

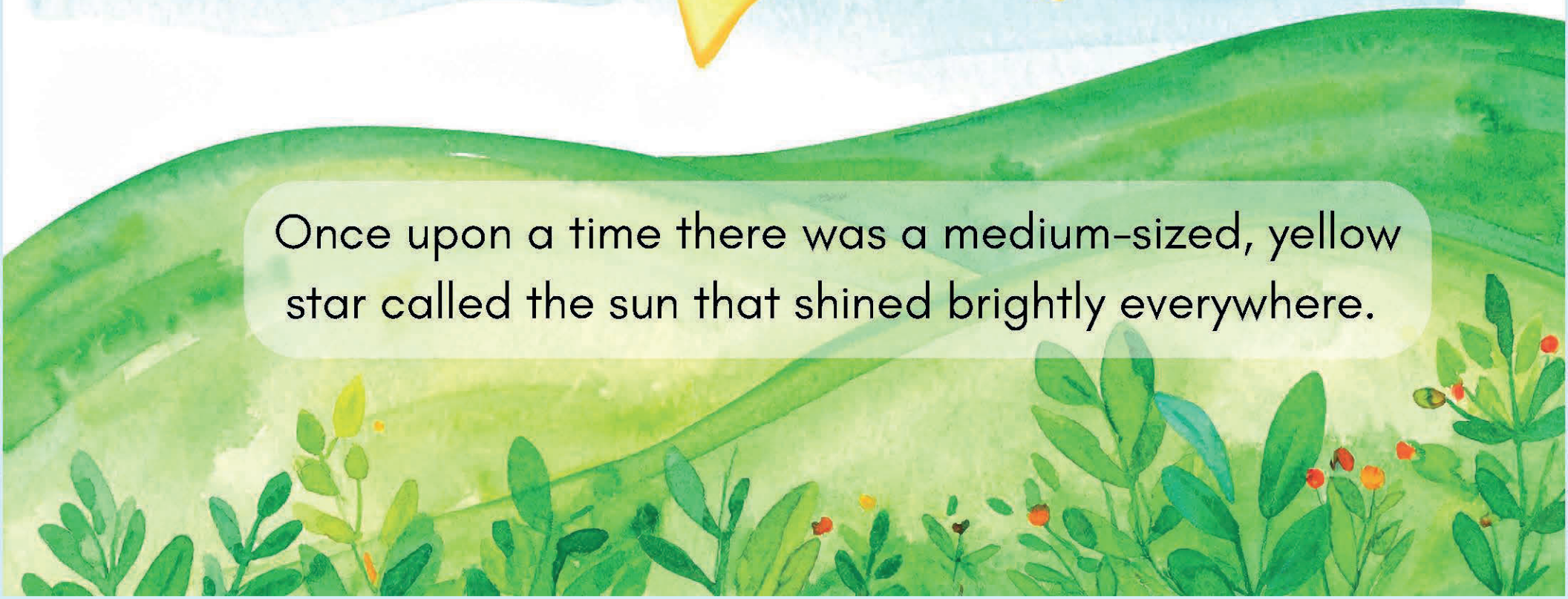
The Star That Went Away



by Michelle Roberts



Once upon a time there was a medium-sized, yellow star called the sun that shined brightly everywhere.



The sun was particularly fond of a land called Earth that was filled with every color of the rainbow, and teeming with life.

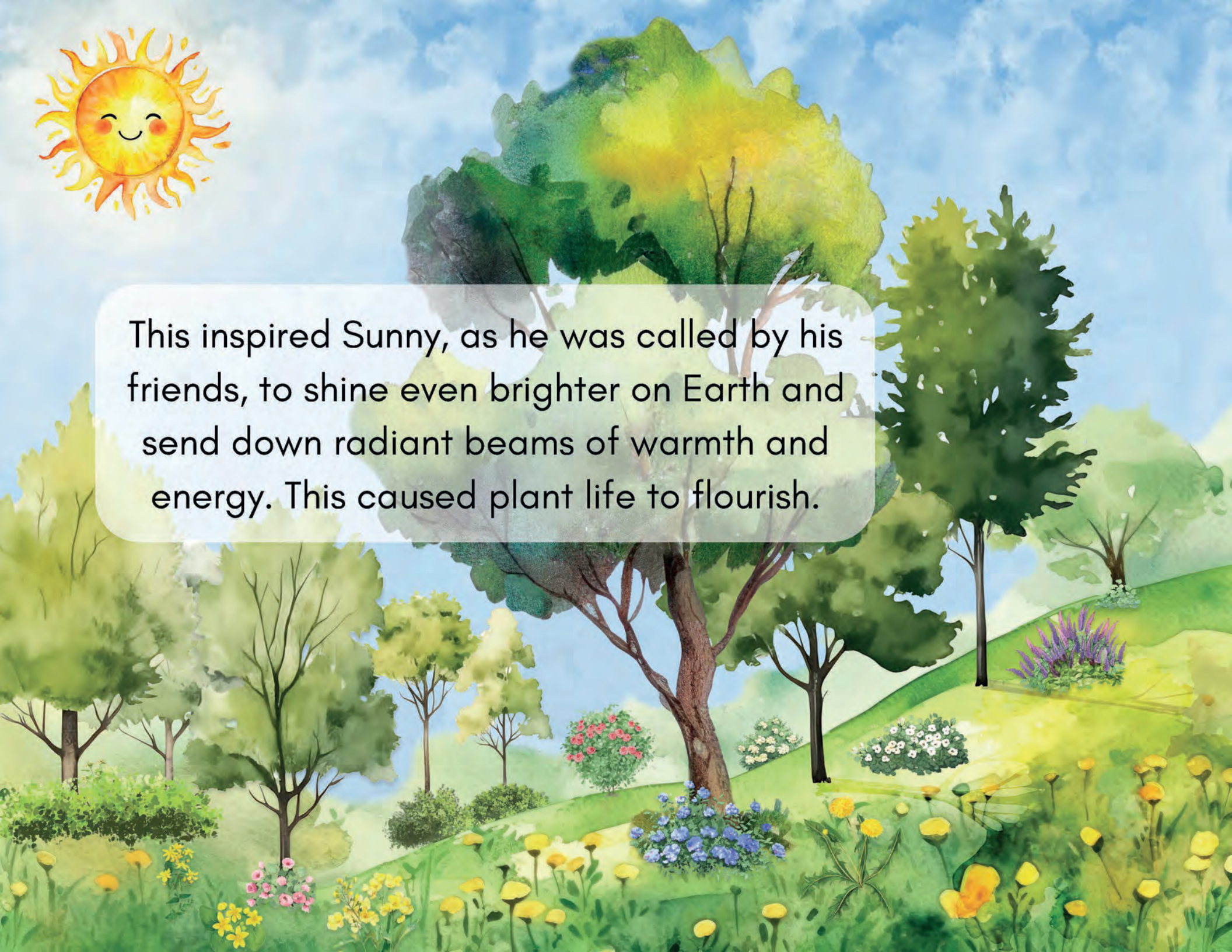


The inhabitants of Earth loved the sun so much,
some even worshipped him.

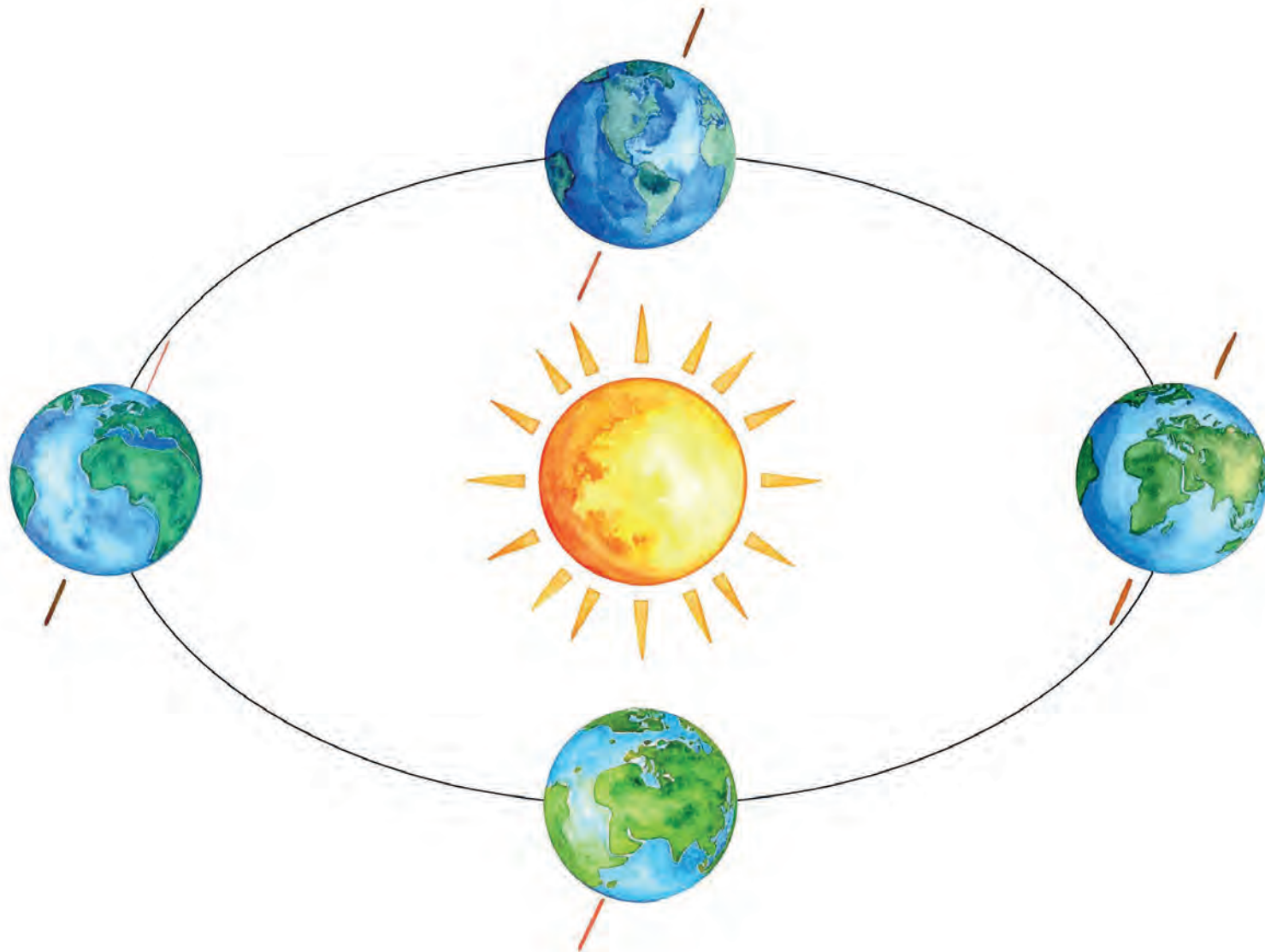




This inspired Sunny, as he was called by his friends, to shine even brighter on Earth and send down radiant beams of warmth and energy. This caused plant life to flourish.



