

The book cover features a central white title panel set against a background of a yellowish-gold field. Two mice are depicted on a dark, thorny branch that winds across the cover. The mouse on the left is smaller and brown, perched on a branch. The mouse on the right is larger and darker brown, also on a branch. Several large, five-petaled pink flowers with yellow centers are scattered around the mice. The overall style is reminiscent of early 20th-century children's book illustrations.

THE
TOWN
MOUSE
AND THE
COUNTRY
MOUSE


AN AESOP FABLE
RETOLD &
ILLUSTRATED BY
HELEN WARD

An illustration of two birds perched on a branch with yellow flowers. The birds have white bodies with black and pink markings. The background is a light blue-green wash.

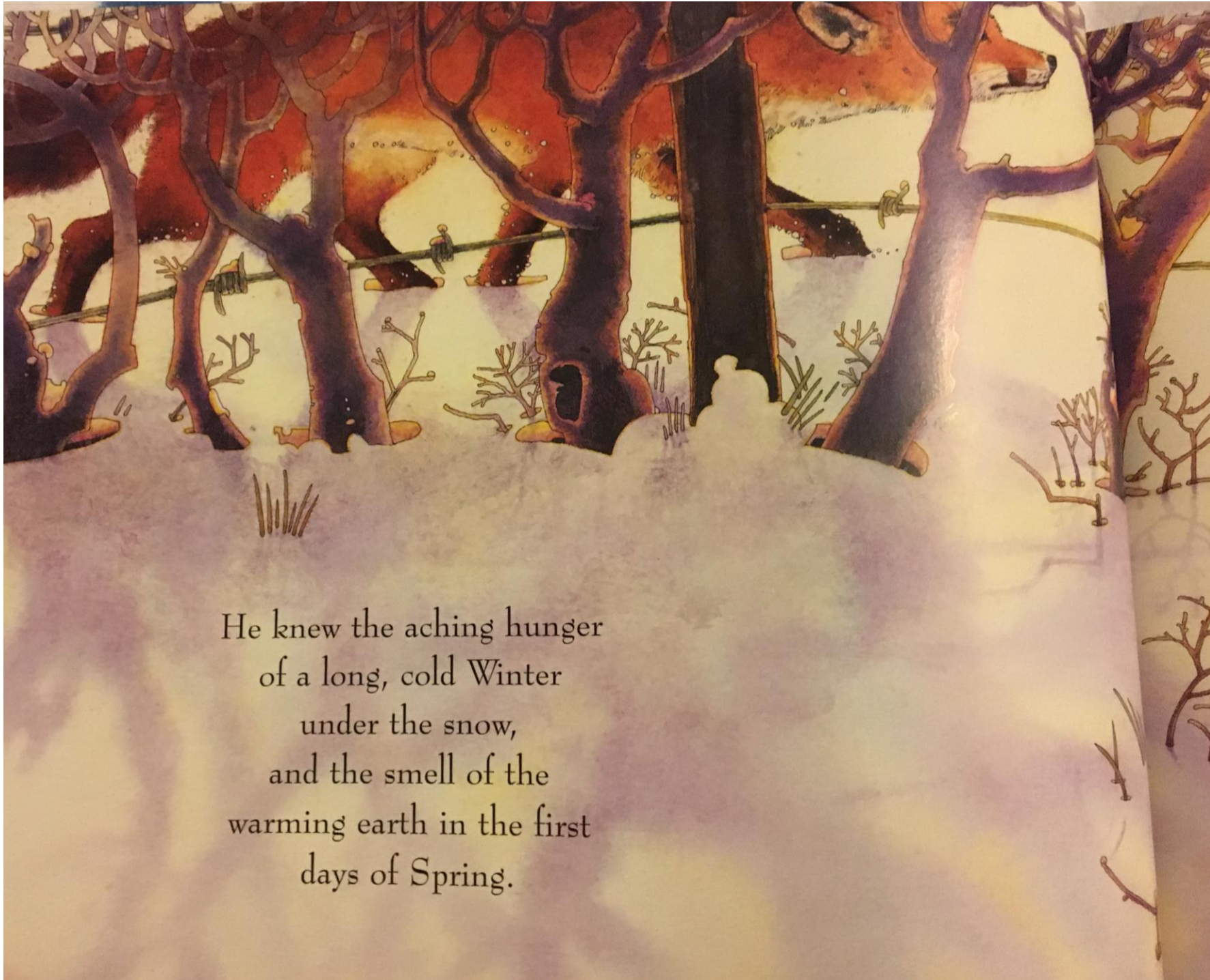
There was once
merely a mouse.

An illustration of a brown mouse perched among pink and white flowers. The mouse is looking towards the right. The background is a light blue-green wash.

