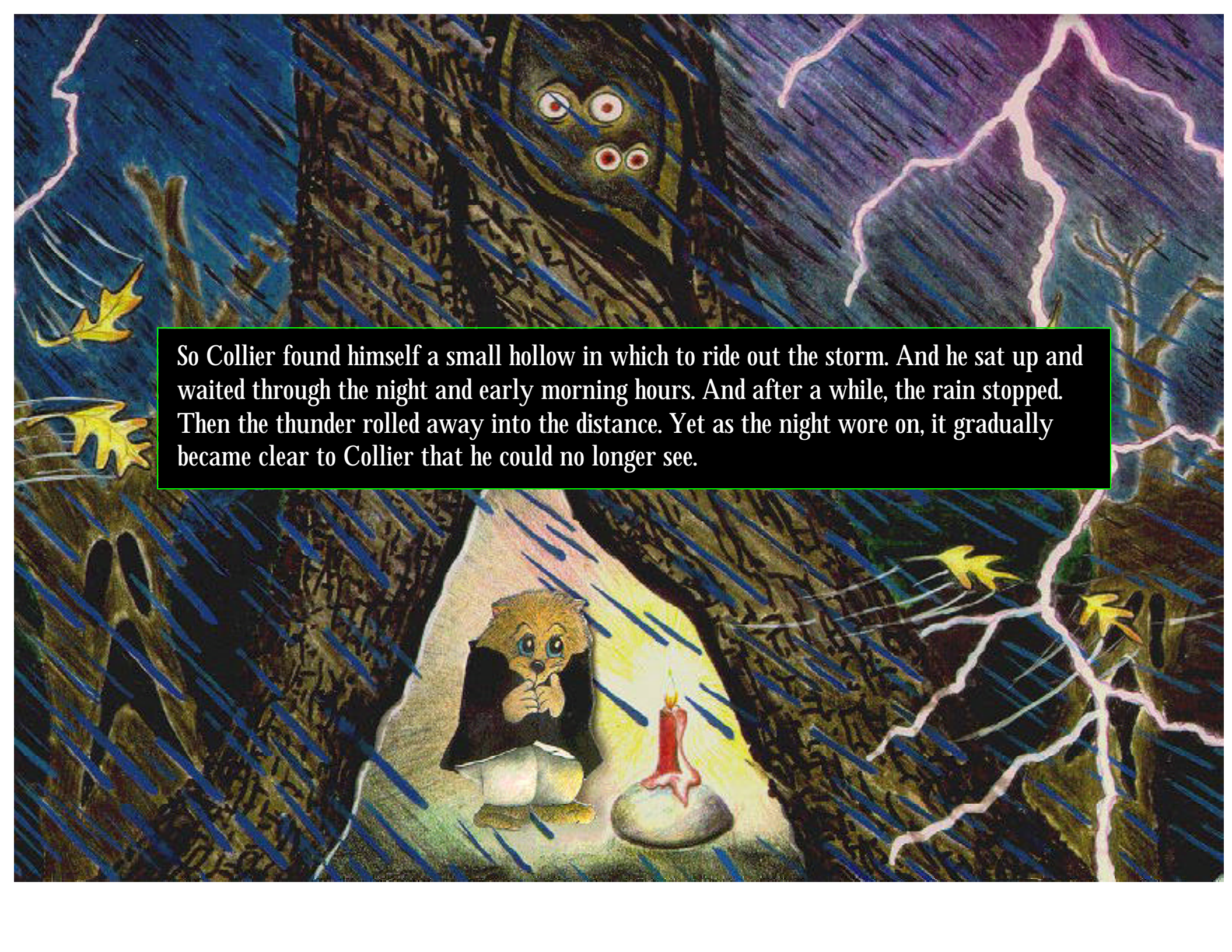
And even though street-wise tom cats aren't accustomed to being afraid, Collier was beginning to feel somewhat scared, for he had never been off on his own like this before.



As it started to rain, the lightening grew more intense, the thunder grew louder, and the rain fell harder.