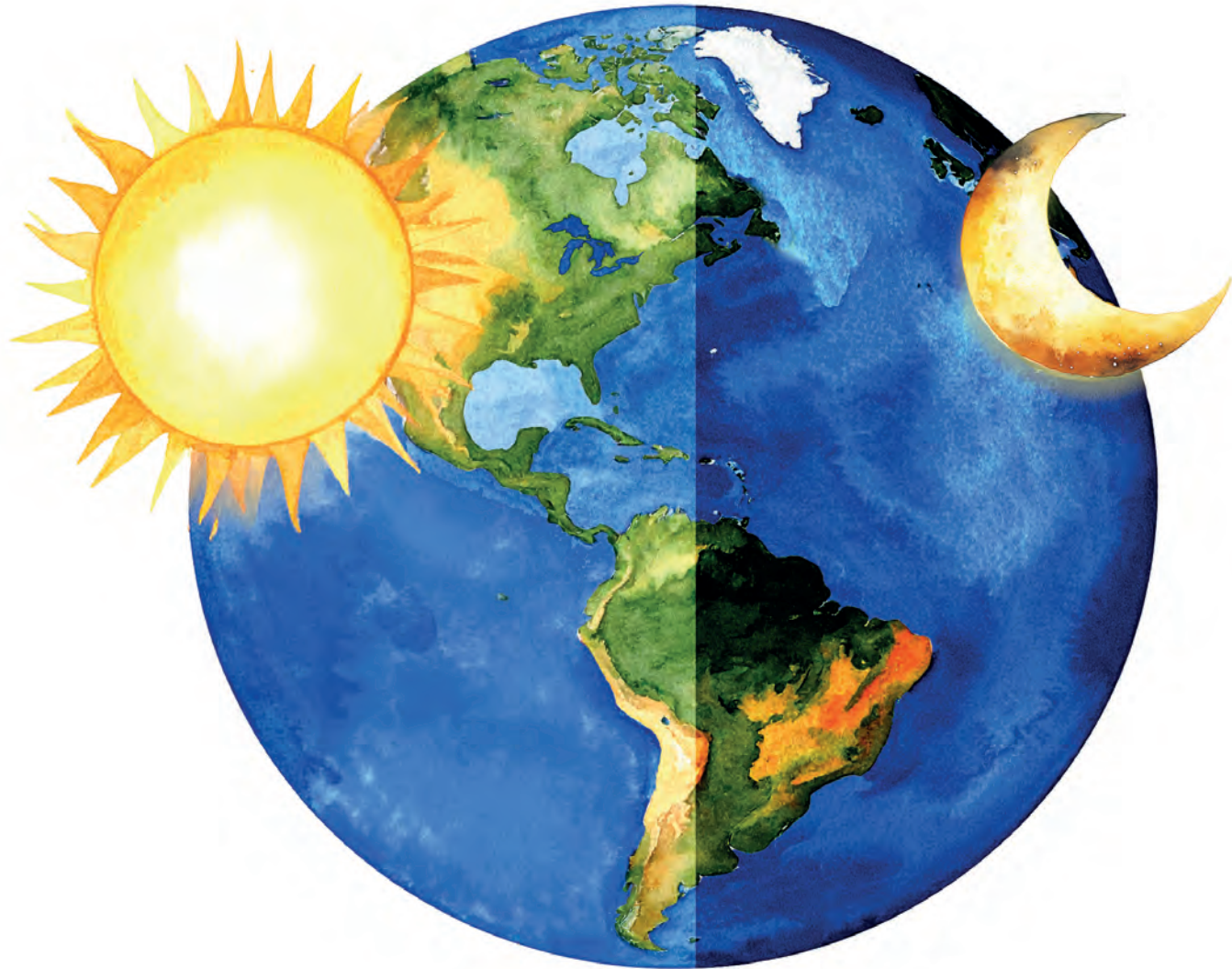
The Earth was so happy with the sun that it danced and spun in the sky around the sun so that the sun could spread its warmth evenly throughout all the world.



However, as the Earth spun around sometimes some parts of the land could not see Sunny's radiant light. So, to help spread the light to the dark places when the sun could not be seen, Sunny asked his friend the moon for help.



Sunny and his friend, Luna, made an agreement, Sunny would shine during the day and Luna would shine during the night. This arrangement went on happily for years.



But one day the North Wind started blowing and the land grew cold from the Wind's mighty breath.





Then other things started appearing in the night sky. Luna was not alone in the night sky anymore. Lights of every color imaginable began dancing across the sky putting on a dazzling display. Their lights were reflected in the waters, ice, and snow of the land.

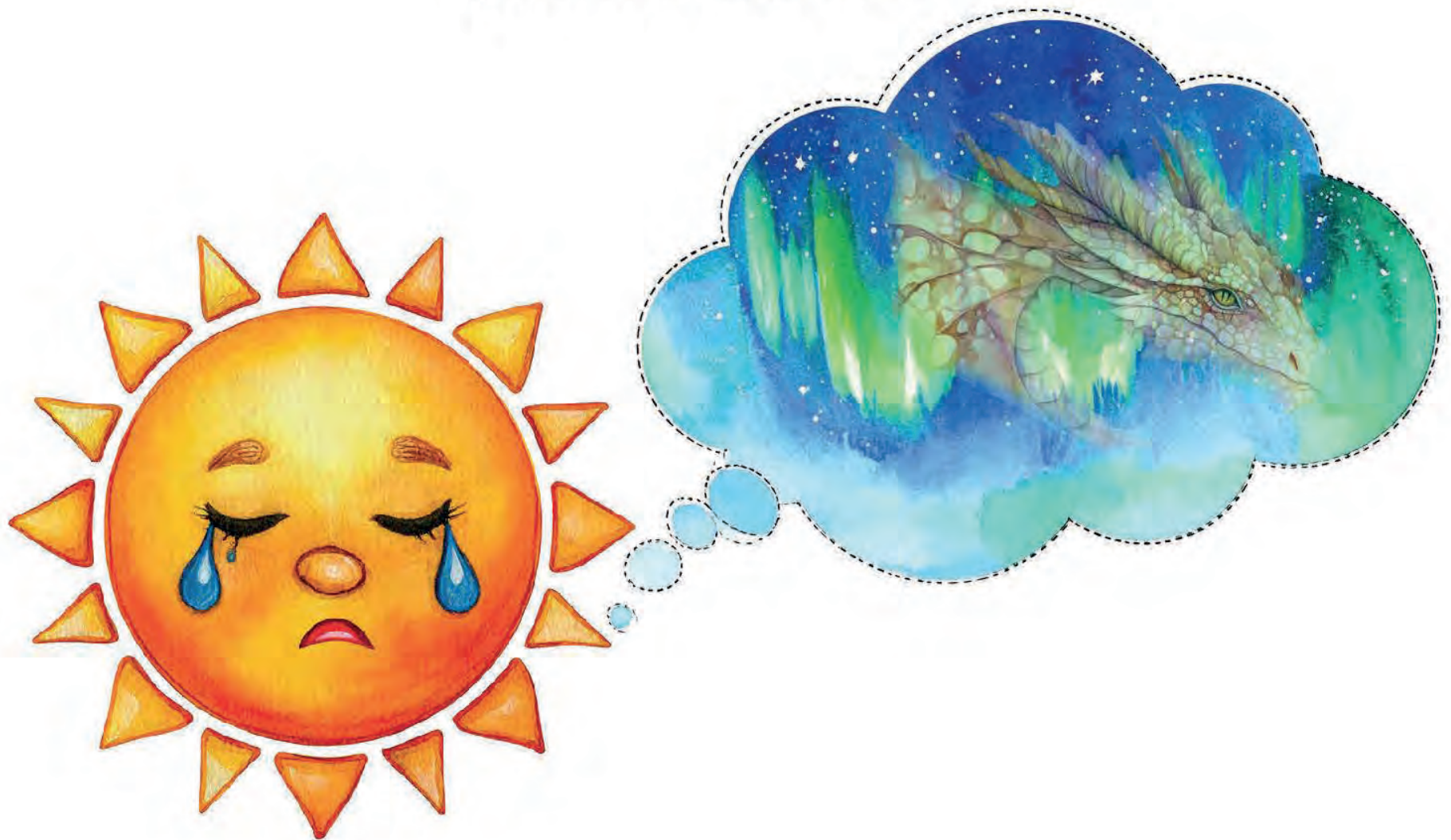
Soon the people and animals started coming out at night to look up in the sky and watch the kaleidoscope spectacle. Each night seemed like a different show. The lights were not as bright or as warm as Sunny, but that did not stop people from coming out into the frozen land. The display was so magical that people couldn't take their eyes off them.



Sunny began to grow suspicious of these lights, especially when he heard the people and animals telling stories about these lights being great mystical spirits with healing powers.