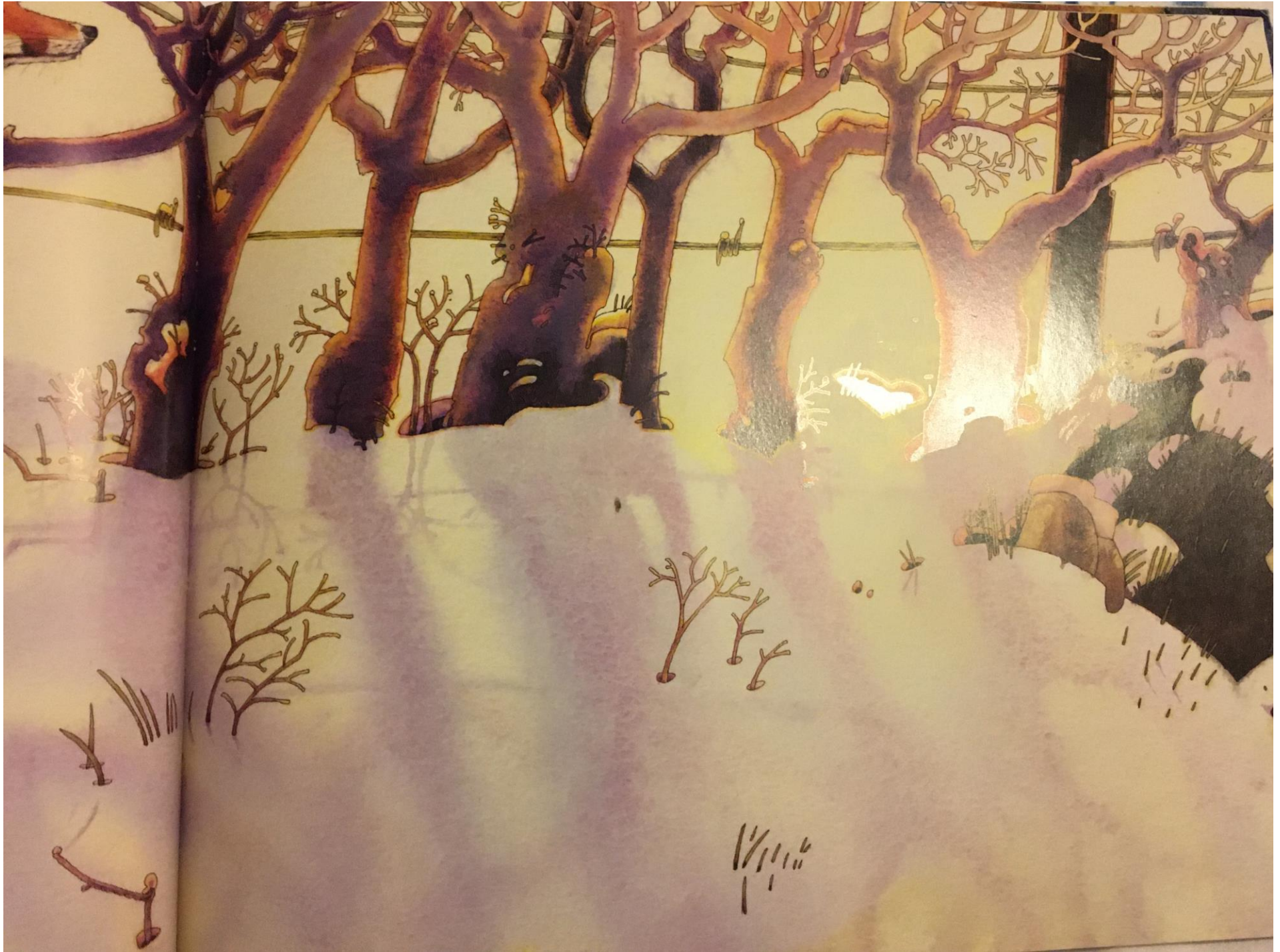
He lived a small
and quiet life
among the seasons.

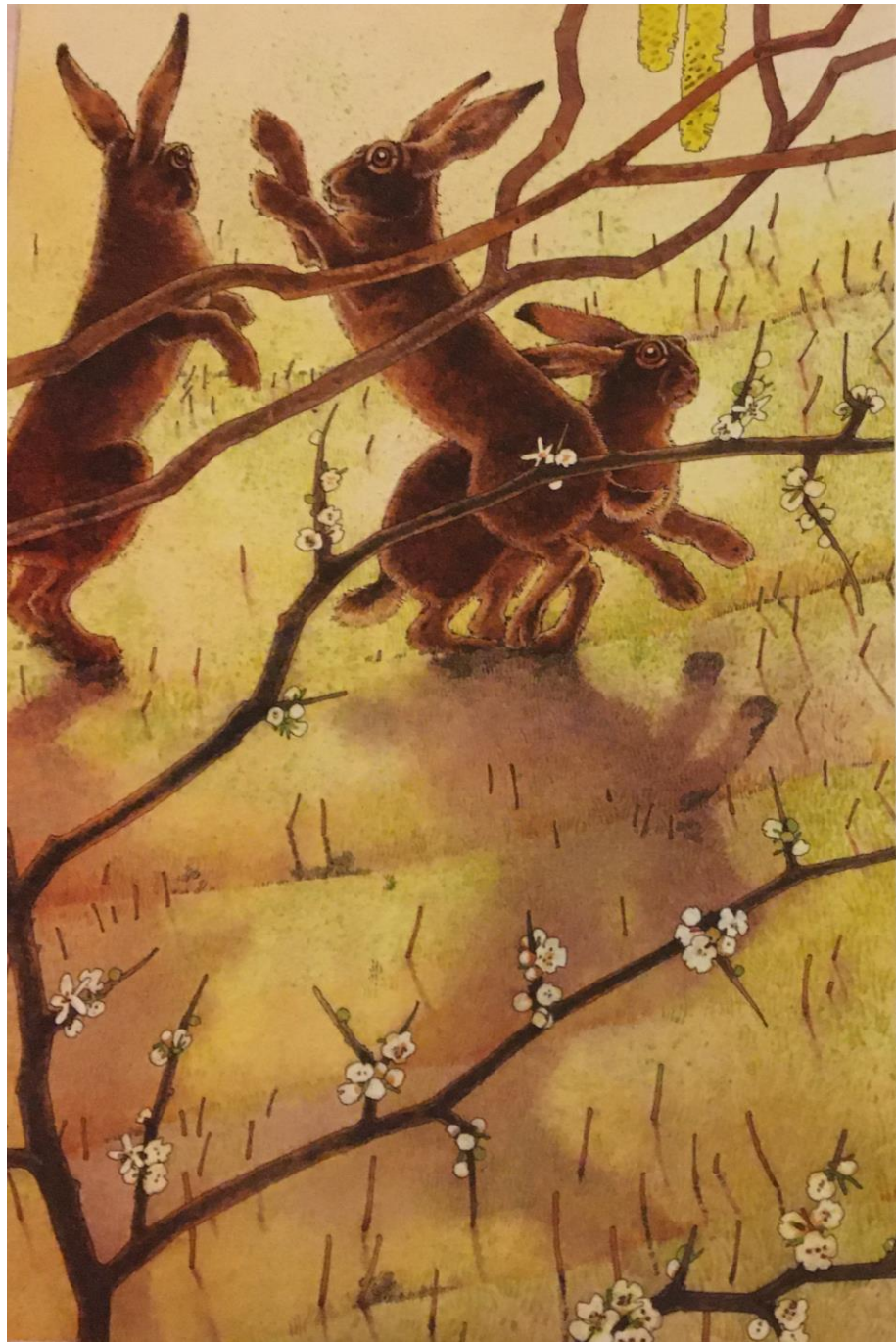


He knew the
busyness of Summer
and the rich, ripe,
dozy-sweet days
of Autumn.



He knew the aching hunger
of a long, cold Winter
under the snow,
and the smell of the
warming earth in the first
days of Spring.






The Country Mouse knew
he was contented.



Then, one Spring morning
a visitor arrived...
a fine, sleek City cousin
with a lot to say.