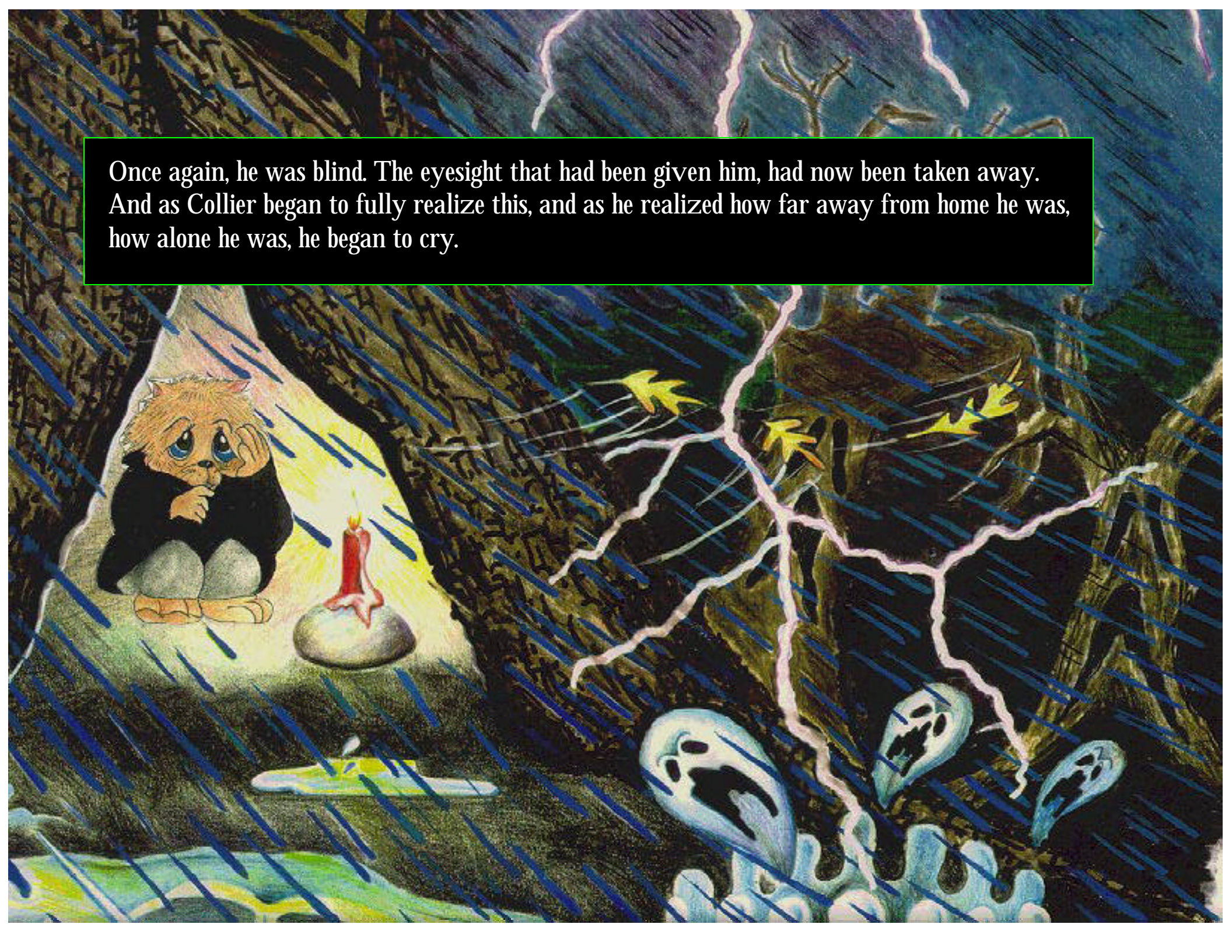


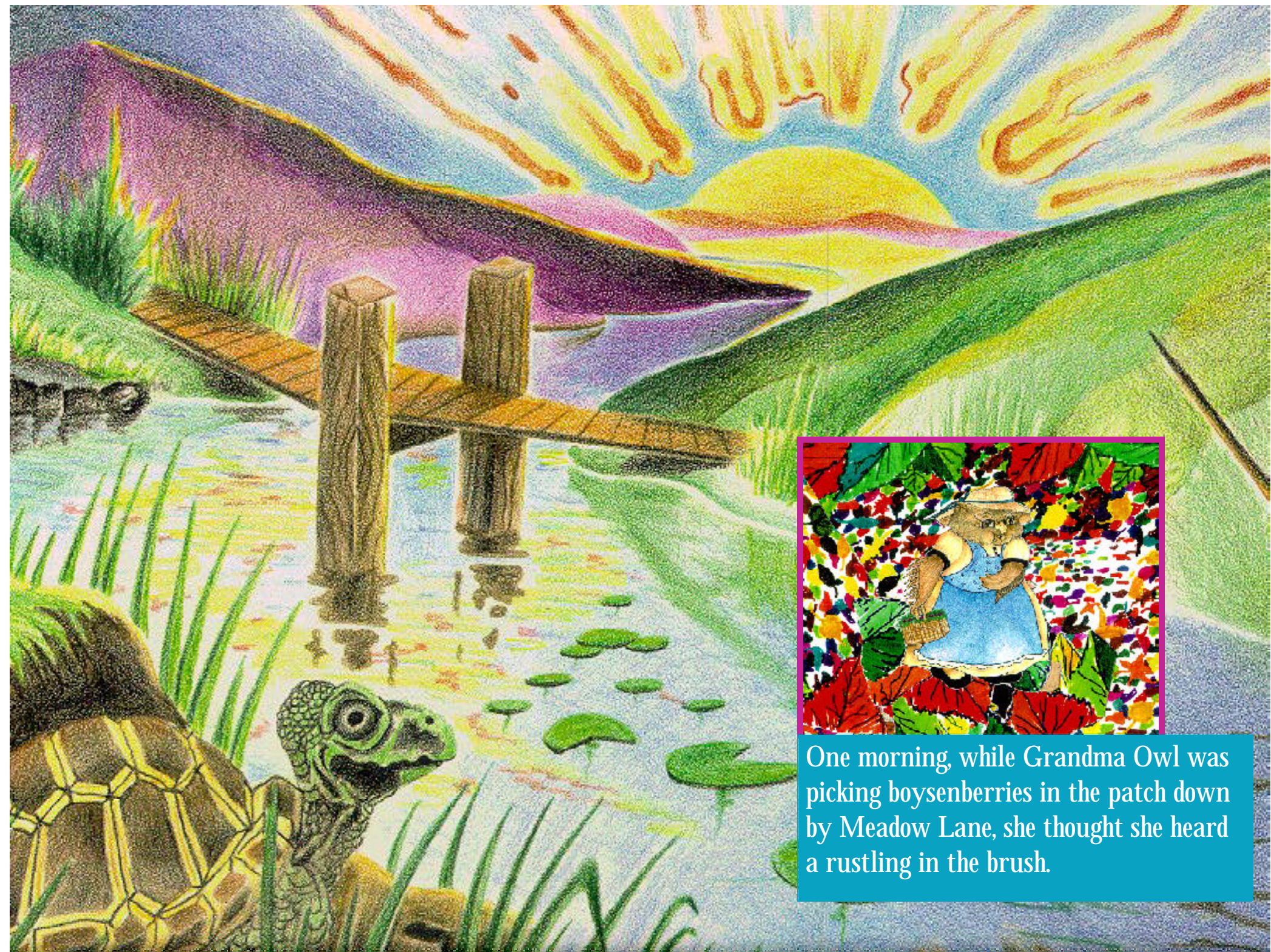
Suddenly there was a huge crash of thunder! And the darkened sky filled with light!
And then another crash followed!

The illustration depicts a stormy night. The sky is dark purple and blue, with bright white lightning bolts striking down. Heavy rain falls diagonally across the scene, represented by numerous blue streaks. In the upper center, a dark, shadowy figure with four large, white, staring eyes peeks out from a hollow in a tree. In the lower center, a small, brown, bear-like creature with large blue eyes sits huddled inside a hollow, looking up with a worried expression. A single lit candle in a glass holder provides a warm, yellow glow, illuminating the creature and the interior of the hollow. Yellow leaves are scattered around the scene, some appearing to be blown by the wind.

So Collier found himself a small hollow in which to ride out the storm. And he sat up and waited through the night and early morning hours. And after a while, the rain stopped. Then the thunder rolled away into the distance. Yet as the night wore on, it gradually became clear to Collier that he could no longer see.

Once again, he was blind. The eyesight that had been given him, had now been taken away. And as Collier began to fully realize this, and as he realized how far away from home he was, how alone he was, he began to cry.





One morning, while Grandma Owl was picking boysenberries in the patch down by Meadow Lane, she thought she heard a rustling in the brush.



She stopped and listened and heard the rustling again. She moved closer and there she saw Collier, shivering in a pile of leaves. He had tried to find his way back to the house, to find his way home again.



“Collier?”

Collier awoke with a start. “Grandma Owl? Is that you?
Oh, Grandma, I’m so sorry for the things I said to you.
I’m so sorry.”