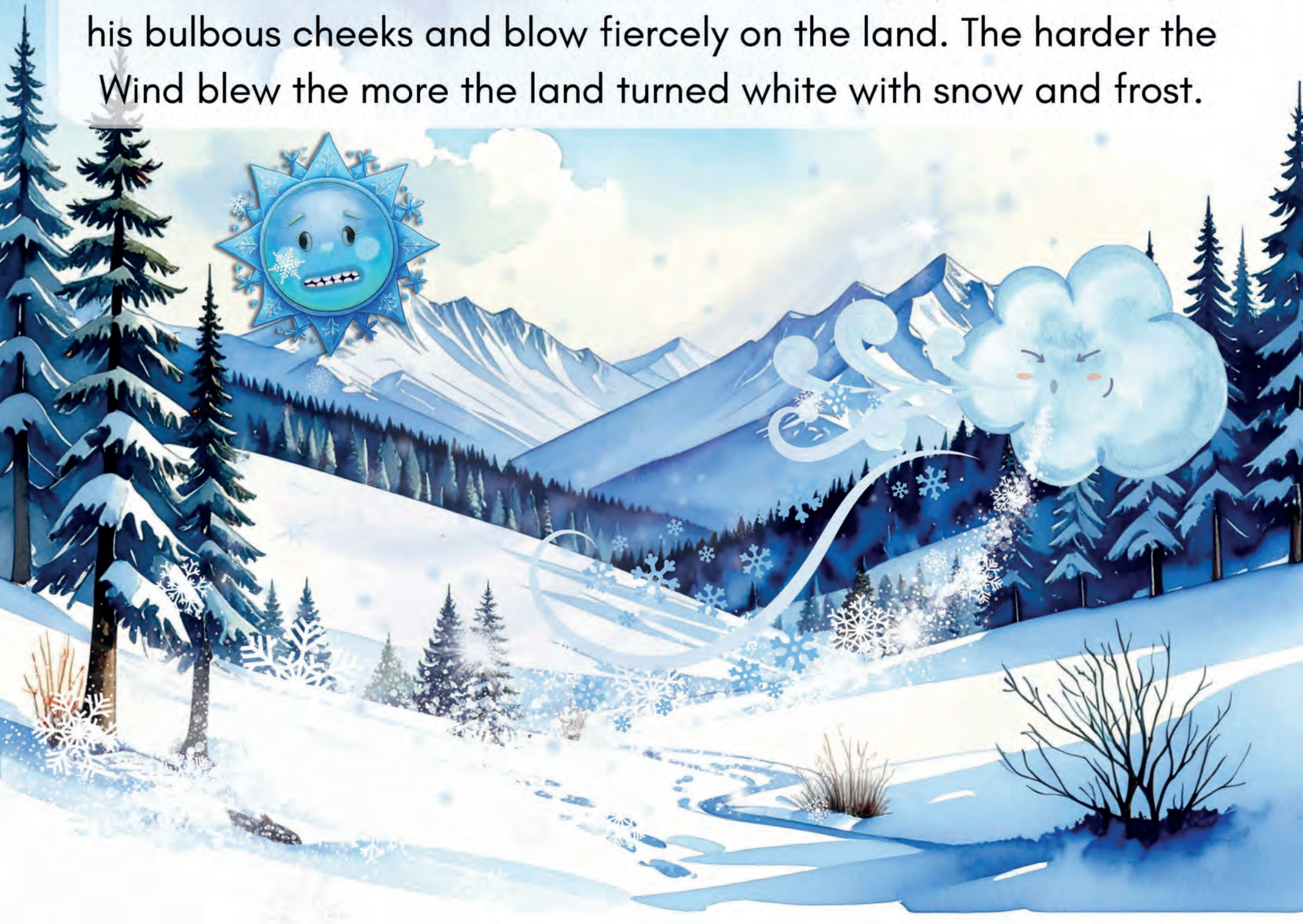
“Great mystical spirits with healing powers?” questioned Sunny. “How can that be? I thought I was the one with healing powers who brought life. Could there be something more powerful than me?”



Sunny began to ponder his role in the land. And as he did,
his light grew dim. He also started to grow cold like the
land he shone on.



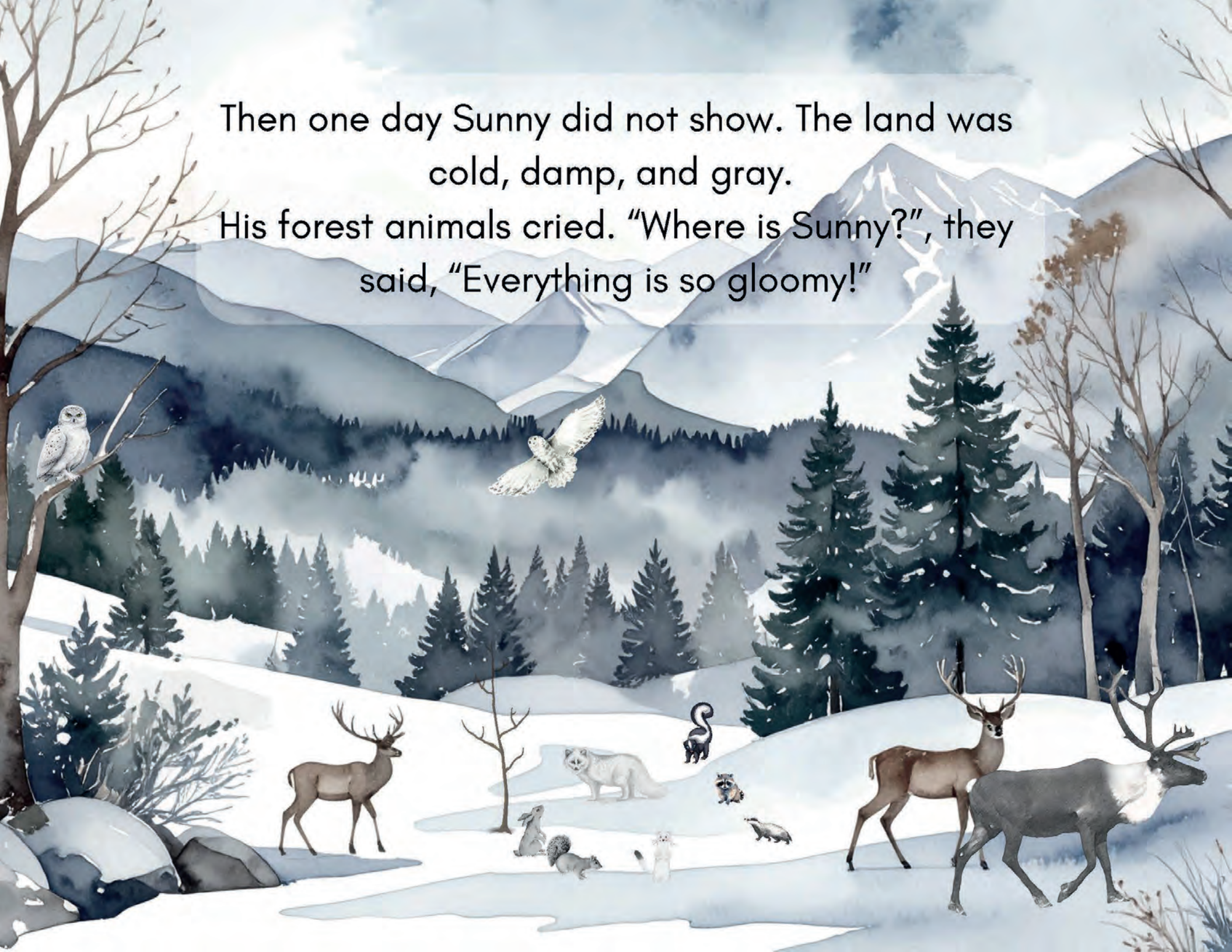
He watched the land for days and saw the mighty North Wind puff his bulbous cheeks and blow fiercely on the land. The harder the Wind blew the more the land turned white with snow and frost.



Sunny grew cold and sad
like the land.



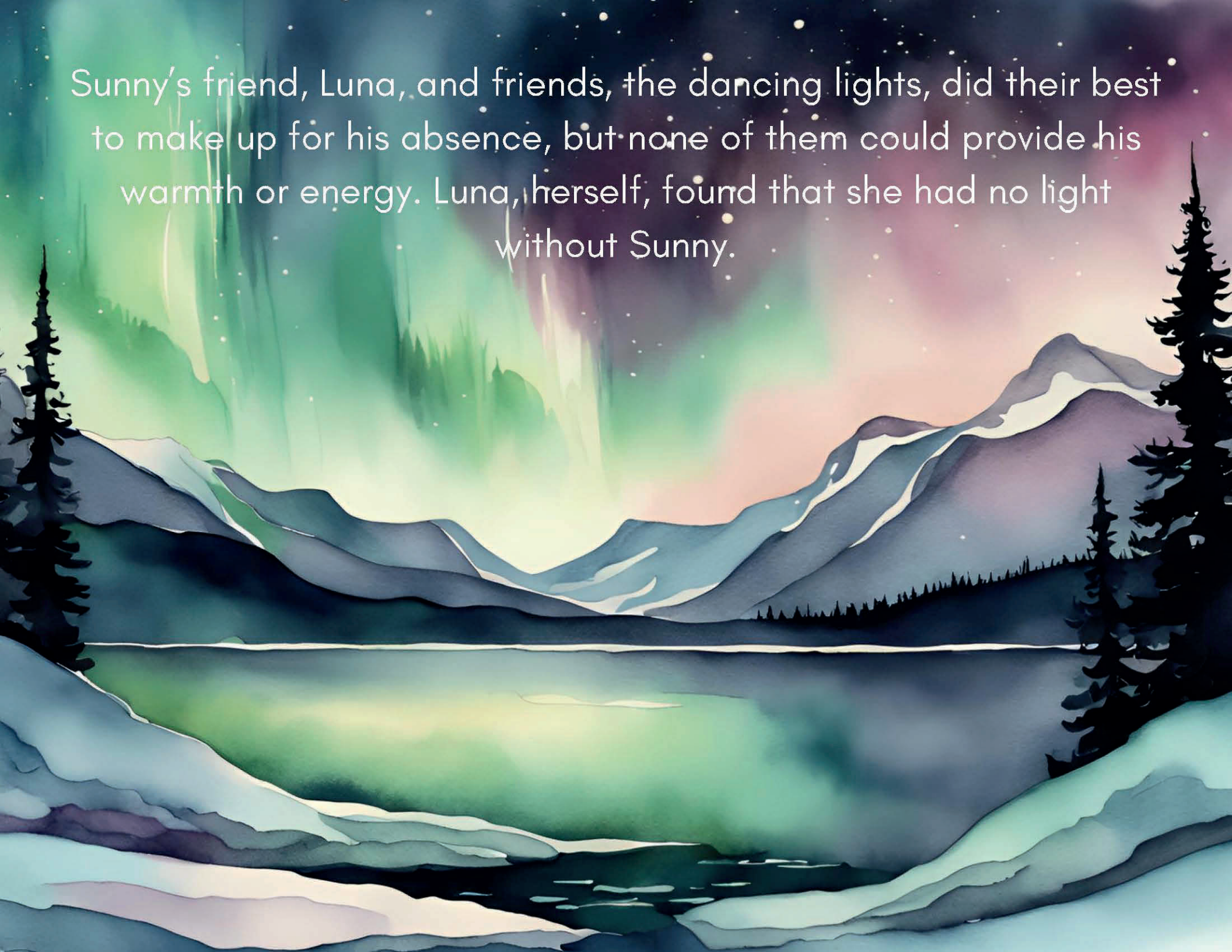
Then one day Sunny did not show. The land was
cold, damp, and gray.
His forest animals cried. "Where is Sunny?", they
said, "Everything is so gloomy!"