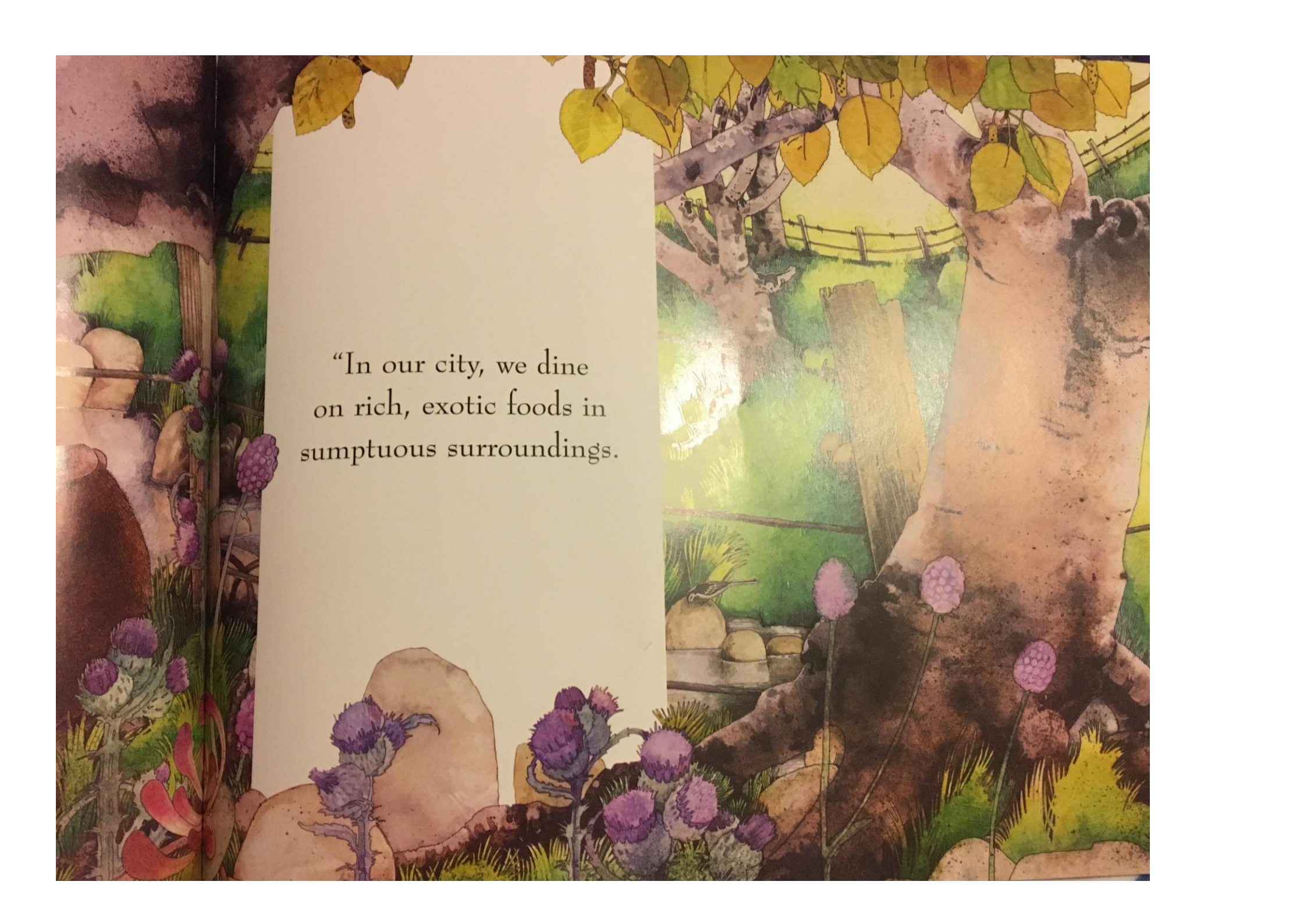


“In the city,
we don’t have mud...

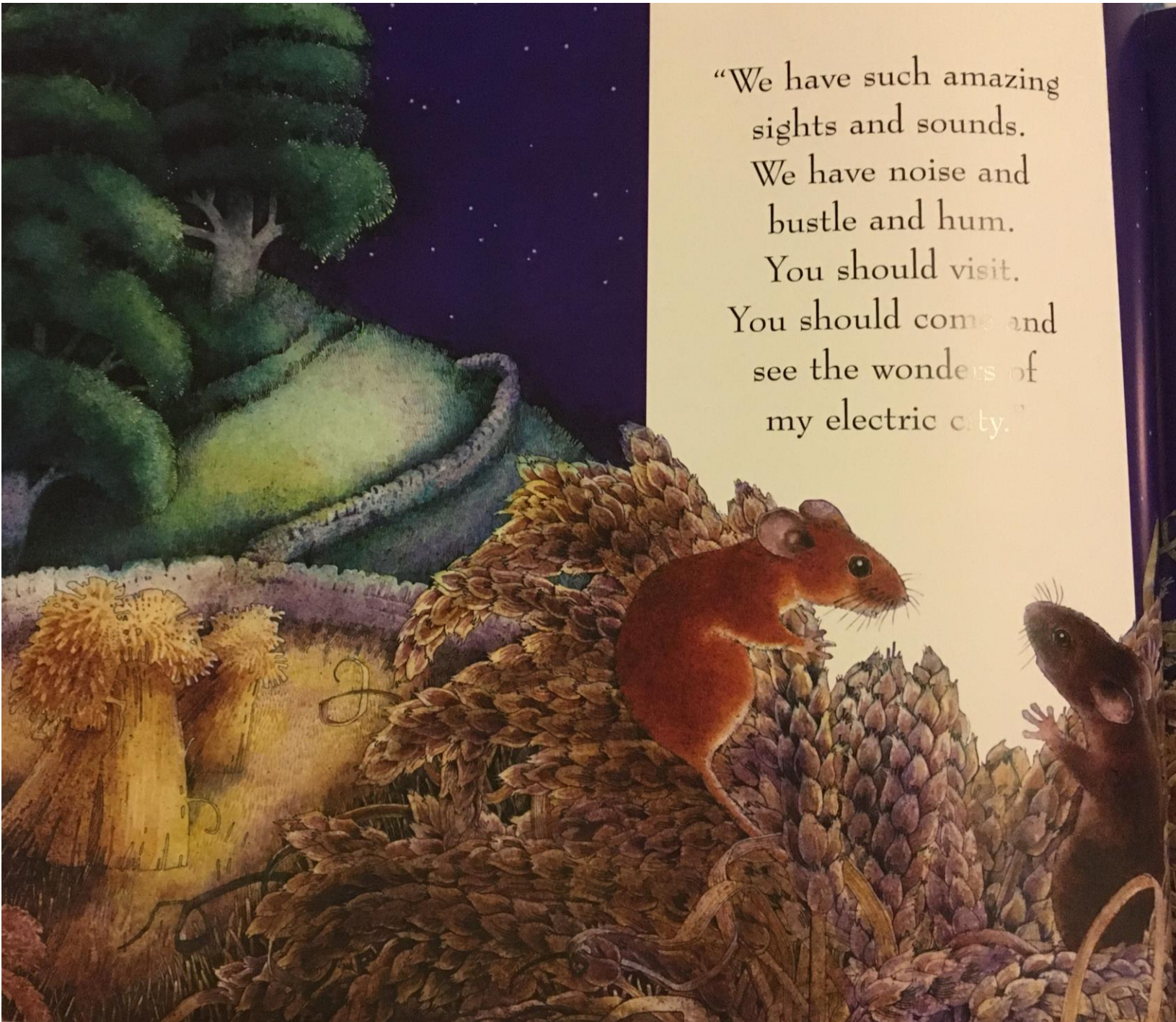
and we don’t have
dangerous wild animals.