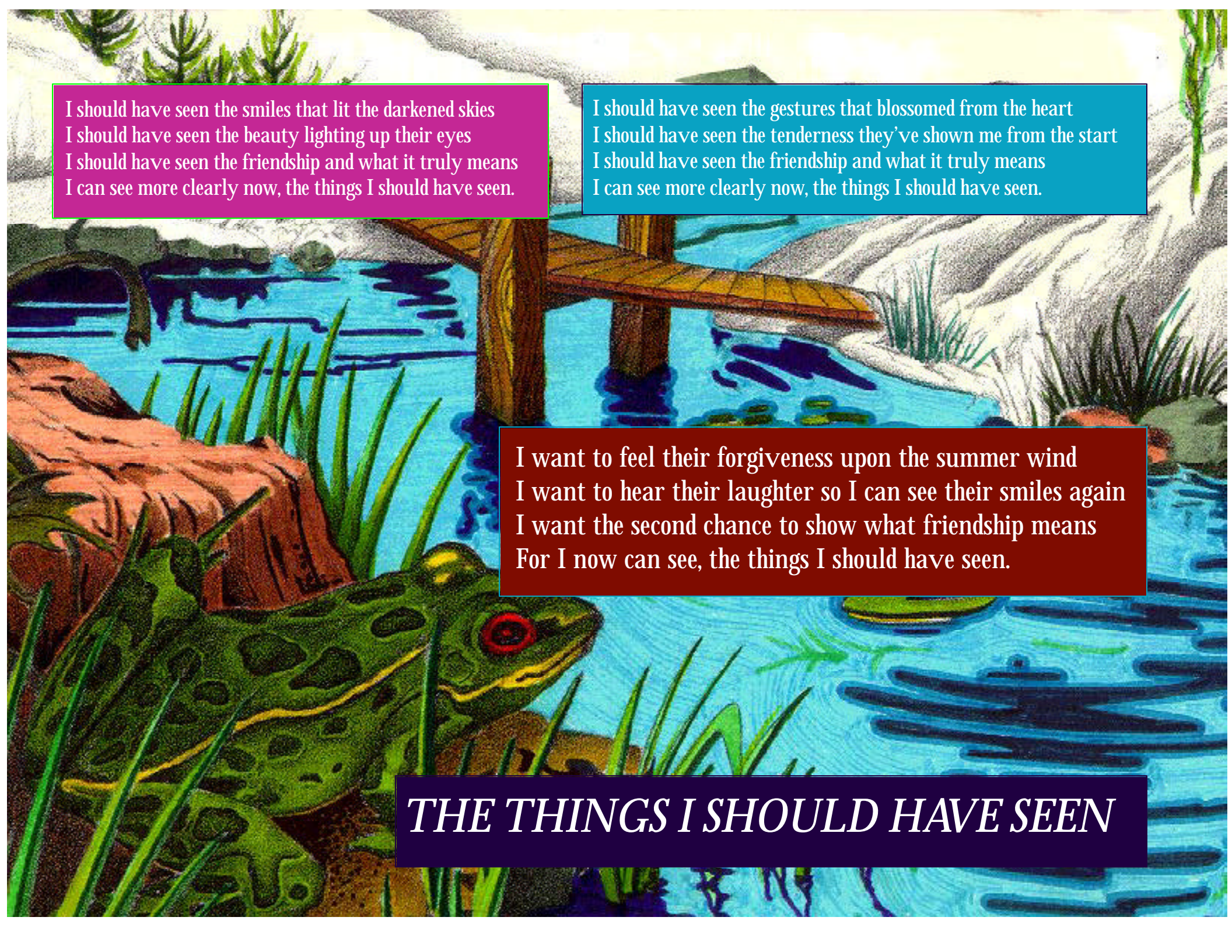




“There, there. Everything’ll be all right. I’m here.
You’re home now.”

“I — I can’t see you Grandma. I’ve lost my sight again.”
Grandma Owl’s heart sank. “Oh Collier. I’m so sorry.”

“No Grandma,
I’m the one who should be sorry.
I was given the gift of my sight and what-do-I-do?
I see the wrong things.
I see the glass half-empty, instead of half-full.
I see flaws in everyone else, instead of their beauty.”



I should have seen the smiles that lit the darkened skies
I should have seen the beauty lighting up their eyes
I should have seen the friendship and what it truly means
I can see more clearly now, the things I should have seen.

I should have seen the gestures that blossomed from the heart
I should have seen the tenderness they've shown me from the start
I should have seen the friendship and what it truly means
I can see more clearly now, the things I should have seen.

I want to feel their forgiveness upon the summer wind
I want to hear their laughter so I can see their smiles again
I want the second chance to show what friendship means
For I now can see, the things I should have seen.