"One friend sobbed, "I feel like we are trapped
in a dismal fog."



Sunny's friend, Luna, and friends, the dancing lights, did their best to make up for his absence, but none of them could provide his warmth or energy. Luna, herself, found that she had no light without Sunny.



When Sunny did not show up the next day his friends grew concerned. Some were even frozen with fear. "What's going to happen to us if he doesn't come back?", they cried.



"We are lost without him! I can feel the life draining from me.
Just look at the trees, how sad and wilted they look!"



"We have GOT to do something!" another friend shouted,
"Let's go find him!"
"Yeah!", the other animals chimed.



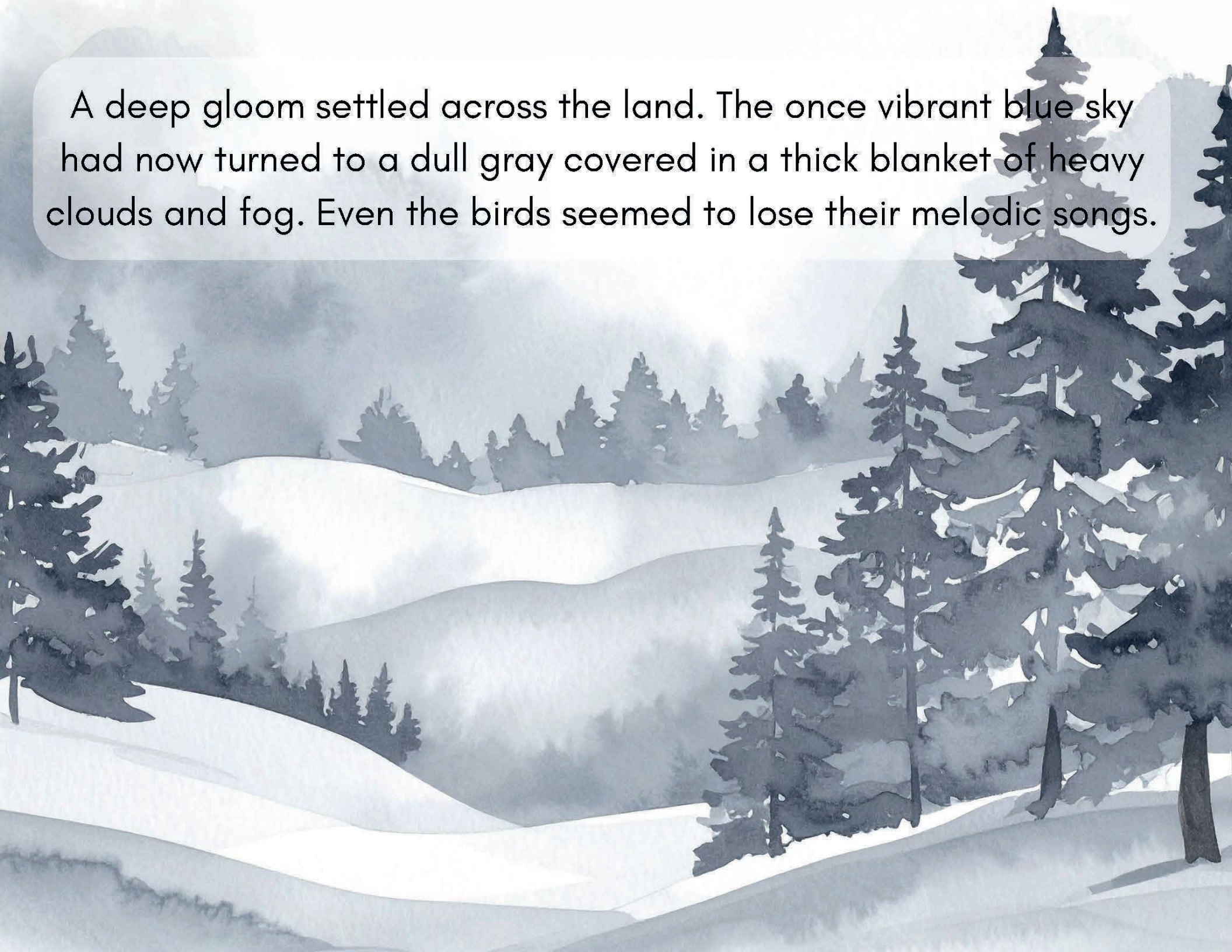
It was decided a small party was best to go searching for Sunny so as not to alarm everyone. So four woodland creatures, a rabbit, a badger, an ermine, and a reindeer stag, set out on a quest to find the missing star. None of them had a clue where to look for him, but they were determined to find their lost friend and would not stop until they found him.



Days passed, and the snow crunched underneath their feet as the four friends trudged in the thick snow looking for their friend.



A deep gloom settled across the land. The once vibrant blue sky had now turned to a dull gray covered in a thick blanket of heavy clouds and fog. Even the birds seemed to lose their melodic songs.

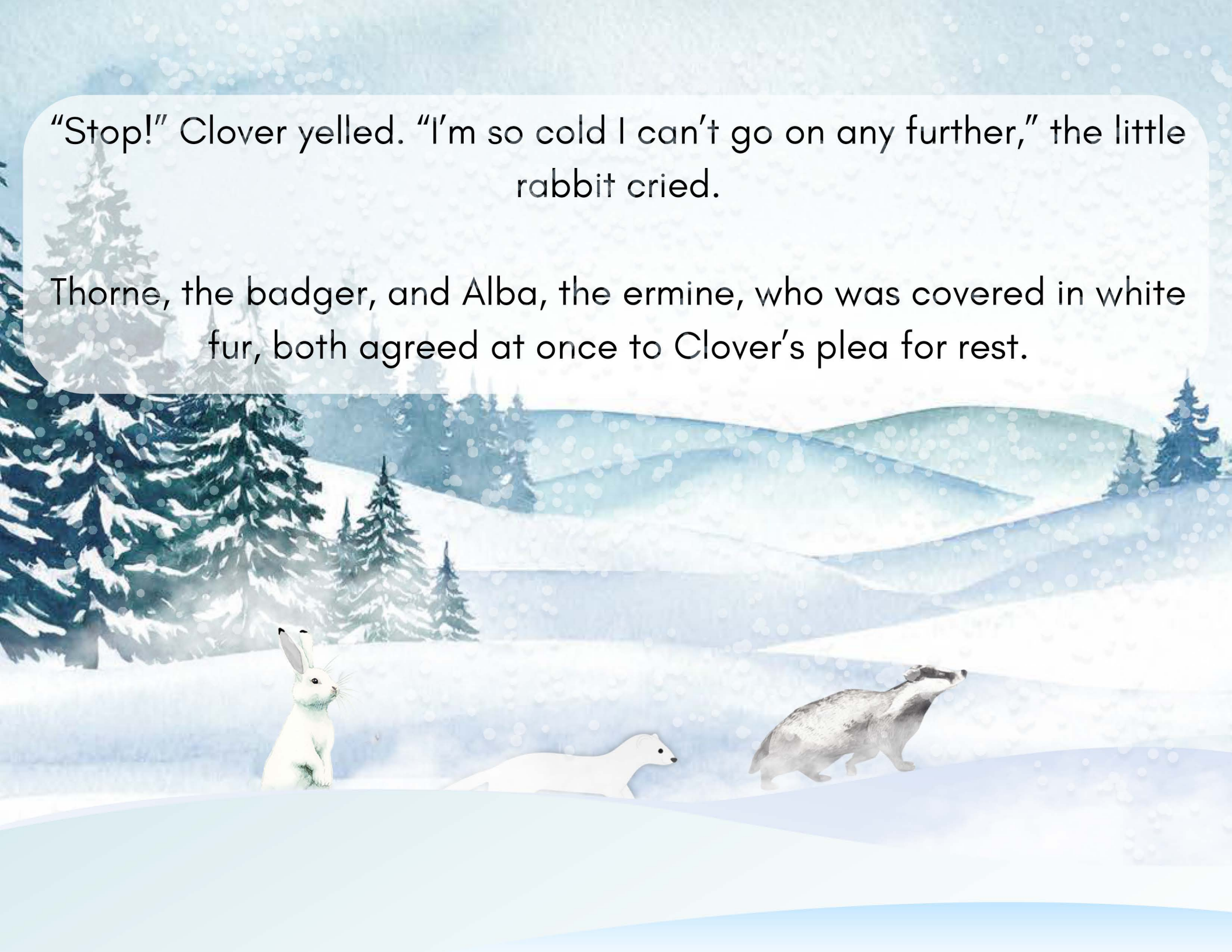


The North Wind continued to blow his icy breath on the land, and even though the animals were covered in a thick layer of fur, they were beginning to feel the chilling effects.



"Stop!" Clover yelled. "I'm so cold I can't go on any further," the little rabbit cried.

Thorne, the badger, and Alba, the ermine, who was covered in white fur, both agreed at once to Clover's plea for rest.