A watercolor illustration of a rural landscape. In the foreground, there are several purple, thistle-like flowers with green leaves and brown stems. To the right, a large, textured tree trunk is visible, with more of these purple flowers growing from its base. In the background, a wooden fence runs across a green field. A stream flows through the scene, with a small bird perched on a rock in the water. The overall style is soft and painterly, with a mix of green, brown, and purple tones.

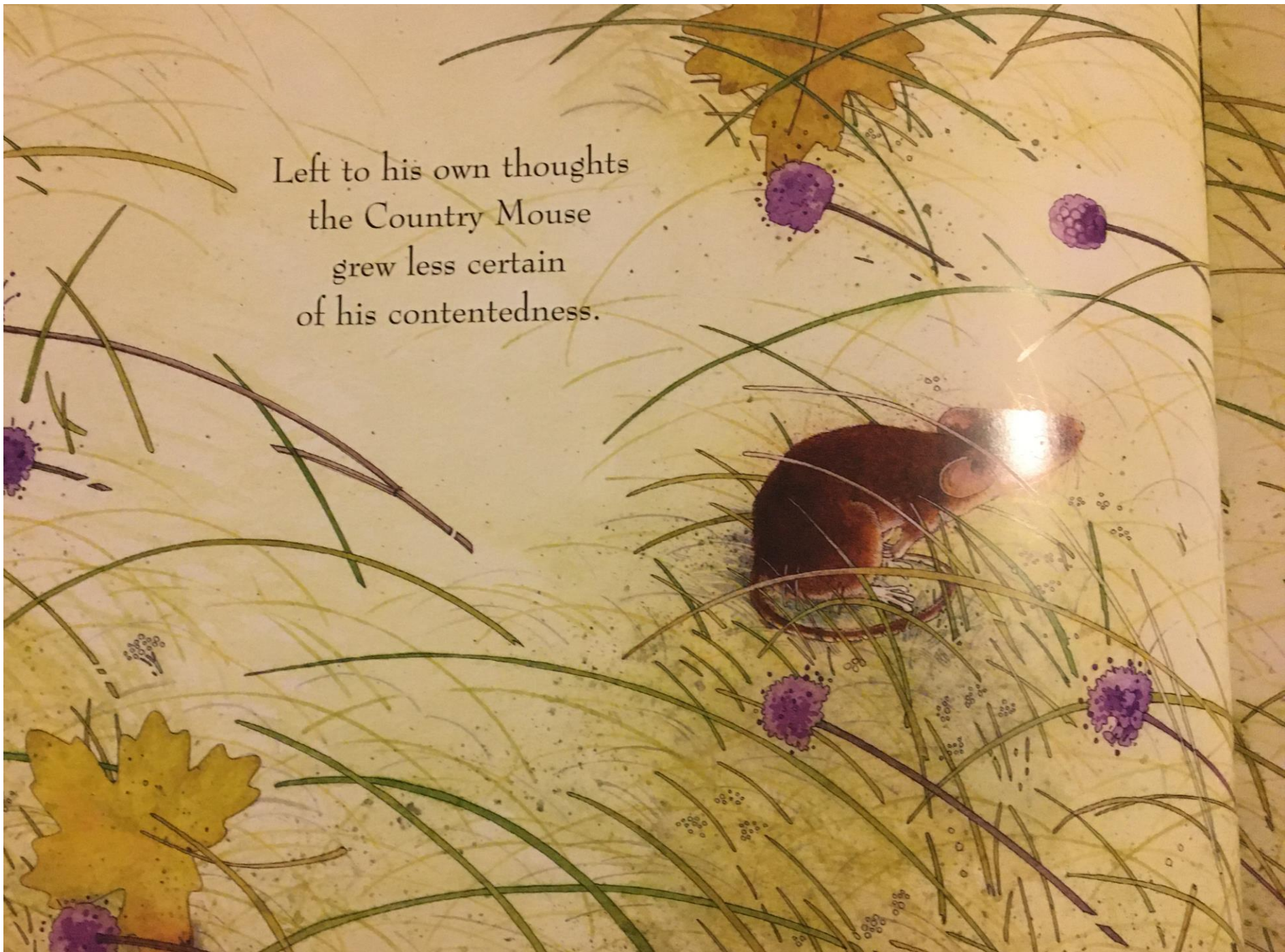
“In our city, we dine
on rich, exotic foods in
sumptuous surroundings.

An illustration of two mice in a field at night. A large, reddish-brown mouse stands on a pile of golden-brown leaves, looking towards the right. A smaller, dark brown mouse is partially visible on the right, looking towards the larger mouse. The background features a dark blue night sky with small white stars, a large green tree on the left, and a field of yellow flowers. The text is printed on a light-colored rectangular area in the upper right.

“We have such amazing
sights and sounds.
We have noise and
bustle and hum.
You should visit.
You should come and
see the wonders of
my electric city.”



Left to his own thoughts
the Country Mouse
grew less certain
of his contentedness.





