



Welcome to Cripley Hollow

Aurora S. Frost

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Celeste and her mother Hannah were headed toward their new home in Cripsey Hollow. Celeste stared out the car window as the tired, old Beetle chugged along, around sharp curves and up steep hills. The sun shone through the leaves on the trees and gave the light a strobe effect that made the ride seem unreal.

"We'll be there in just a little bit," Hannah said with a smile.

Celeste yawned. It had been a long drive from their old home, and the bright summer sun beating down on the car made her slightly carsick.

"Are you all right?" Hannah asked.

Celeste nodded. She was excited to be going to a new place, but she was also a little afraid. She didn't know anything about Cripsey Hollow, and her mother had been secretive about the move.



A few minutes later, Hannah turned the Beetle onto a gravel road that twisted and turned around the mountain. Rocks and trees rose up on one side of the road, while more trees grew at the bottom of a drop on the other side.

Celeste held her breath as they passed, terrified her mother would run the car off the road and into the trees below.

Celeste's mouth dropped open when her mother pulled into the driveway.

The house looked like it had been built in the nineteenth century, with a ramshackle porch that perched precariously on the front of the house. A small outbuilding sat in the yard, but it wasn't in any better shape. And, even worse, the grass was nearly three feet tall, and Celeste could see tires and other garbage hidden in its blades,

An old man with a straw hat rode a tractor around the yard, leaving giant piles of tall grass behind him.

"I know it looks bad," Hannah said. "But we'll be able to fix it up in no time. You'll see." She tousled Celeste's hair then got out of the car with her keys jangling. "And Mr. Scattermire's agreed to help get the yard cleaned up. You'll like the Scattermires. They're good people."