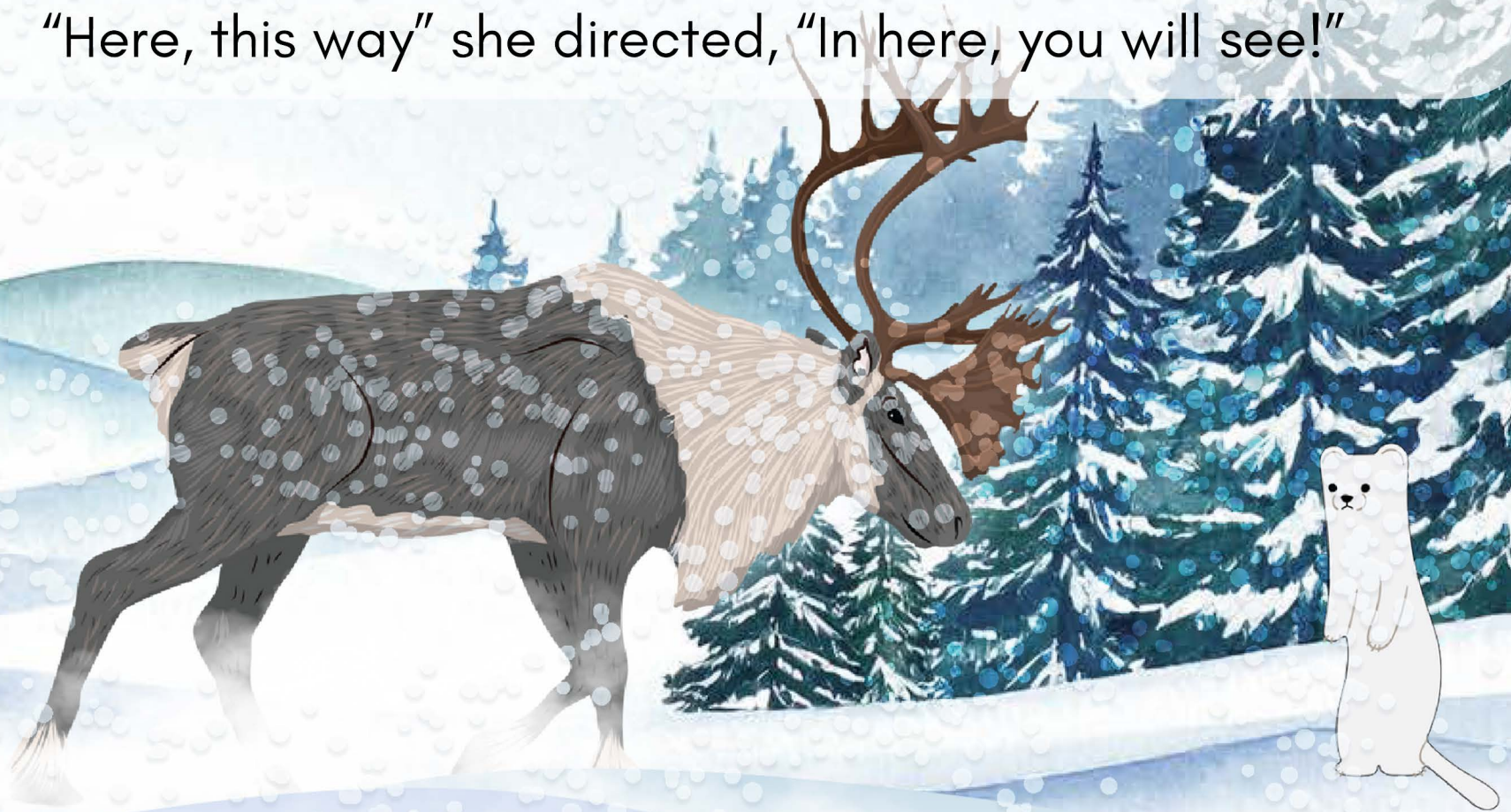


Bran, the reindeer stag, who was obviously the group's leader, was snug in his winter coat, but was inclined to allow the little animals a short rest. "Let's find some shelter to get out of this wind!" the stag insisted.



Alba exclaimed, "I know a place! It's not far from here. I saw it when I scouted ahead. Hurry, follow me! It's up ahead!" she called back as she scurried ahead.

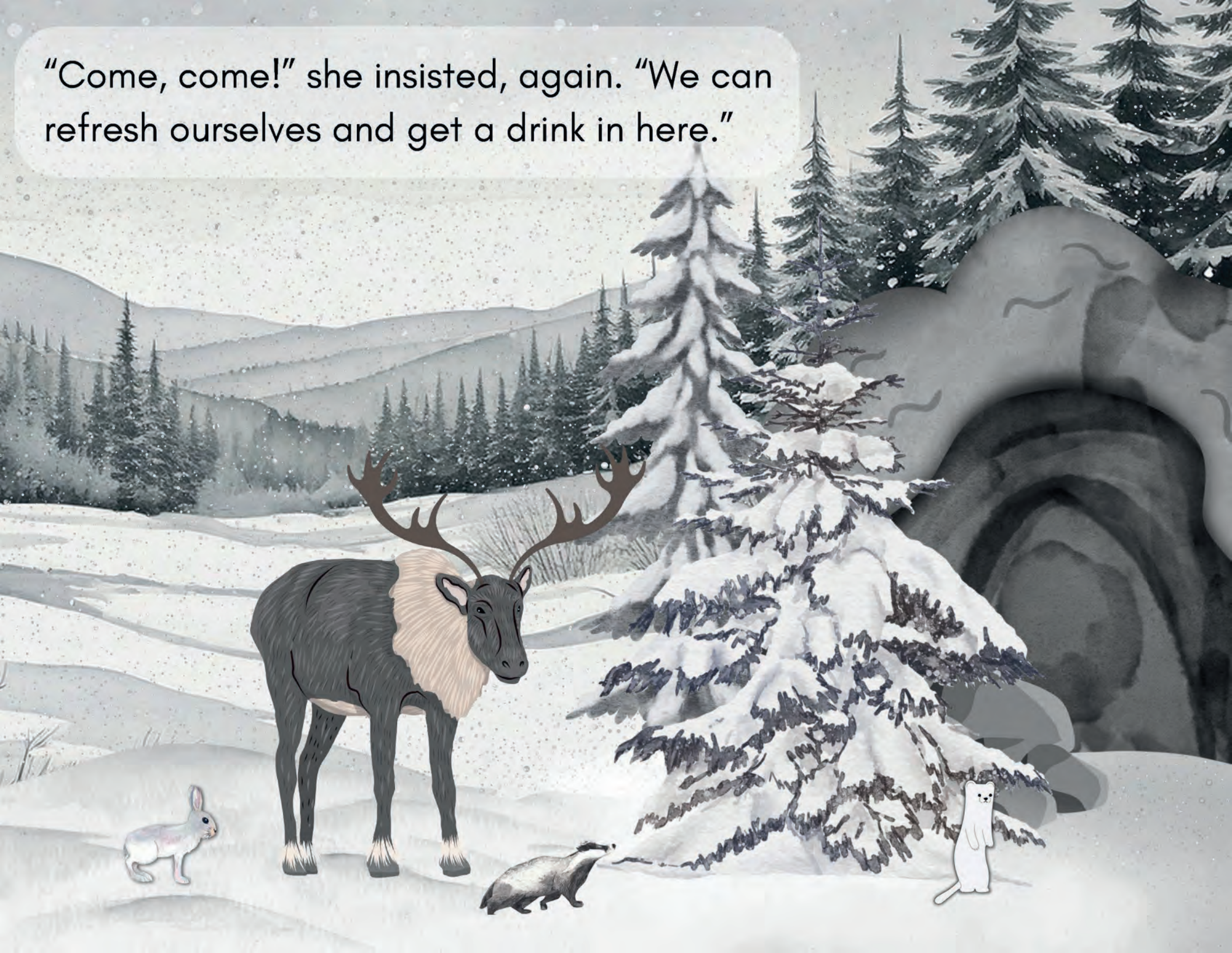
"Here, this way" she directed, "In here, you will see!"



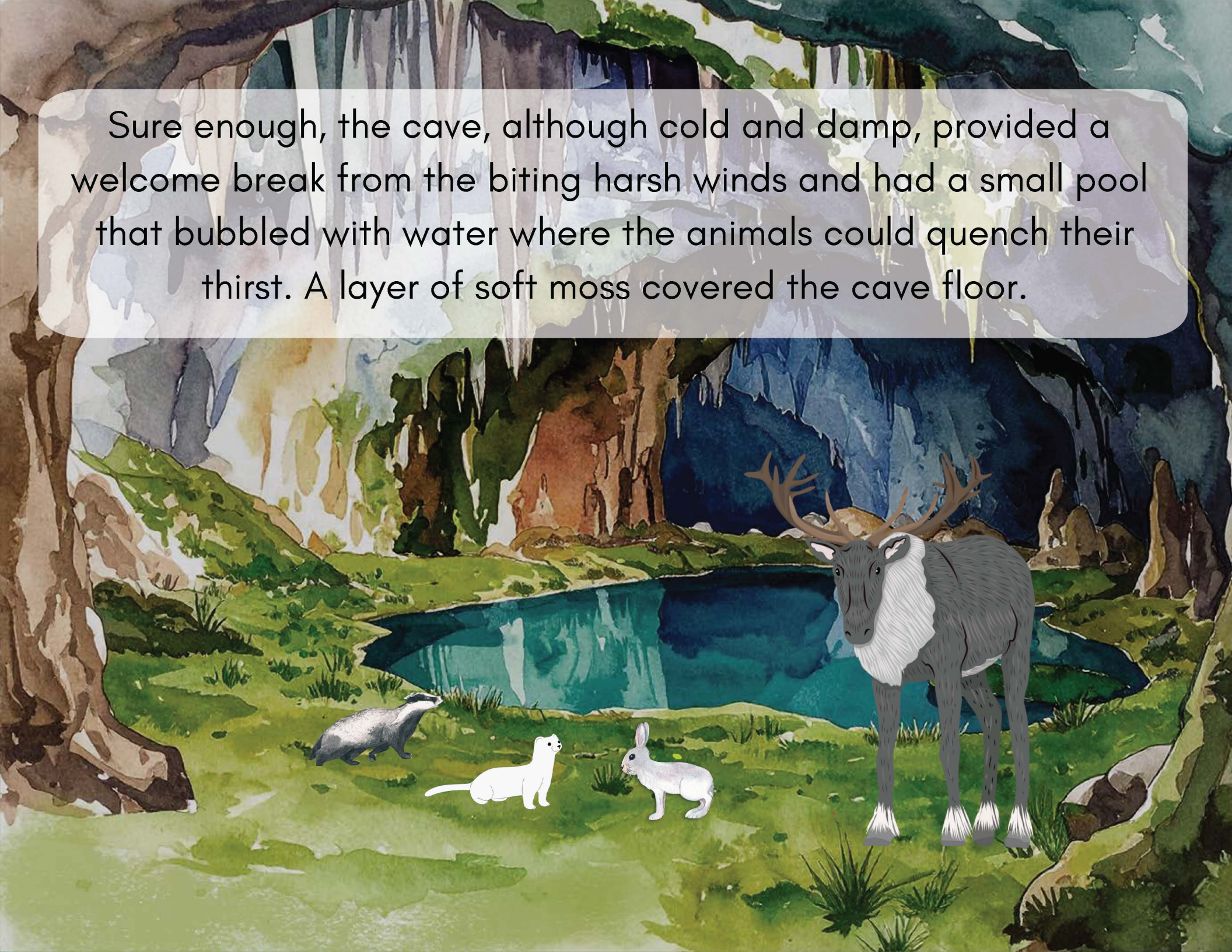
Hidden from plain view by a cluster of evergreen trees now covered in snow was a stack of large rocks. The rocks concealed the entrance to a cave.