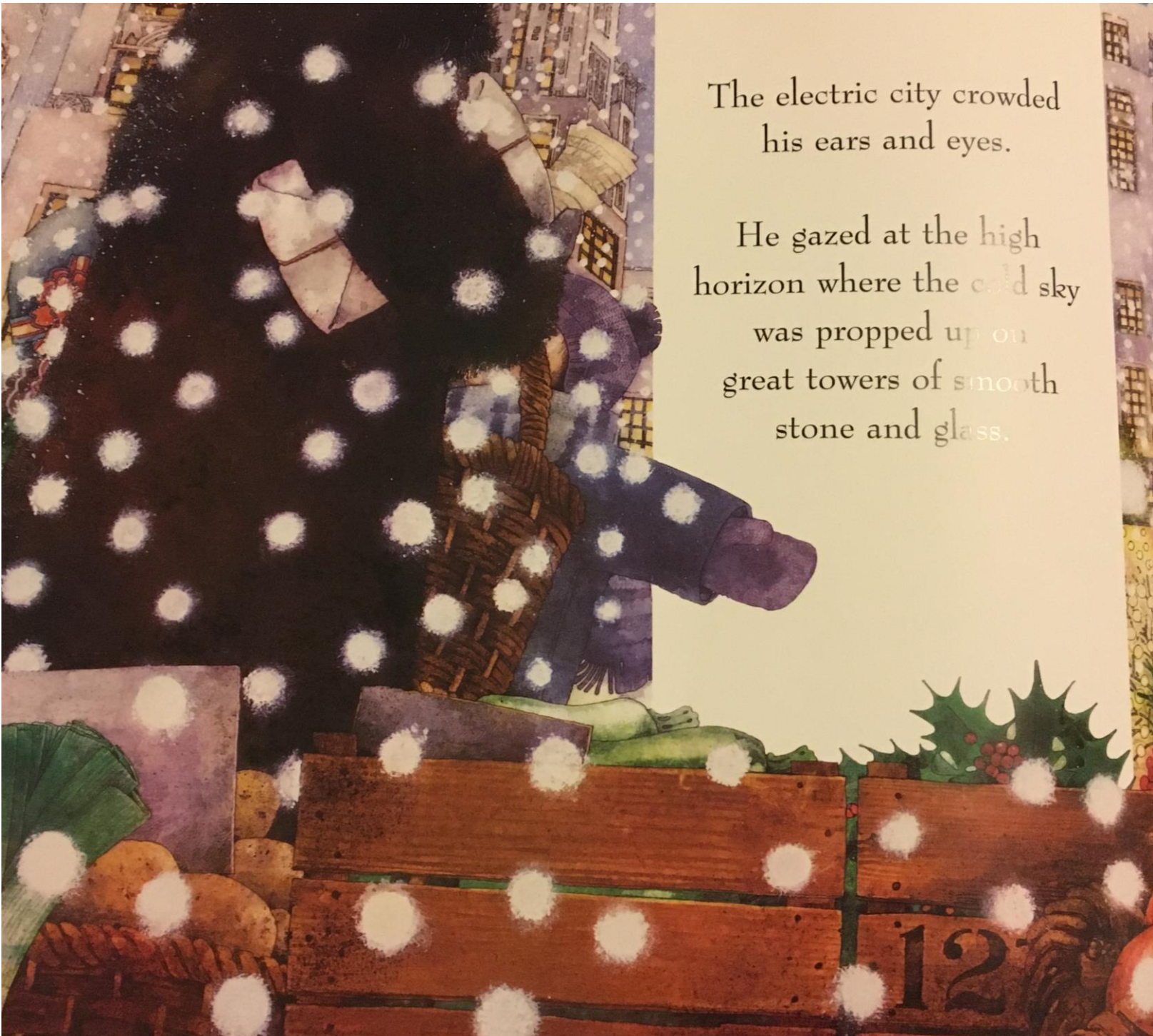




He felt a longing for
new sights and sounds.

With the first sharp chill
of Winter he stole a ride
to that bustle and hum.





The electric city crowded
his ears and eyes.

He gazed at the high
horizon where the cold sky
was propped up on
great towers of smooth
stone and glass.





He found lights
in the dark...

and automatic
ups and downs.





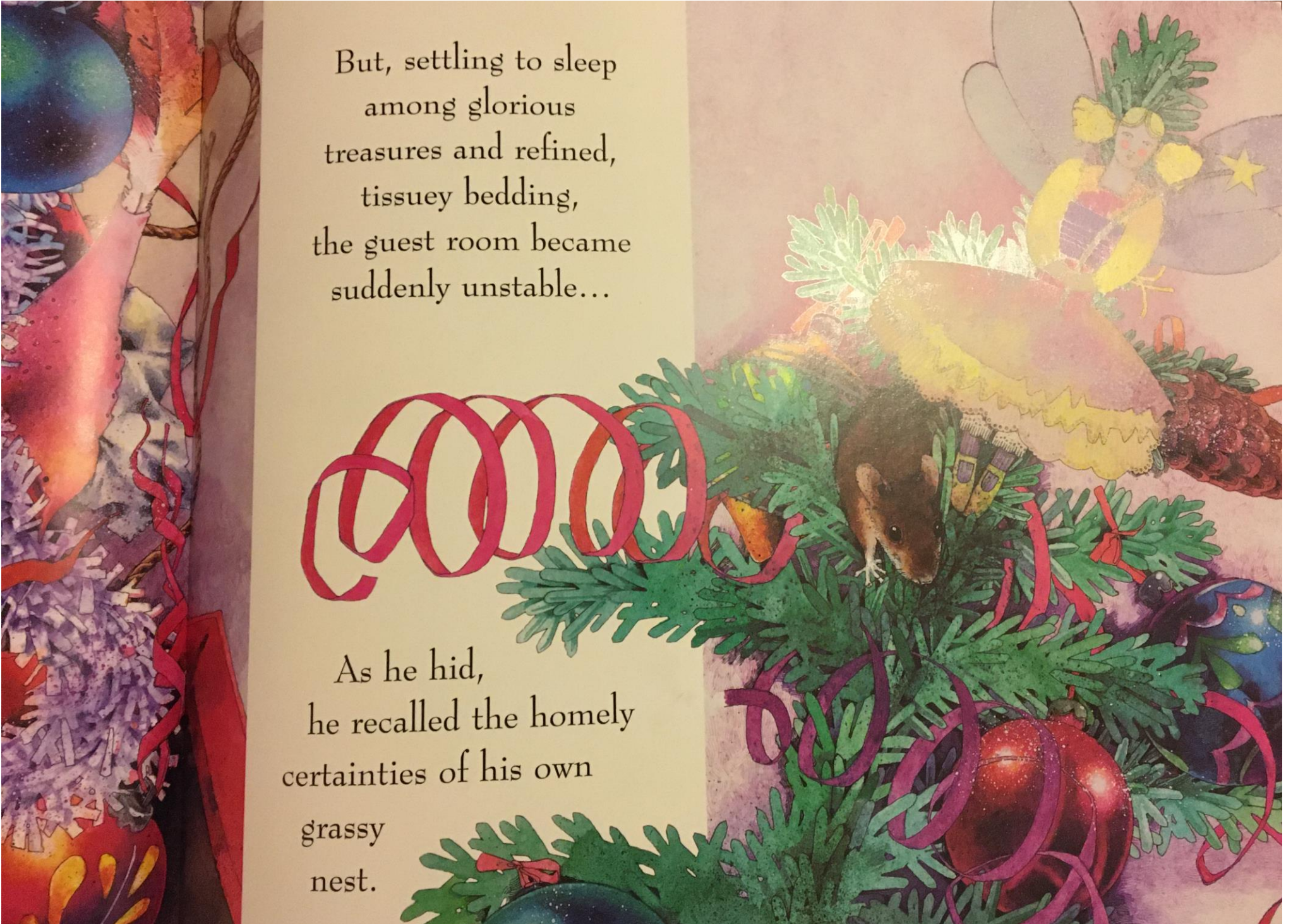




He found his cousin's
well-appointed apartment,
with luxurious
accommodation for
the humblest of
creatures.