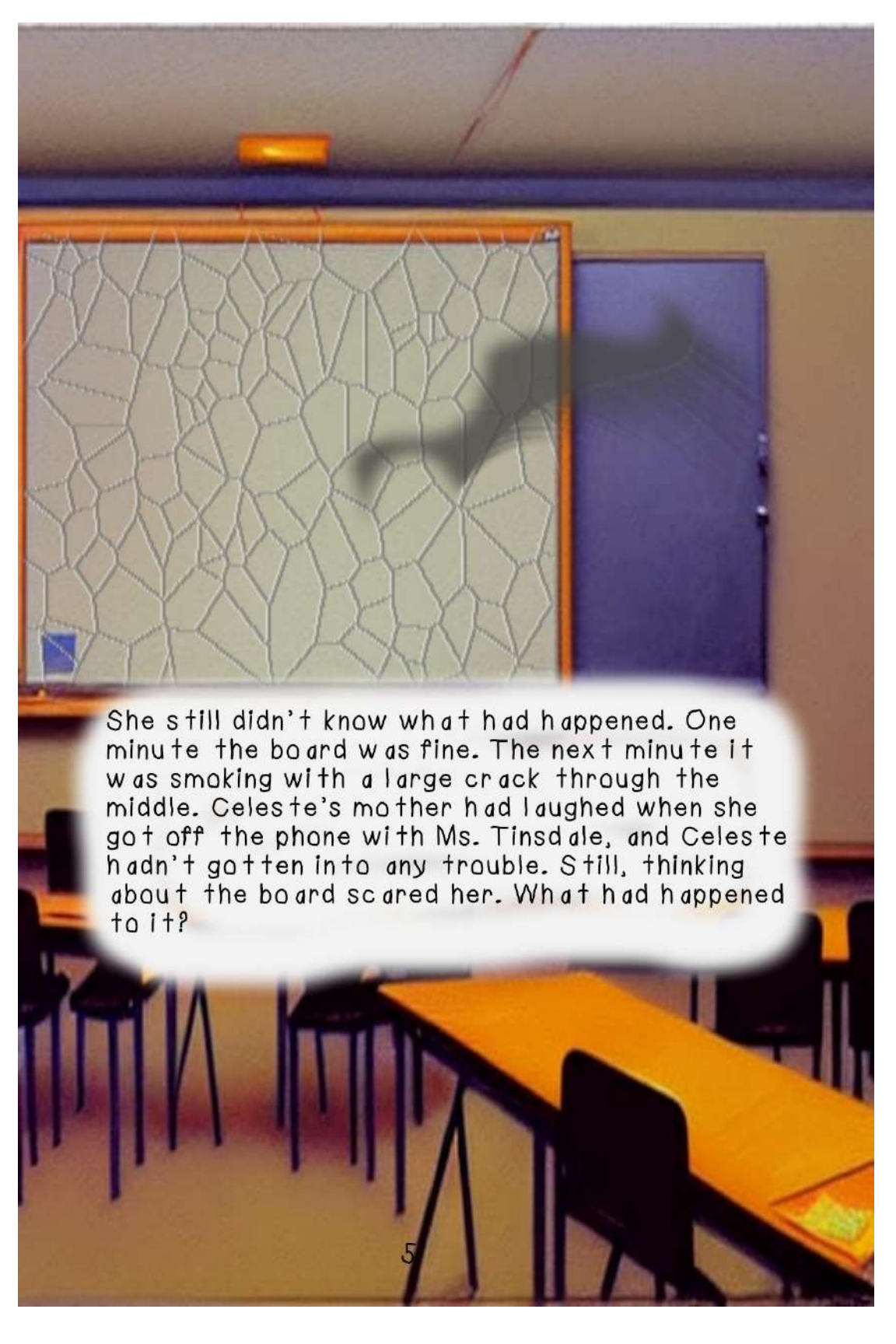


Celeste climbed out and stood in the tall grass. She shuddered as it brushed her bare knees, and she trembled at the thought of walking through it to the porch. "Mom, are you sure about this?" Celeste called.

Hannah laughed. "Yes, honey. I'm sure. We'll be just fine." She unlocked the door and waved to Celeste. "Come on."

Celeste sighed. This was all her fault. If she hadn't broken the new white board in Ms. Tinsdale's class, they wouldn't have had to move. They could've stayed right where they were, where all her friends were, she was sure.



A photograph of a classroom. In the background, there is a large whiteboard with a wooden frame. The whiteboard is covered in a pattern of irregular, interconnected lines, resembling a cracked surface or a honeycomb structure. To the right of the whiteboard is a dark blue door. In the foreground, there are several wooden tables and black chairs. The lighting is somewhat dim, and the overall tone is slightly muted.

She still didn't know what had happened. One minute the board was fine. The next minute it was smoking with a large crack through the middle. Celeste's mother had laughed when she got off the phone with Ms. Tinsdale, and Celeste hadn't gotten into any trouble. Still, thinking about the board scared her. What had happened to it?



Celeste stepped carefully along the walkway to the porch. She grimaced as she passed an old tire and several bits of garbage, but a moment later she was on the porch and looking into the house.





Cobwebs hung in the corners, and dust covered the floor. Old paint cans sat in the fireplace, and the walls were atrocious colors, like pale green, bright blue, and lavender. On top of all that, an odor of dampness and neglect wafted through the place. Tears filled Celeste's eyes as she thought of having to live in such an awful place, but she wiped them away before her mother could see them.

"Mom?" Celeste called.

"I'm in the kitchen!"