"Come, come!" she insisted, again. "We can refresh ourselves and get a drink in here."



Sure enough, the cave, although cold and damp, provided a welcome break from the biting harsh winds and had a small pool that bubbled with water where the animals could quench their thirst. A layer of soft moss covered the cave floor.



The rodents were able to find some tasty larva under some rocks near the spring. Once they ate and had their fill of drink, the animals rested on the soft moss carpet.



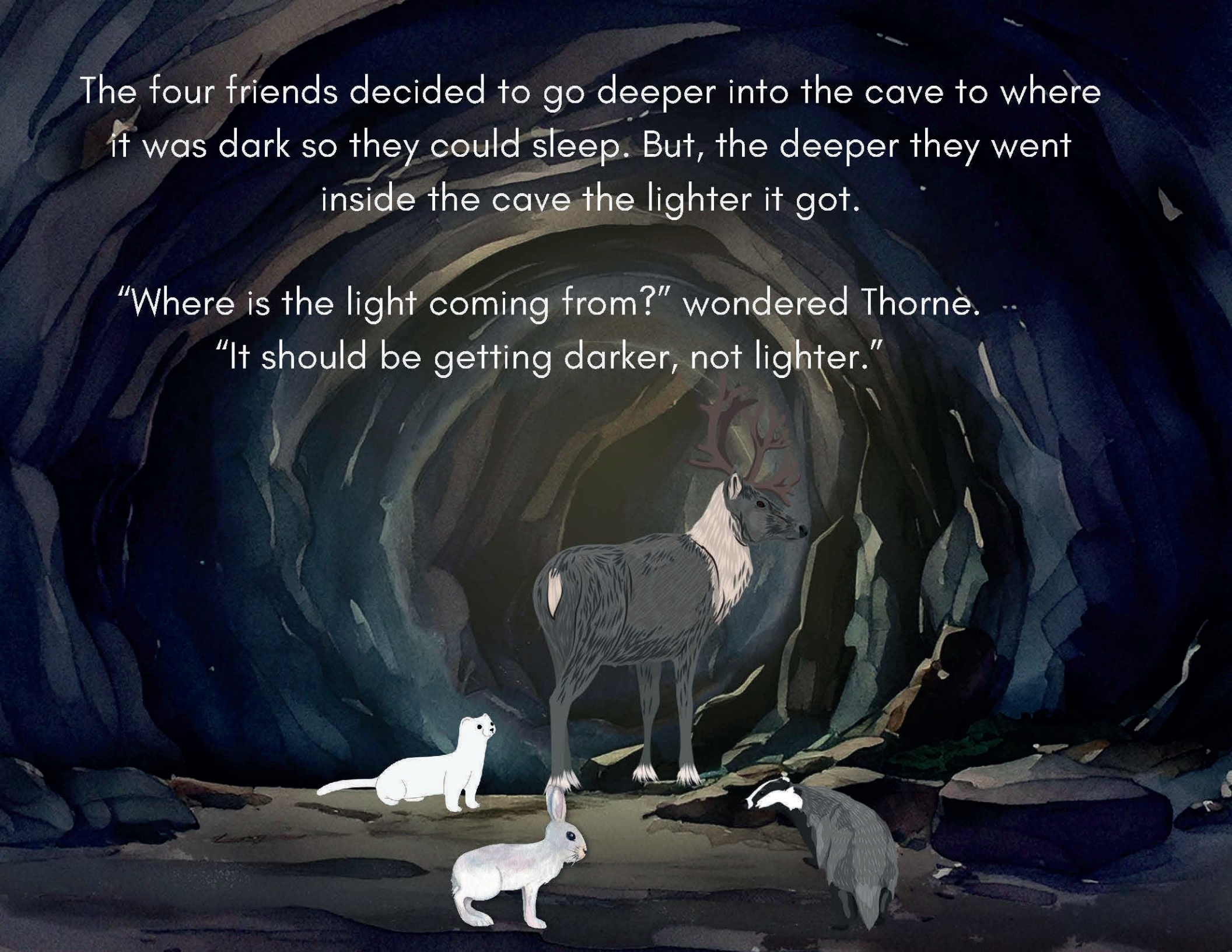
Sometime later the animals woke up. They could tell it was night by the glow of ever-changing colors at the cave's entrance.



The four friends decided to go deeper into the cave to where it was dark so they could sleep. But, the deeper they went inside the cave the lighter it got.

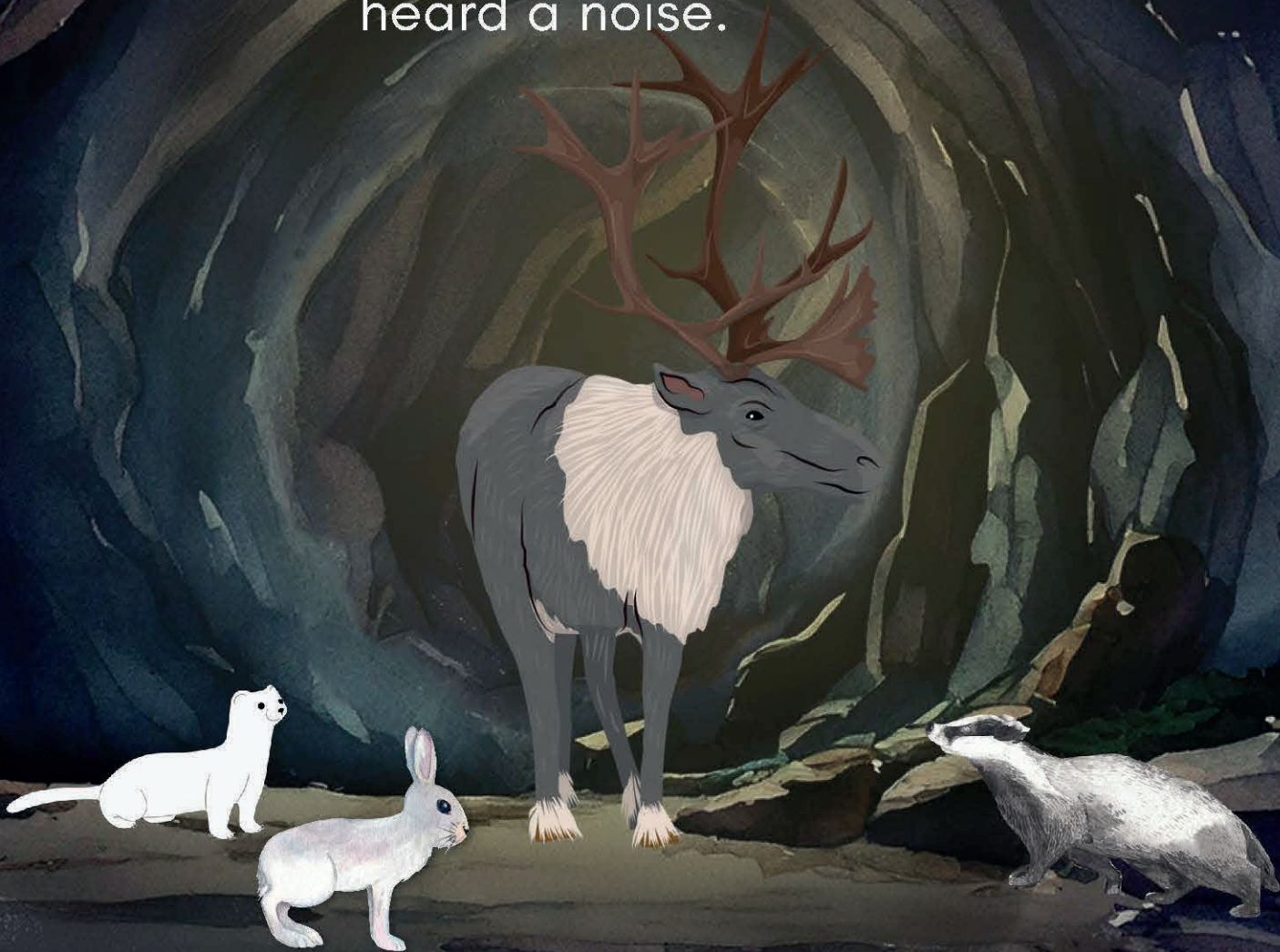
"Where is the light coming from?" wondered Thorne.

"It should be getting darker, not lighter."



The friends decided to follow the light and investigate more.

As they got deeper into the cave, the four friends
heard a noise.