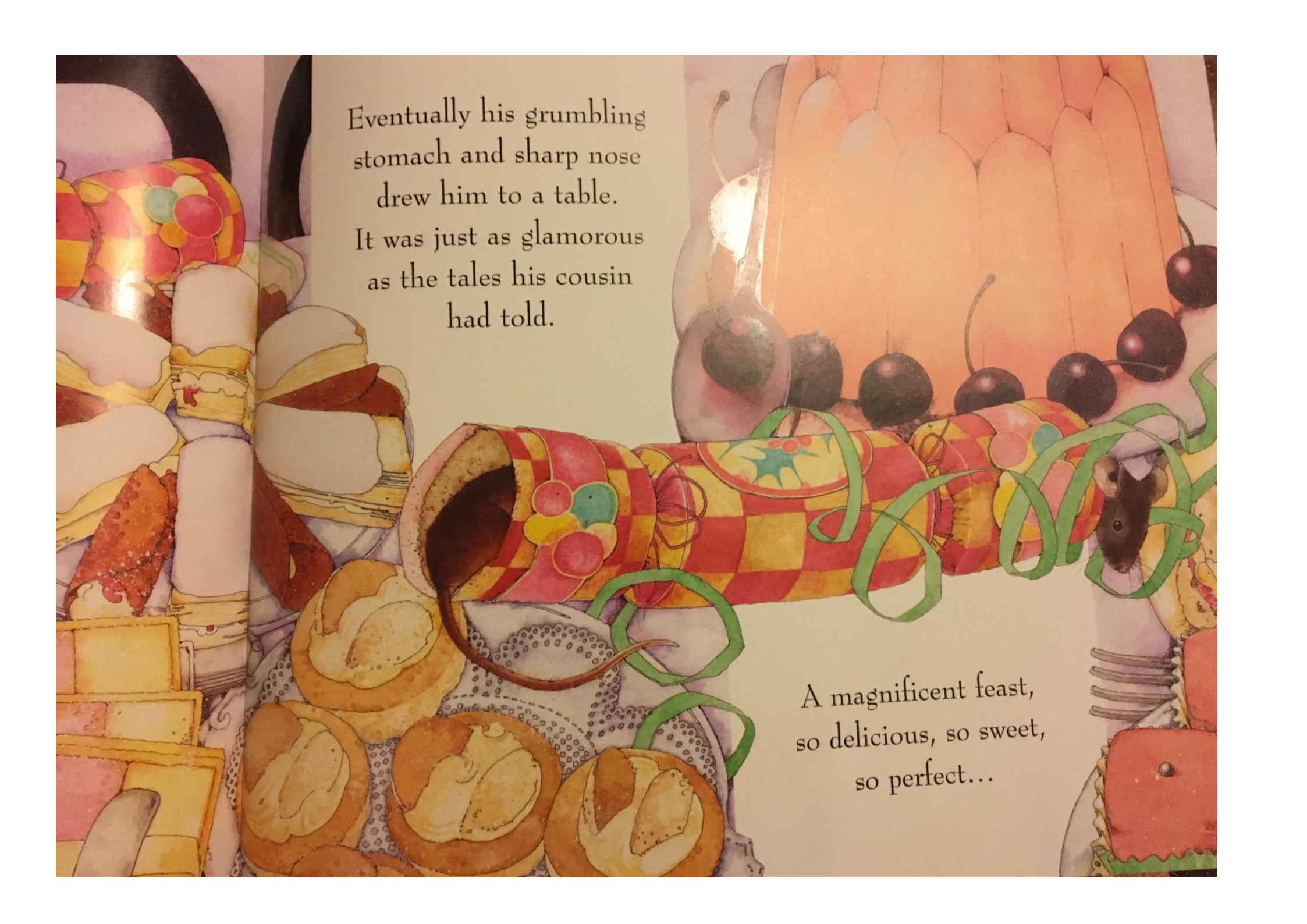




But, settling to sleep
among glorious
treasures and refined,
tissuey bedding,
the guest room became
suddenly unstable...

As he hid,
he recalled the homely
certainties of his own
grassy
nest.





Eventually his grumbling
stomach and sharp nose
drew him to a table.
It was just as glamorous
as the tales his cousin
had told.

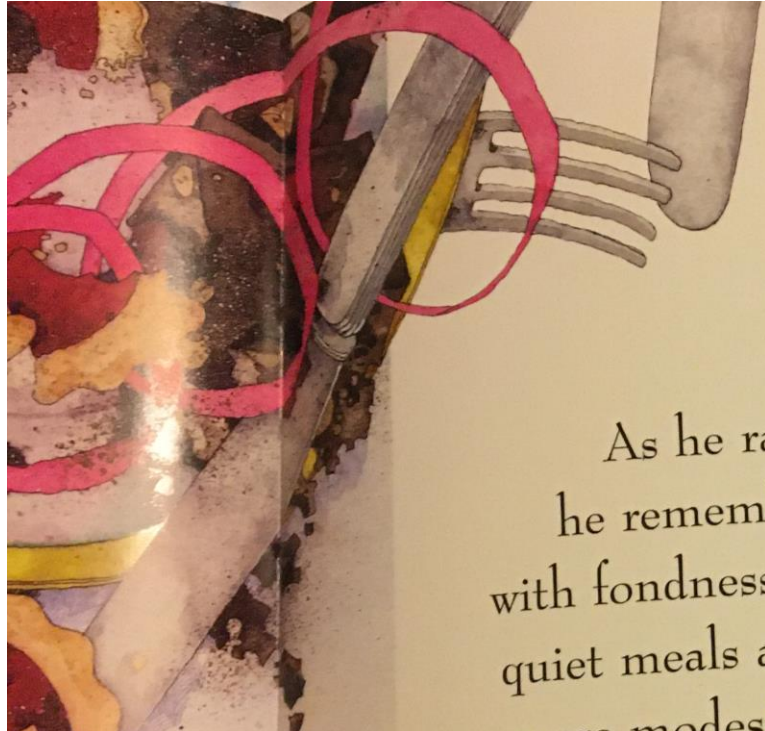
A magnificent feast,
so delicious, so sweet,
so perfect...