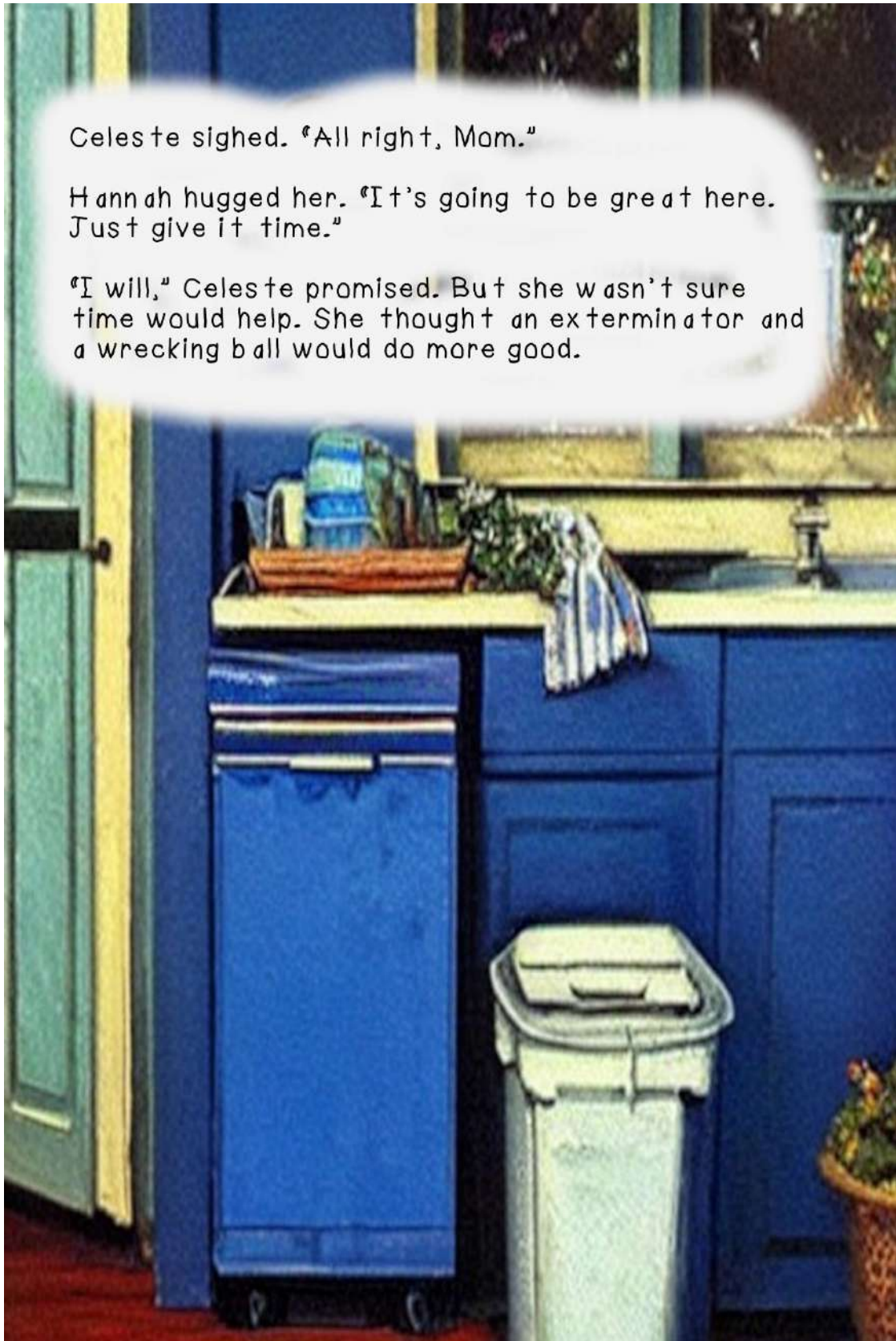
Celeste made her way through the living room and dining room to find her mother standing in the middle of the kitchen with her hands on her hips. This room was light blue with black cabinets that looked like they would fall from the wall at any second. The stove had a large dent in the side, and a dead mouse laid by the back door. More tears burned in Celeste's eyes, and a large lump filled her throat. Why couldn't they just go home?