THE THINGS I SHOULD HAVE SEEN

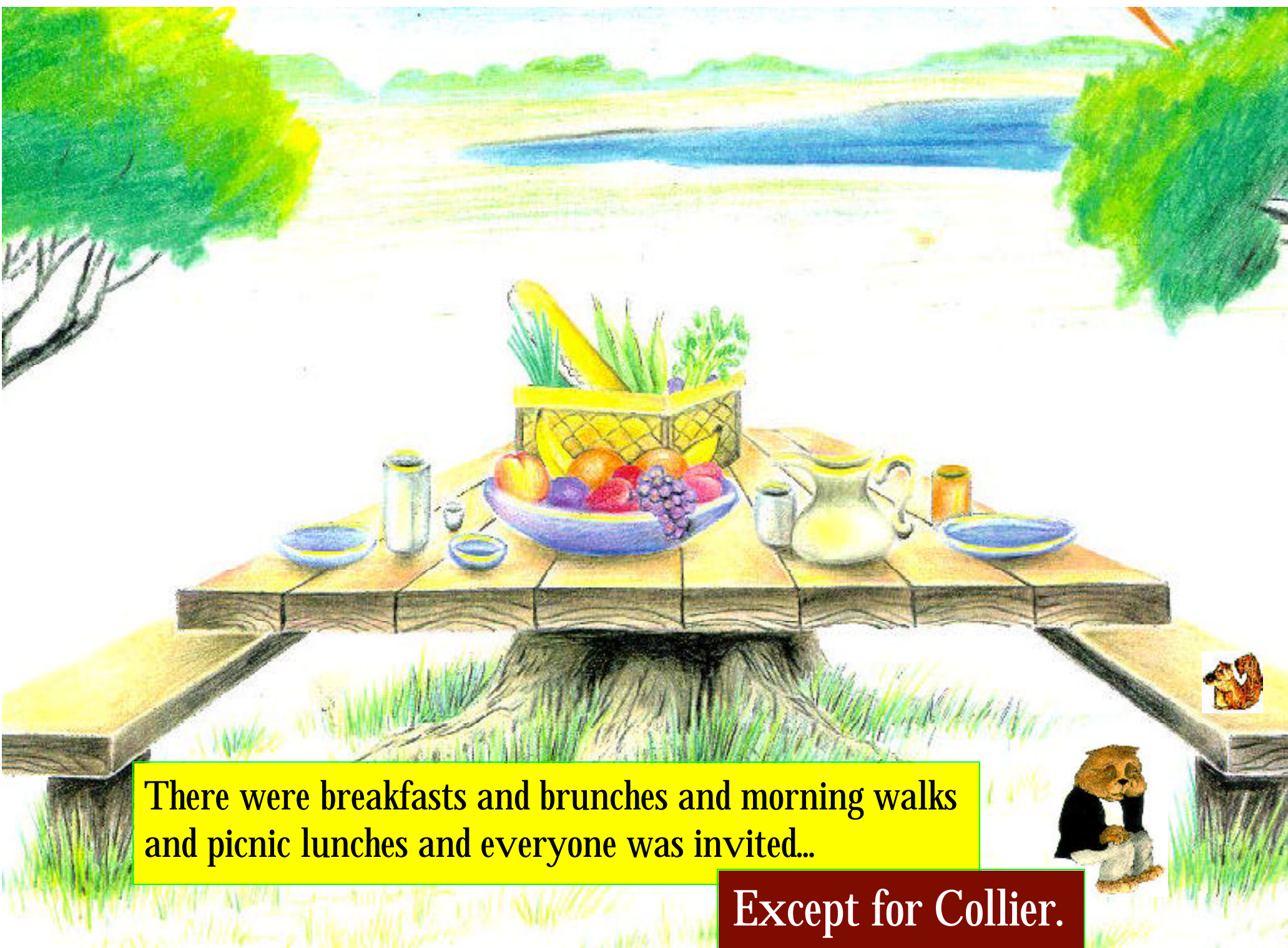


Grandma Owl took Collier under her wing and guided him home.

For the other animals on Chestnut Ridge, however, being forgiving did not come so easily.



So, no one said anything.
No one acknowledged Collier's presence
nor the apology he offered.
Rather, they all just turned away and ignored him.



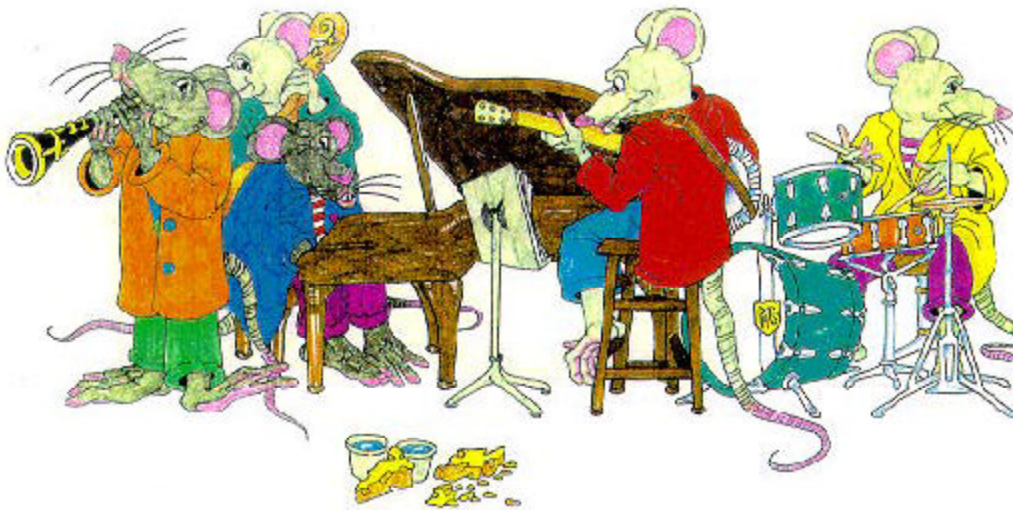
There were breakfasts and brunches and morning walks and picnic lunches and everyone was invited..