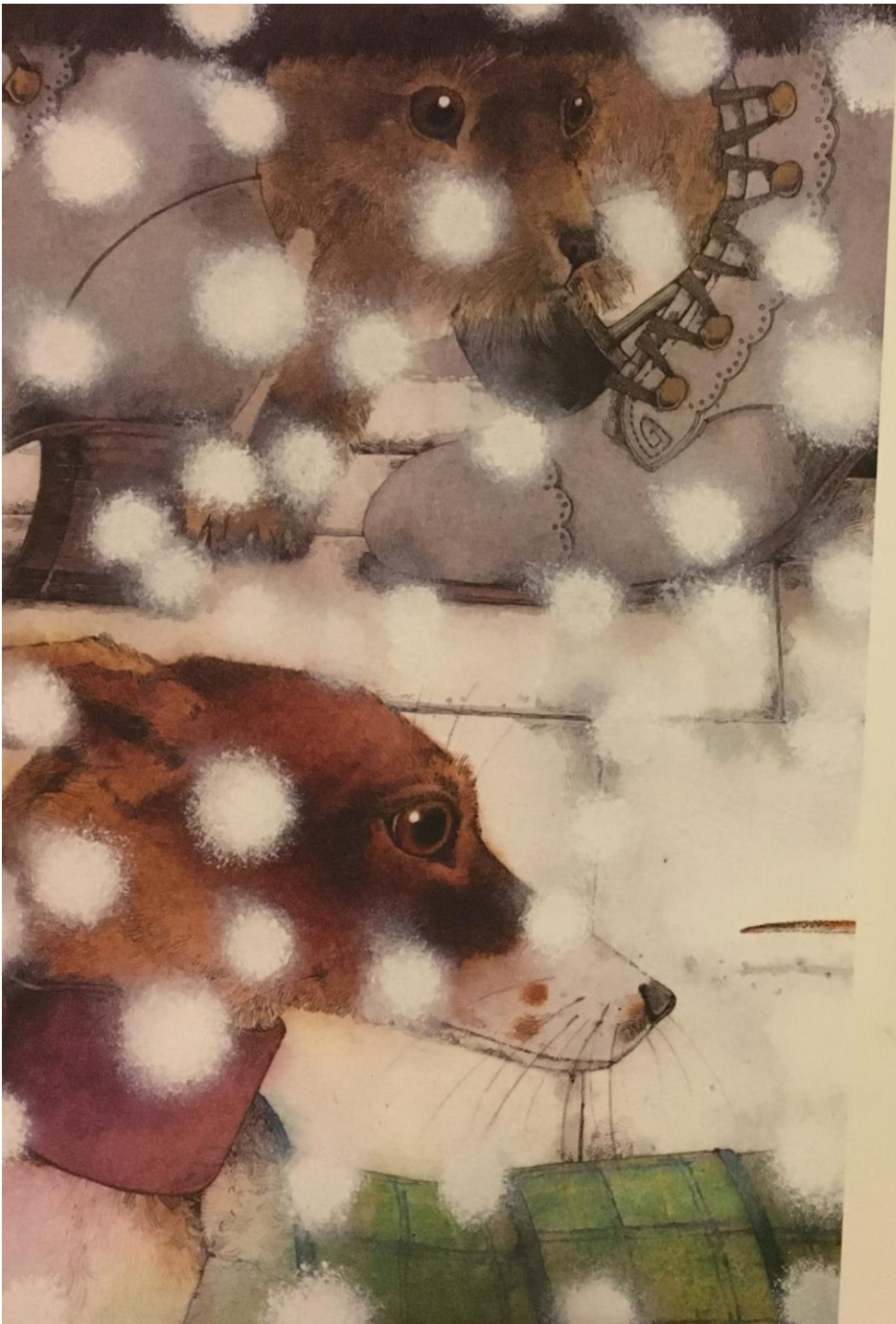
But so perilous.





As he ran,
he remembered
with fondness his own
quiet meals and their
more modest variety.



An illustration of two mice in a snowy scene. The mouse at the top is brown and looking towards the right, wearing a grey, lace-trimmed dress with a white collar and a small crown-like headpiece. The mouse at the bottom is reddish-brown and looking towards the right, wearing a purple collar. The scene is filled with soft, white snowflakes. The background shows a wooden structure, possibly a house or a fence, partially obscured by the snow.

He remembered too
the song of the
faraway thrush,
the heave of the worm
in the close earth,
and the buzz of crickets
in the hot hay meadows.