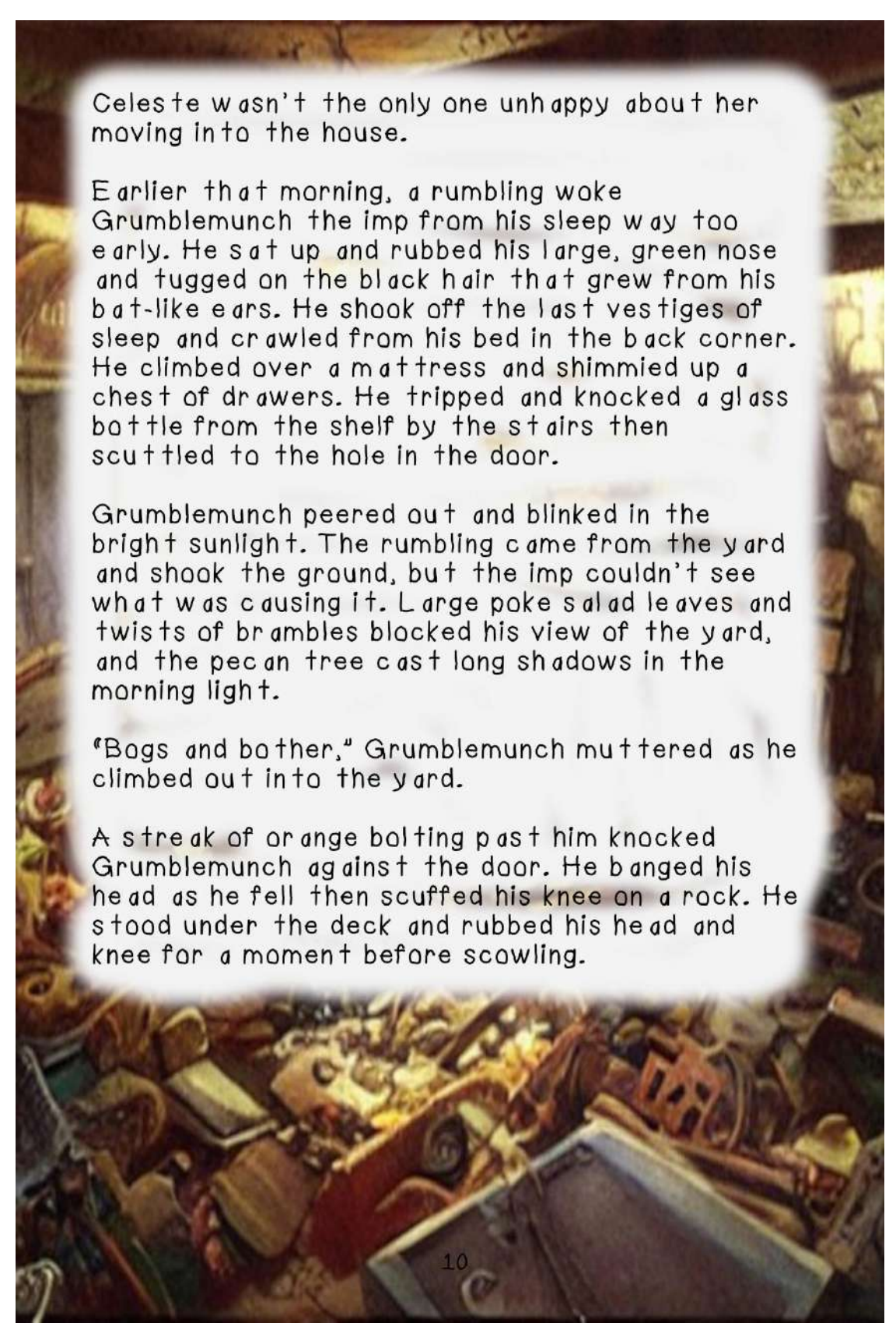
"All right," Hannah said. "Let's get the cleaning supplies out of the car and get started. I'd like to have at least one room cleaned before our stuff gets here."

Celeste sighed. "All right, Mom."

Hannah hugged her. "It's going to be great here. Just give it time."

"I will," Celeste promised. But she wasn't sure time would help. She thought an exterminator and a wrecking ball would do more good.





Celeste wasn't the only one unhappy about her moving into the house.

Earlier that morning, a rumbling woke Grumblemunch the imp from his sleep way too early. He sat up and rubbed his large, green nose and tugged on the black hair that grew from his bat-like ears. He shook off the last vestiges of sleep and crawled from his bed in the back corner. He climbed over a mattress and shimmied up a chest of drawers. He tripped and knocked a glass bottle from the shelf by the stairs then scuttled to the hole in the door.

Grumblemunch peered out and blinked in the bright sunlight. The rumbling came from the yard and shook the ground, but the imp couldn't see what was causing it. Large poke salad leaves and twists of brambles blocked his view of the yard, and the pecan tree cast long shadows in the morning light.

"Bogs and bother," Grumblemunch muttered as he climbed out into the yard.

A streak of orange bolting past him knocked Grumblemunch against the door. He banged his head as he fell then scuffed his knee on a rock. He stood under the deck and rubbed his head and knee for a moment before scowling.

"Hey!" he yelled after the fleeing shape. "What's going on?"

The orange streak skidded to a stop and turned back to Grumblemunch. "Pardon me, Grumblemunch. I lost control most shamefully. Apologies."

A cat with orange fur picked his way through the grass and over the discarded wood planks that littered the area behind the house. He stopped in front of Grumblemunch and stood trembling.