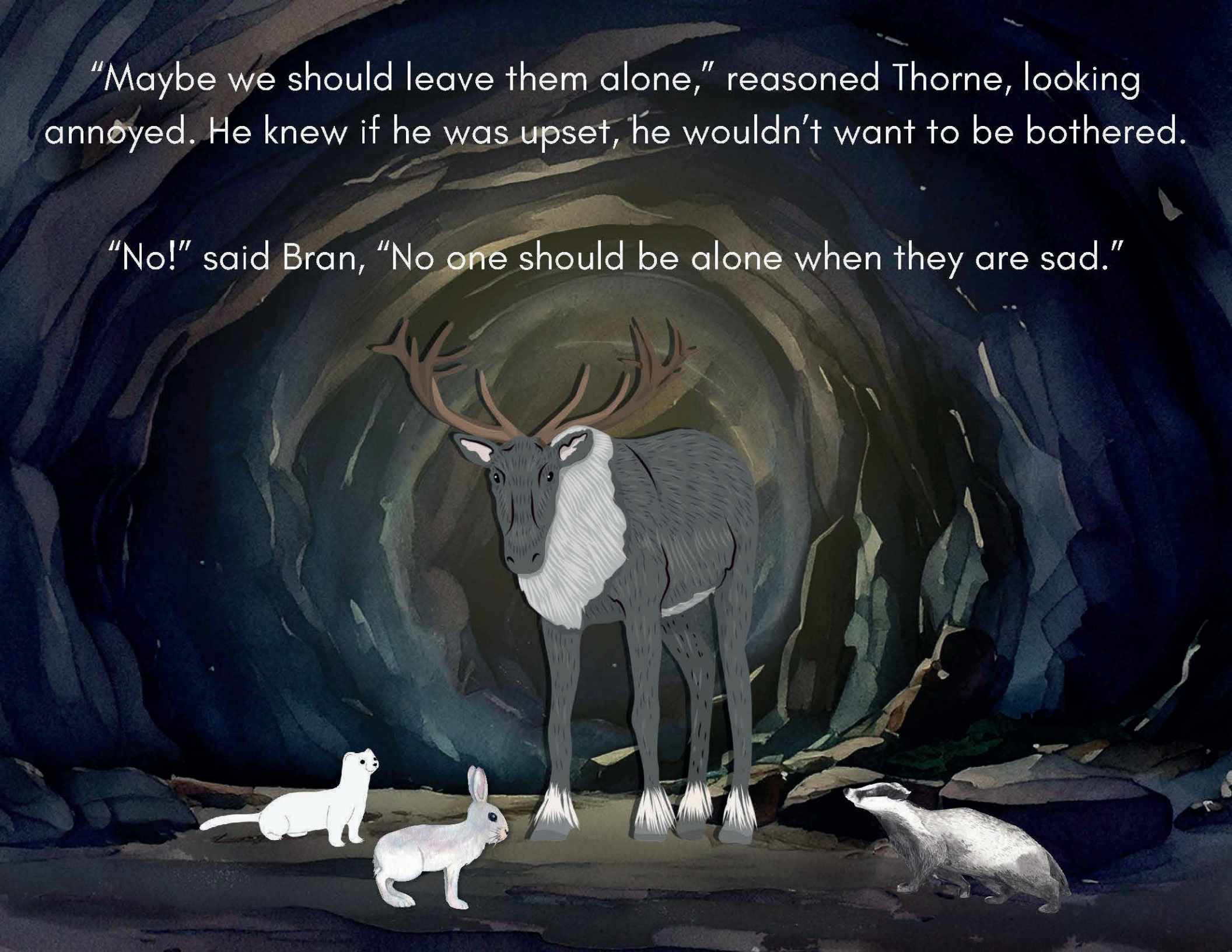
Alba whispered, "I think someone else
is in here, and is crying."

I hear crying, too," Clover said.



"Maybe we should leave them alone," reasoned Thorne, looking annoyed. He knew if he was upset, he wouldn't want to be bothered.

"No!" said Bran, "No one should be alone when they are sad."



The four friends kept following the light and the sound of the cries through twists and turns, even climbing over rock formations at times. Suddenly, there was a loud scream from Alba, who once again had snuck ahead of the party.



"Oh! There you are! We've been looking everywhere for you!"



The three friends looked at each other and gasped as they realized they had found their dear friend. Quickly, they dashed over a pile of rocks and around the corner to catch up with their friends.



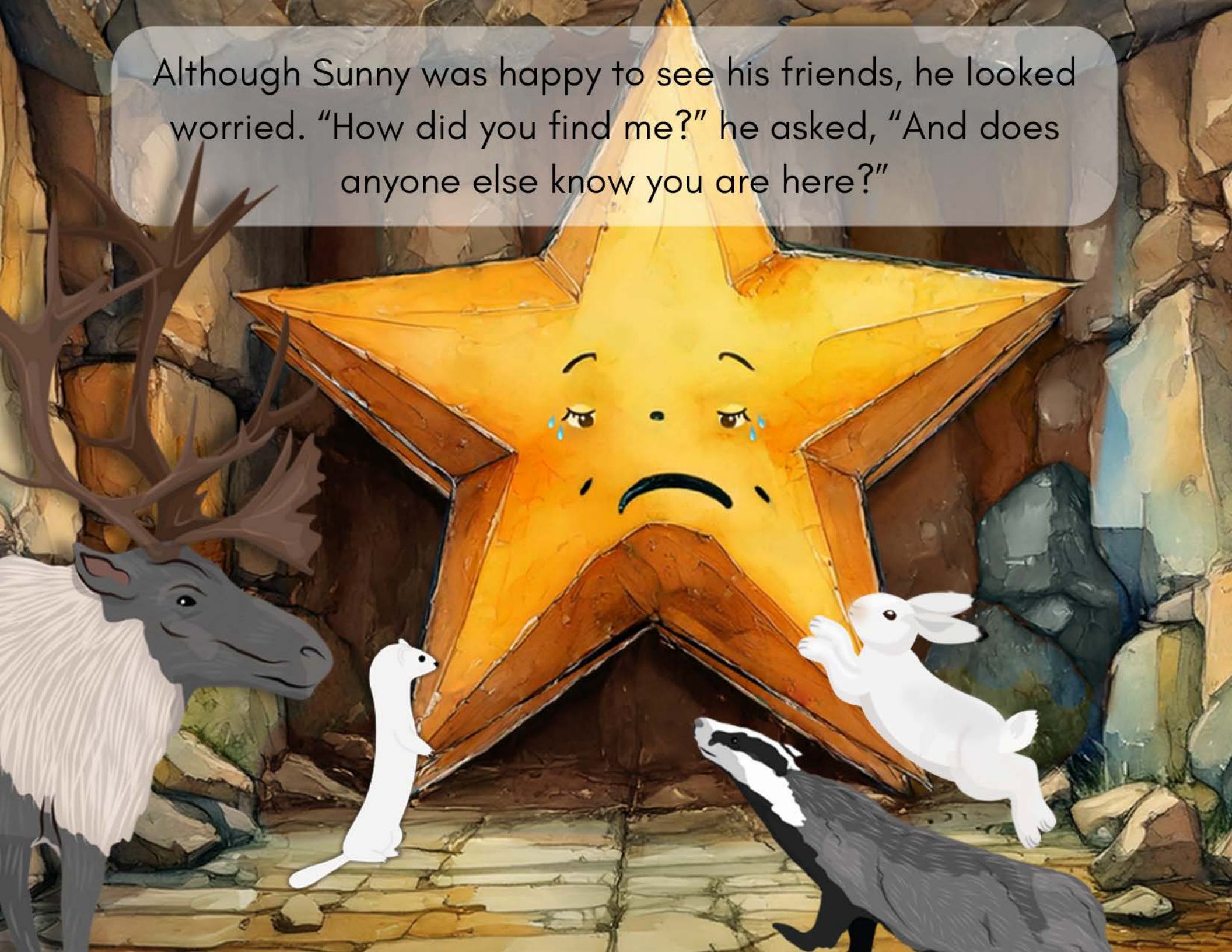
They were so overjoyed to see Sunny they rushed toward him, hugging him with all their might, their hearts racing with joy and relief.



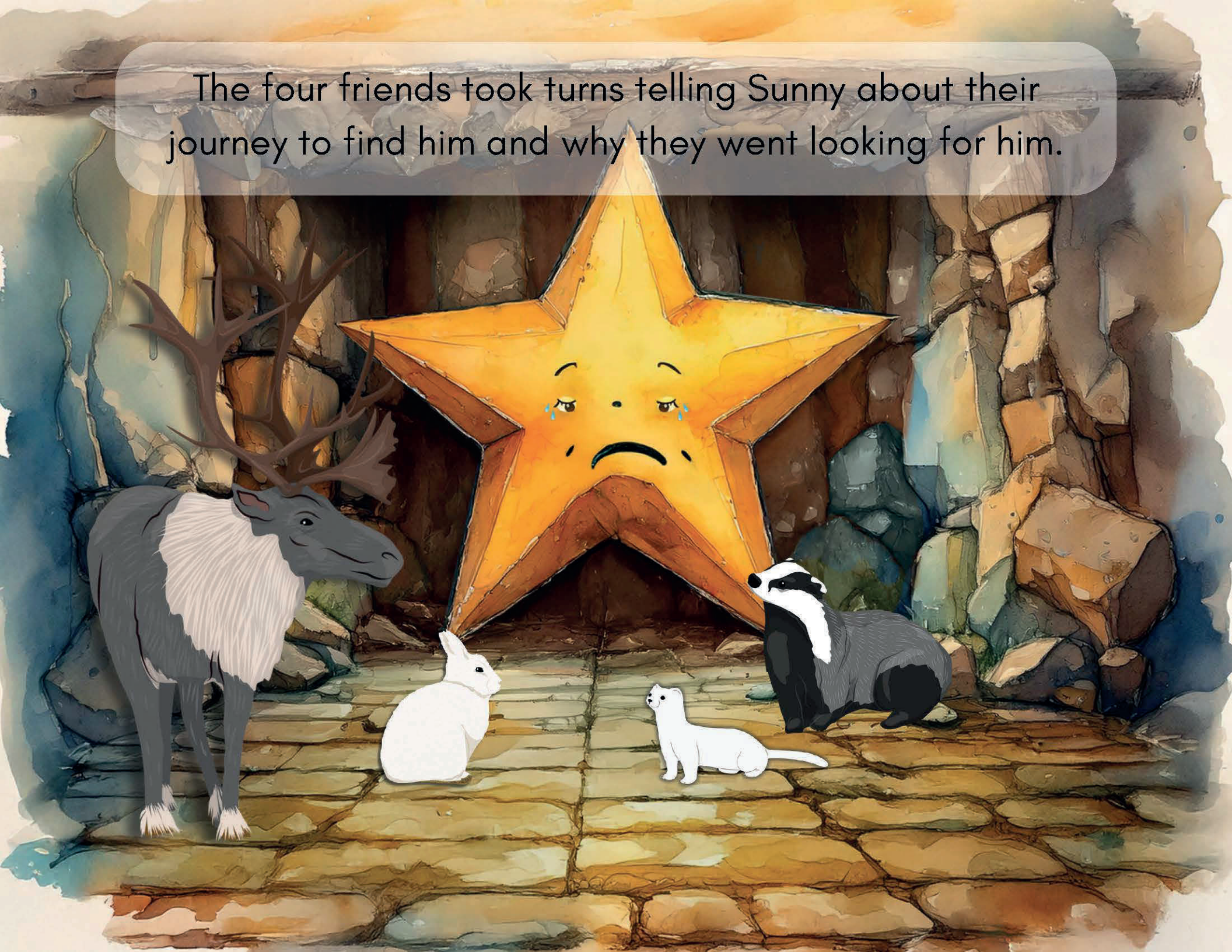
"Are you okay?" Clover asked looking at her friend with big, sad eyes. "What's wrong? Why did you go away?"



Although Sunny was happy to see his friends, he looked worried. "How did you find me?" he asked, "And does anyone else know you are here?"



The four friends took turns telling Sunny about their journey to find him and why they went looking for him.