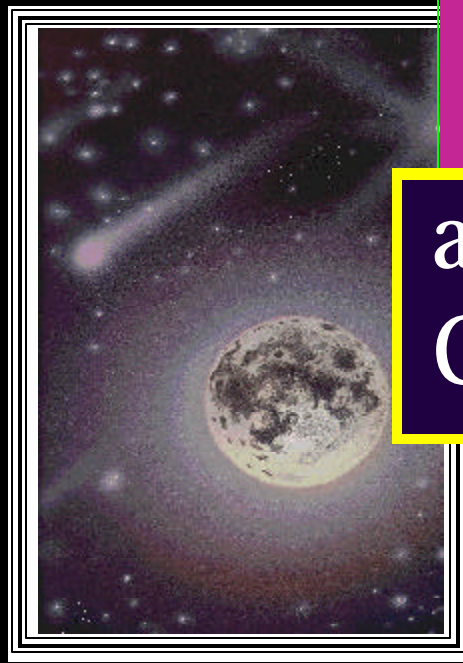
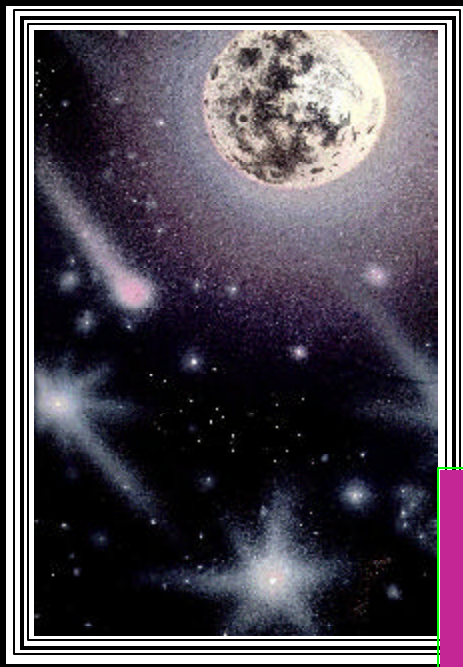
Except for Collier.



There was kite flying and kick ball games and floating in Pressler's Pond and everyone joined in...

Except for Collier.