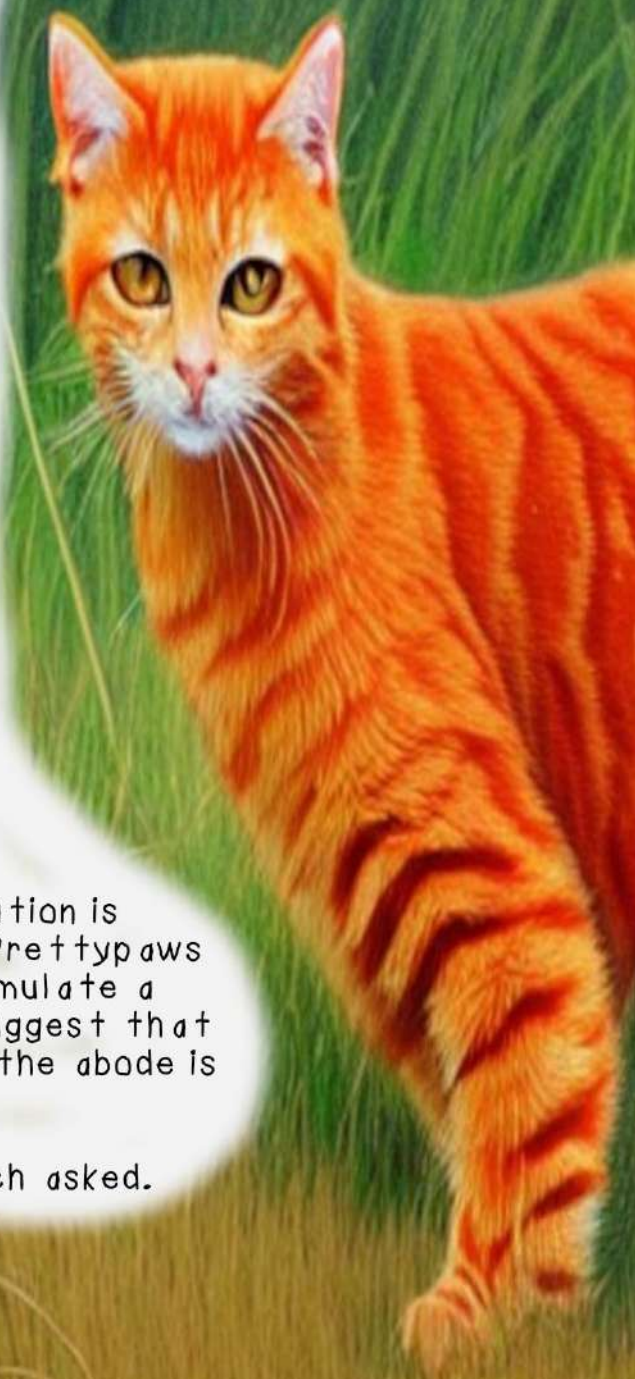
Grumblemunch rolled his eyes at the cat. Professor Prettypaws always spoke in a lofty manner that made Grumblemunch's head hurt.

"There appears to be a human on a...what do they call it?...a tractor...driving over the yard. It caught me by surprise."

"Human?" Grumblemunch asked, confused. "There haven't been humans here in years. Not since Mr. Evilian died."

"It appears the situation is changing," Professor Prettypaws replied. "Had I to formulate a hypothesis, I would suggest that human occupation of the abode is eminent."

"What?" Grumblemunch asked.



Professor Prettypaws stared at Grumblemunch then rolled his eyes. "Humans are moving in soon."

"Bogs and bother!" Grumblemunch cried. "What are they doing?"

"I would hazard a guess that they are trimming the foliage," Professor Prettypaws said. He sat down and began cleaning his fur.