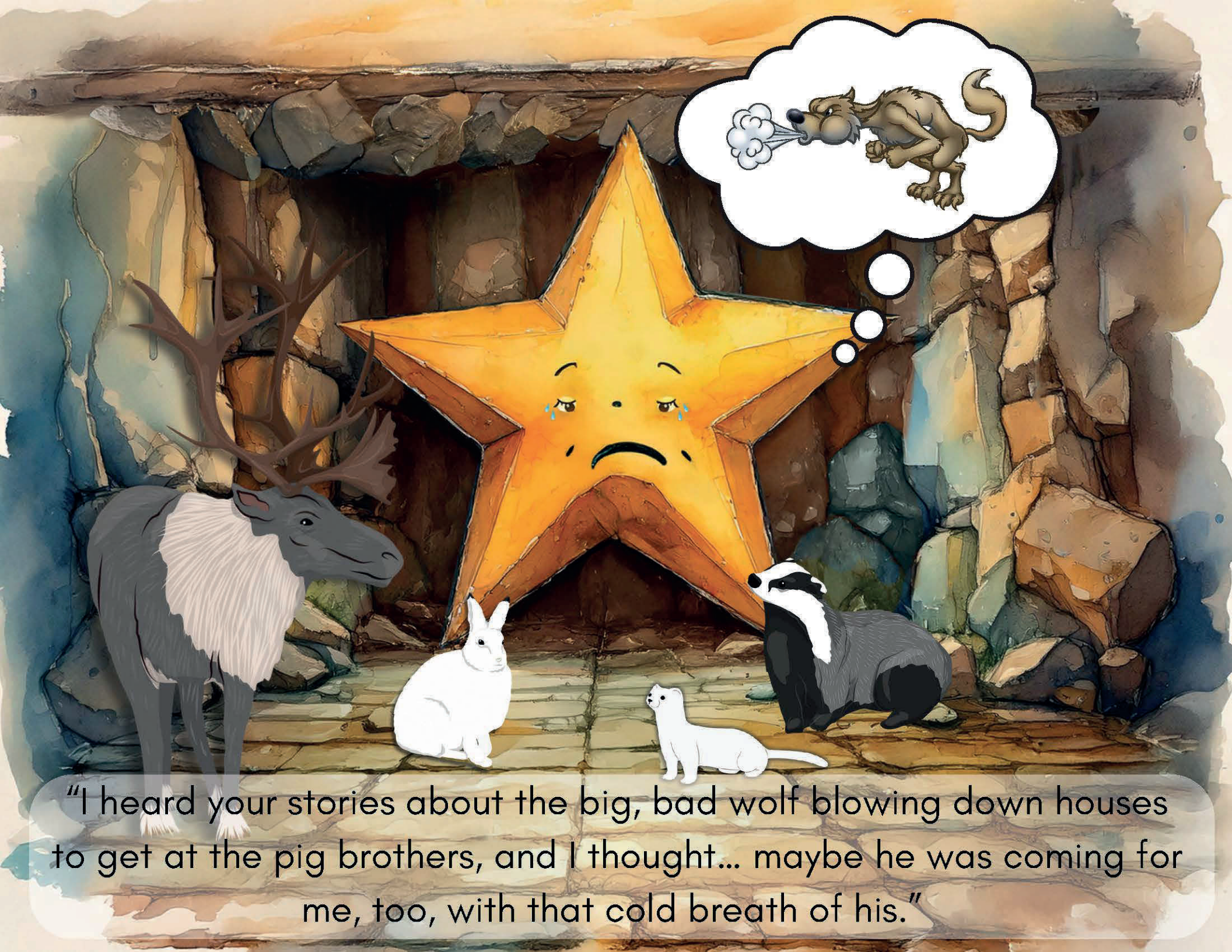




Sunny began crying, again. "I'm afraid of the big, bad wolf!" he cried.



The forest animals looked at each other puzzled. "What?!" they cried, "Big. Bad. Wolf?! What do you mean?"



"I heard your stories about the big, bad wolf blowing down houses to get at the pig brothers, and I thought... maybe he was coming for me, too, with that cold breath of his."



"And, besides, you don't need me with all those other lights in the sky, especially at night!" Sunny exclaimed.

The friends sat in silence listening to their friend, pondering the meaning of his words. At last, Bran wisely spoke up.



"The big bad wolf is just a character in a story we made up to warn the pigs they needed to select better building materials for their homes."

Bran continued, "The North Wind is just doing his job of blowing cold air in for the winter, his time will pass soon."



"We need you to keep us warm," Clover said thumping her foot.

"And, besides," Alba started, "the other lights can't hold a candle to your radiant light!"



"Their lights are not warm like yours."
Thorne chimed in.



"I think you should speak to the moon about the dancing lights," Bran said, "They are pretty, but they do not shine as brightly as you."

"Really?" Sunny asked, starting to feel better.



"It's true," Clover said, "Ask Luna when you get back in the sky."

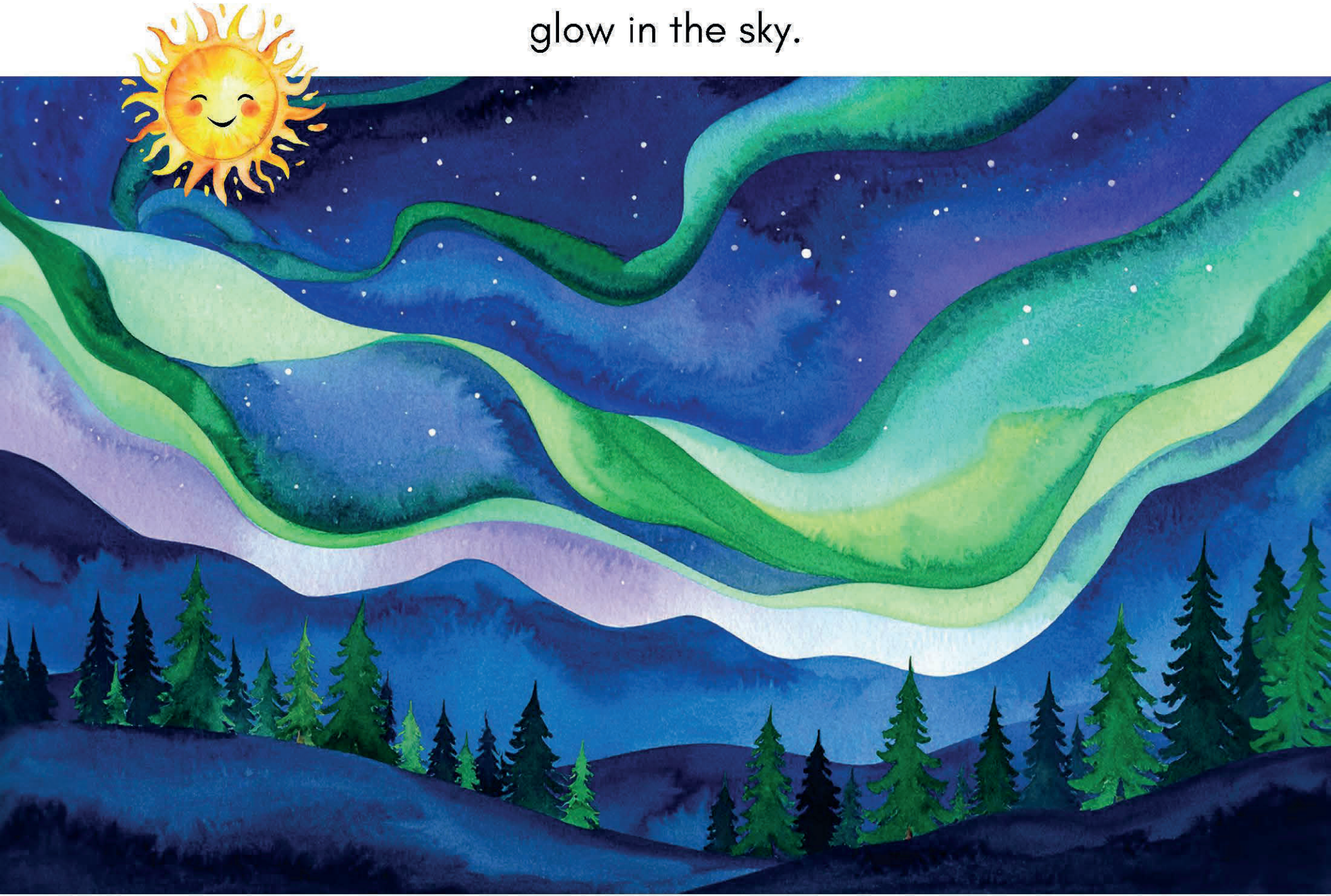


Sunny realized his friends were right, and it was starting to get cramped in that cave. So, the star left to do what stars do best, shine brightly in the sky.



Sunny decided Bran was wise indeed and followed his advice about speaking with Luna. And, after speaking with her, he discovered that she does not have any light of her own, but reflects his light instead.

As it turns out, the dancing lights were made by particles from Sunny reacting with gases in Earth's atmosphere and create a beautiful glow in the sky.





"I don't have any light of my own, Sunny. I only shine because you light the way for me. Without you, there would be no moonlight."

Sunny reflected on all that Luna told him. Luna turned out to be a true friend as well.

"The lights in the sky are like my children, born from my warmth and energy, dancing through the night to share a piece of me with Earth."





Sunny realized the world doesn't need to choose between him and the other lights, because they all have their place in the sky. "The lights," he reasoned, "are like a gift from me, and not meant to replace me." Smiling to himself, Sunny knew the dancing lights, Luna's reflection, and his own warmth were all parts of a grander harmony in the universe.

He never doubted himself after that and always shined brightly remembering he had friends who cared enough to brave the frozen lands and go find him.





The end.

Where did Sunny go? He's disappeared.

Sunny the Sun was everyone's friend - warm, bright, and full of cheer. But one chilly winter morning, he vanished from the sky, and the forest was left cold and quiet.

Worried and determined, Clover the clever Arctic hare, Alba the quick and curious ermine, Thorne the brave badger, and Bran the gentle reindeer stag set out on a journey through snow and shadow to find their dear friend.

Where has Sunny gone? Why did he stop shining? And will the light ever return?

Join this band of woodland friends in a tender, beautifully illustrated tale of friendship, courage, and the magic of changing seasons.

A cozy adventure to warm hearts and brighten imaginations.