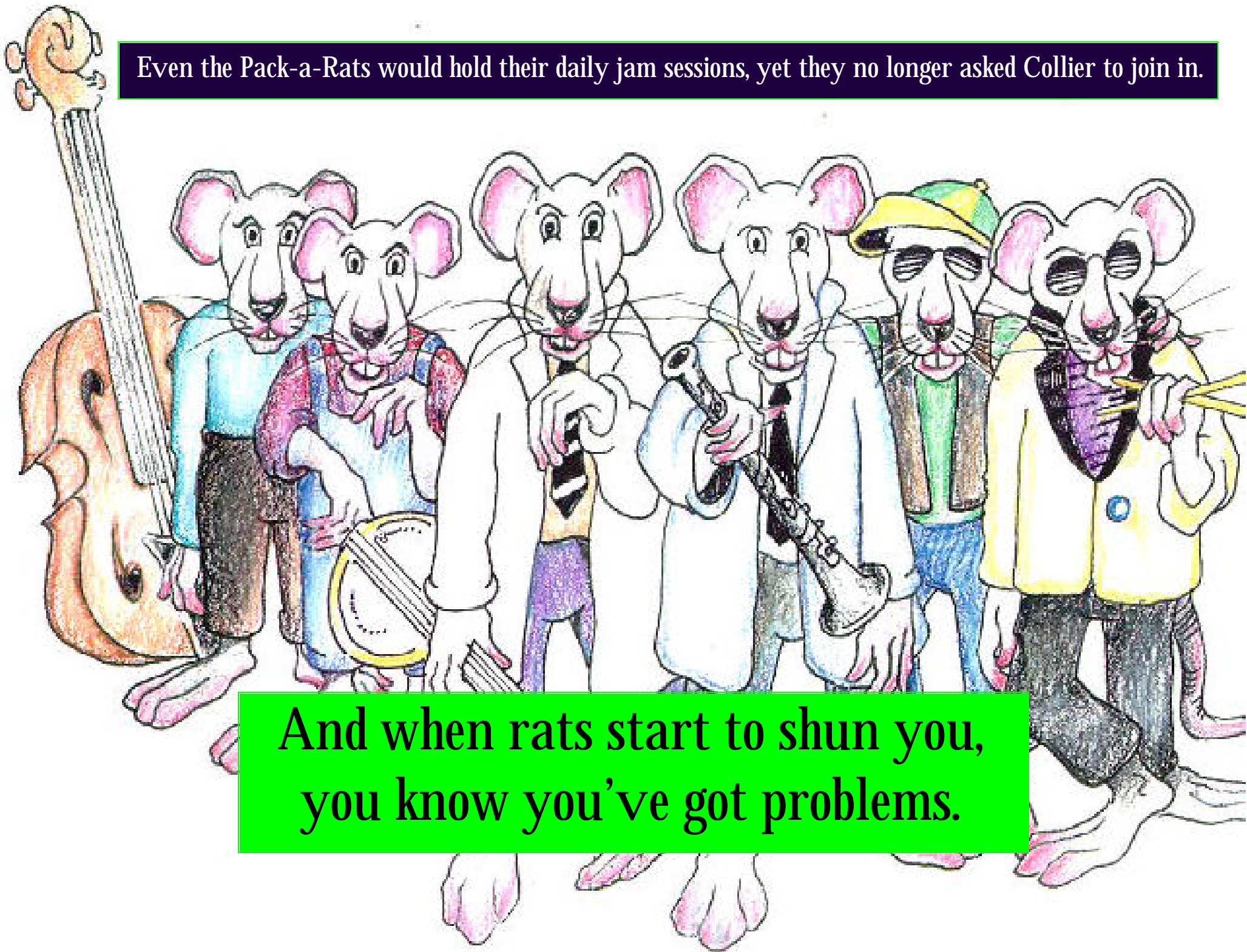


There was storytelling
and tree climbing and
star gazing —

and no one ever invited
Collier to come along.



Even the Pack-a-Rats would hold their daily jam sessions, yet they no longer asked Collier to join in.



And when rats start to shun you,
you know you've got problems.



Then, one day late in the fall, the crew was planning for the annual Harvest Festival Hay Ride and Beach Party held down by the Big River.

It was the last celebration before the snows and everybody would be there and everyone on the Ridge was packing blankets and picnic baskets, gathering kick balls and kites, tuning up musical instruments and dusting off old stories...



And still, no one invited Collier to come along.



Then, just before they left, Ras rabbit turned toward Collier. “Well mon, are you just going to sit there or are you coming along with us?”



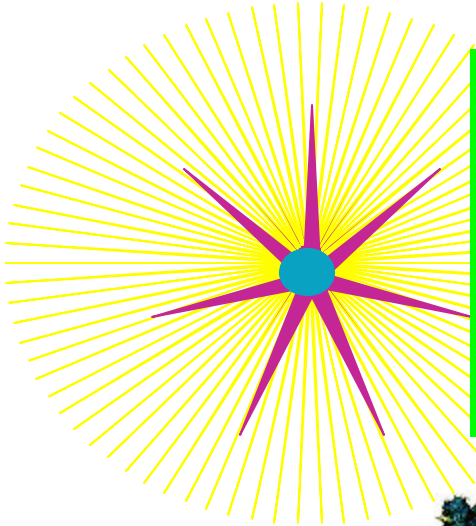
Everyone was shocked by the invitation, most of all Collier, who could feel the stares of the others on him as his face heated up with embarrassment.



The other animals weren't certain that they wanted Collier along.

They'd been hurt by him and weren't sure they could forgive the things he'd said about them, much less forget the way he'd treated them.






But Ras disagreed.
“Certainly you can forgive.
And surely you can forget.