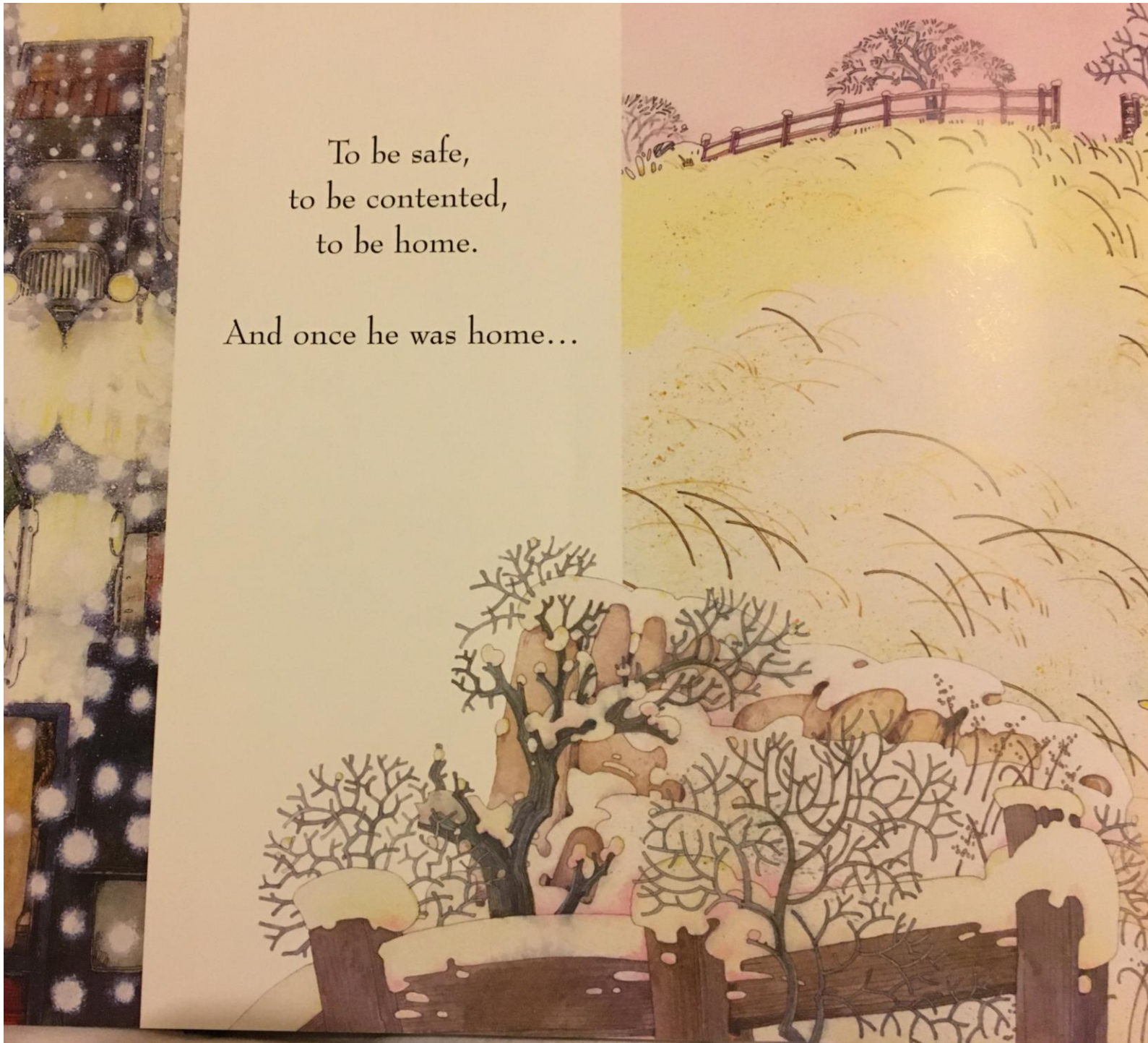


He longed
to be elsewhere.
To see the night sky
lit only by stars.



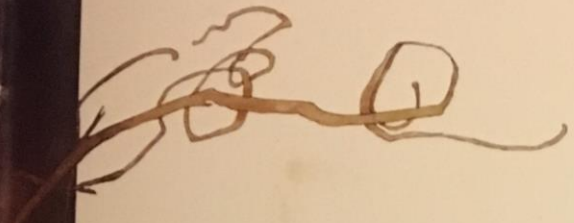
To be safe,
to be contented,
to be home.

And once he was home...





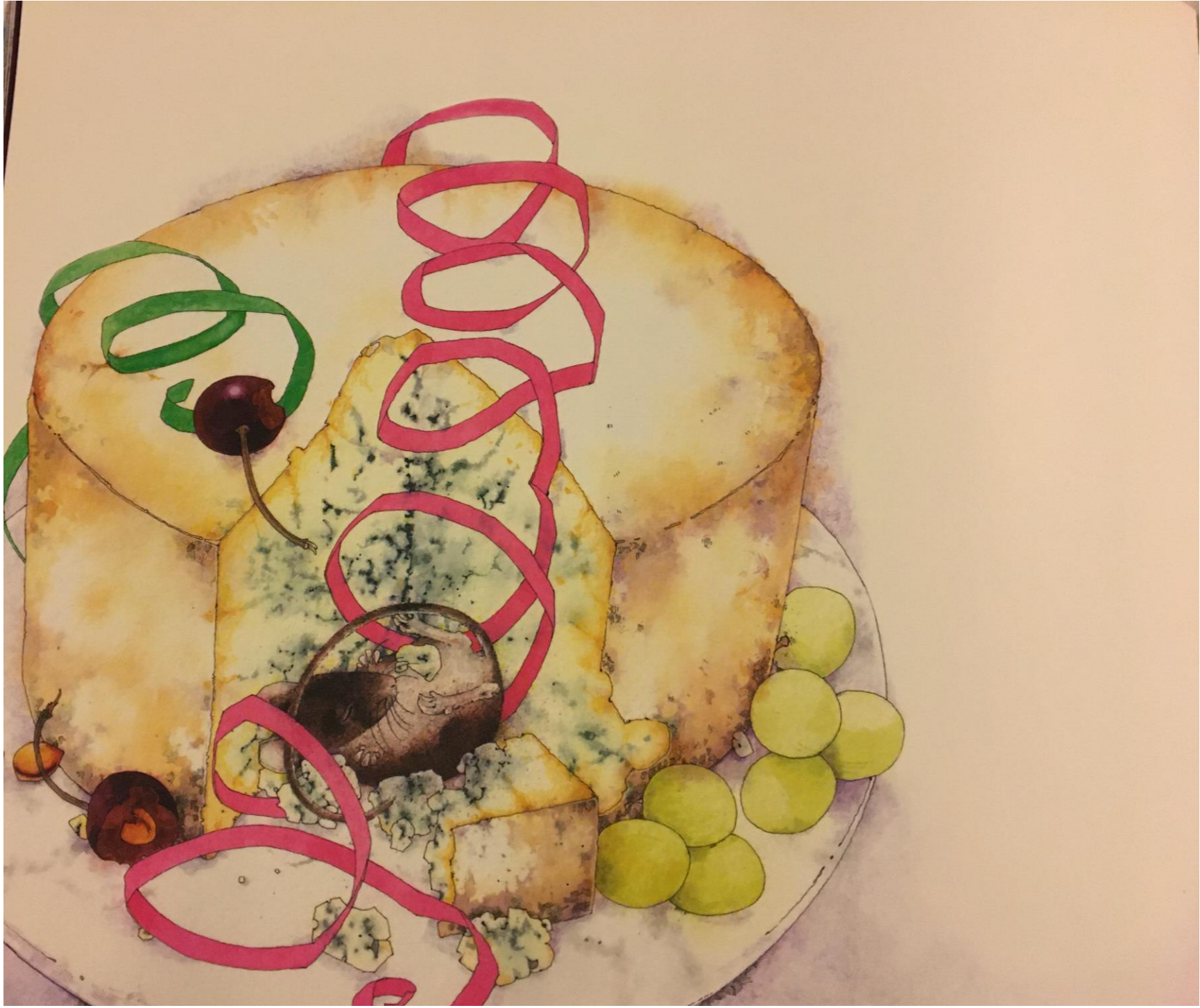




He slept deeply.

Merely a mouse
dreaming of Spring.





"There was once merely a mouse,
a Country Mouse who lived a small
and quiet life among the seasons."

Then one Spring morning his peace
is shattered by the arrival of a visitor –
his sleek City cousin with
rather a lot to say...

'My picture book of the year.'

Amanda Craig, *The Times*



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