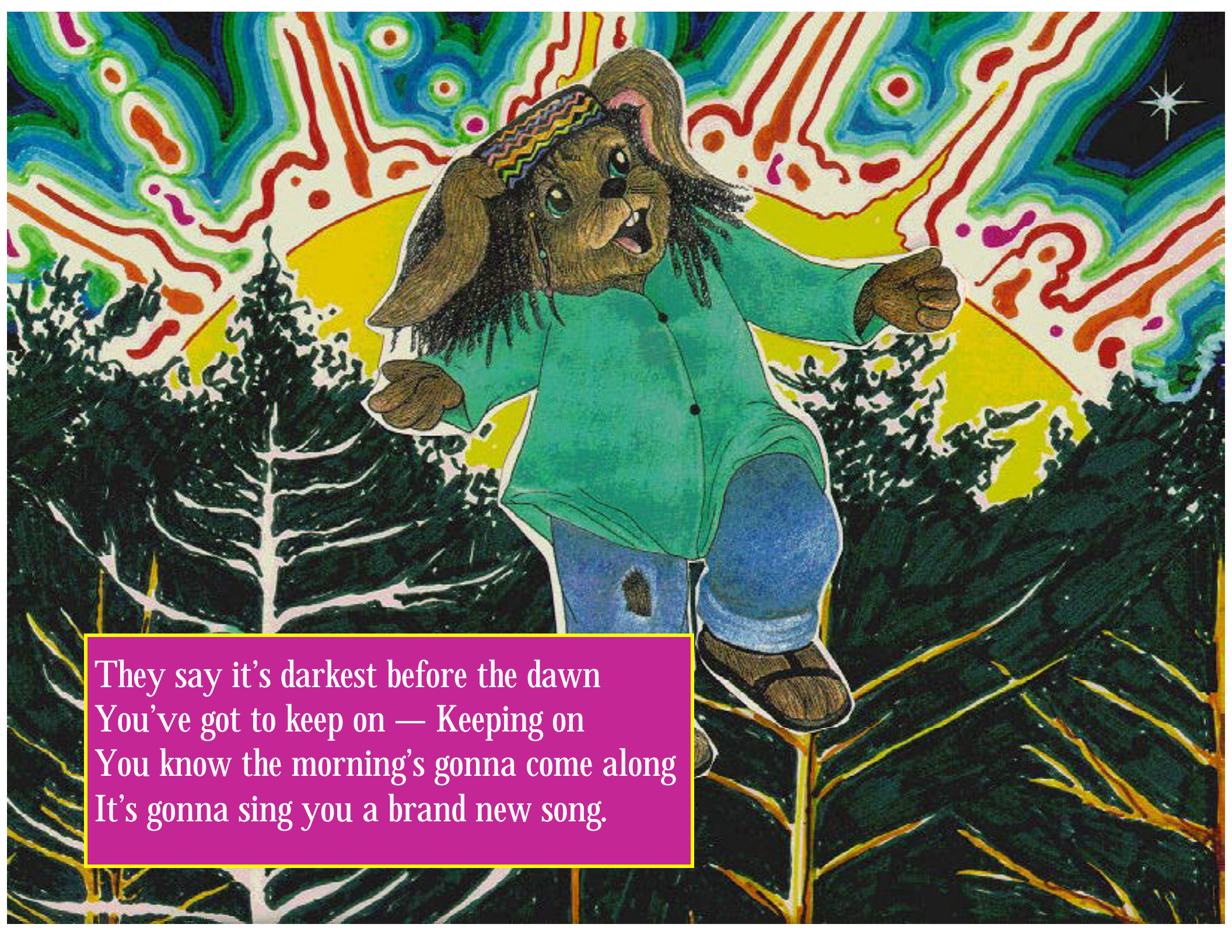


All you need do is put a new song
in your heart and
let it just dash away the doubts
that may continue to linger.”



You — You've got a good thing going
The breeze is blowing your way
The birds are a-winging,
The church bell's a-ringing
The new day's singing your praise.

BRAND NEW SONG



They say it's darkest before the dawn
You've got to keep on — Keeping on
You know the morning's gonna come along
It's gonna sing you a brand new song.

They all thought about it for a time. Could they forgive? And if they did forgive, could they forget?

What if they were going about their business one day and suddenly, out of no where, the memories of the hurt popped into their head? What would they do then? What would they do?

Think of the good times, perhaps. Think about the sunsets they'd described to Collier, or the walks they had taken, or the stories and the laughter they had shared. But would it be enough? Could they truly forget?

"Yes, we can forget," said Argus, on behalf of the others. "I accept your apology Collier. I do forgive you."



"Really Argus? You mean it?"

"Yes I do. You're our friend.

And friends sometimes have a falling out, but a friendship should be stronger than any old falling out. And the fact of the matter is... I've missed you. So come on. We've got a festival to go to, and who knows what might happen!"



CHESNUT RIDGE (REPRISE)

We're so glad you stopped on by
To share a song in the morning sky
And hear the birds sing in reply!
On Chestnut Ridge

We're so glad you came along
Excuse us, we don't mean to fawn
But with friends like you, we can't go wrong!
On Chestnut Ridge

Chest-nut — Chestnut Ridge
Where the whippoor wills
And the buttercup spills
The dew drops from the night.

Chest-nut — Chestnut Ridge
Where the butterflies in the morning skies
Then flutters out of sight.



We're so glad you happened past
Our time together went so fast
But the memories will always last!
Of Chestnut Ridge.

CHESNUT RIDGE (REPRISE)

We're so glad you stopped on in
For a slice of smile and a glass a grin
We hope y'all stop back again!
To Chestnut Ridge.

Chest-nut — Chestnut Ridge
Where the meadow larks and the dogwood barks
Although it never bites.

Chest-nut — Chestnut Ridge
Where the dragon flies in the twilight skies
Then kite tails out of sight.

THE HOUSE ON CHESTNUT RIDGE

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Music and lyrics by James Tigue and Matthew K. Weiland

NARRATION BY

Anne E. DeChant and Wayne S. Turney

ILLUSTRATIONS BY

Susan Blaugrund, Vince Broncaccio & Karlis Petersons

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