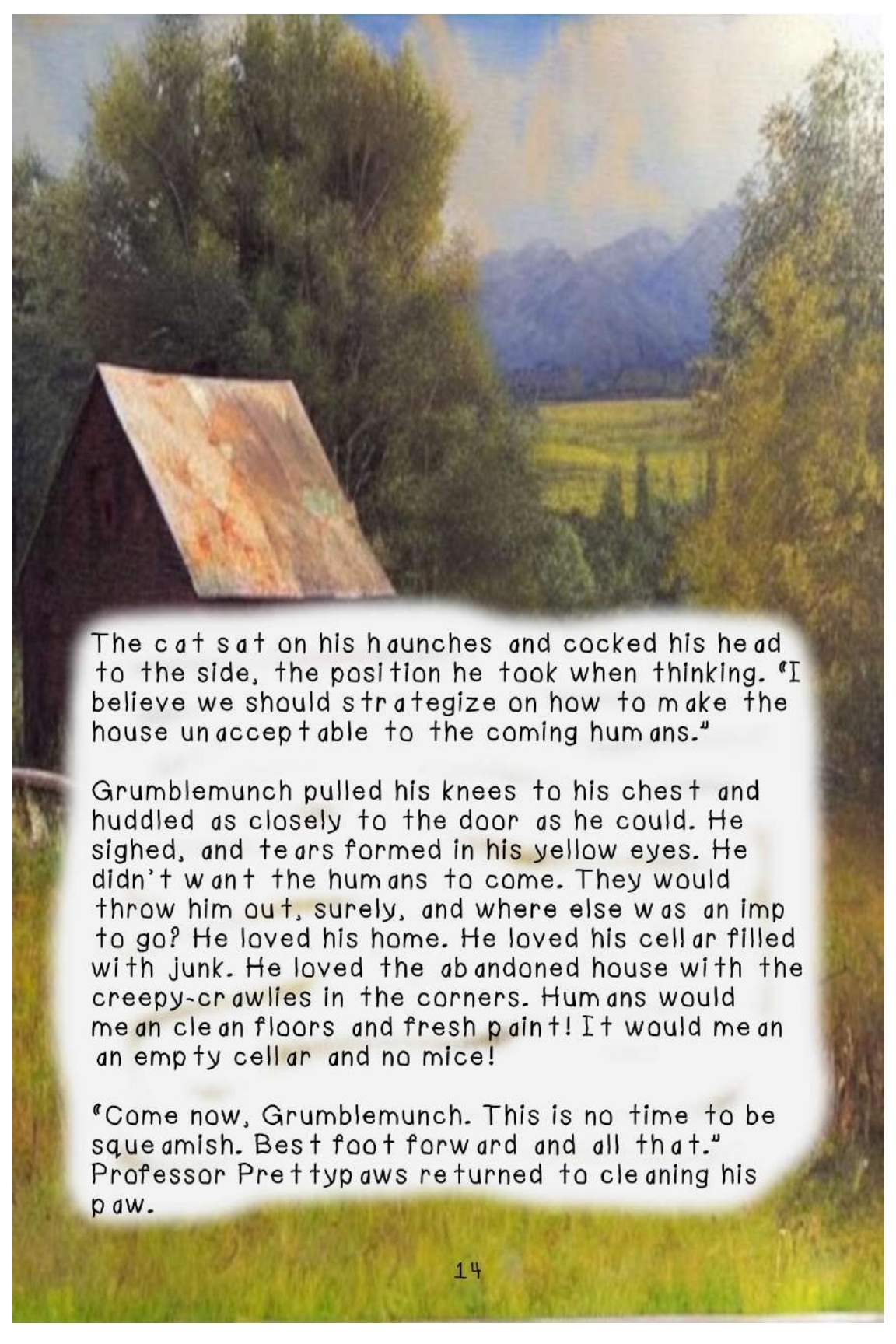
"They're what?"

Professor Prettypaws looked up from his paw and gave Grumblemunch a quizzical look. With a sigh, he said, "They're cutting the grass."

Grumblemunch moaned and sank to the ground. He placed his head in his hands as his whole body shook. Cutting the grass. This was bad. Really bad. Cut grass meant he might have to leave. Only Mr. Evilian had let him do as he pleased.

Professor Prettypaws trotted to Grumblemunch's side and placed a paw on the imp's arm. "We will persevere, dear Grumblemunch. Never fear. We will preserve your home together."

"How?"



The cat sat on his haunches and cocked his head to the side, the position he took when thinking. "I believe we should strategize on how to make the house unacceptable to the coming humans."

Grumblemunch pulled his knees to his chest and huddled as closely to the door as he could. He sighed, and tears formed in his yellow eyes. He didn't want the humans to come. They would throw him out, surely, and where else was an imp to go? He loved his home. He loved his cellar filled with junk. He loved the abandoned house with the creepy-crawlies in the corners. Humans would mean clean floors and fresh paint! It would mean an empty cellar and no mice!

"Come now, Grumblemunch. This is no time to be squeamish. Best foot forward and all that." Professor Pretty paws returned to cleaning his paw.



Inside, Celeste poured a bit of cleaner into the bucket and sat on her hands and knees as she scrubbed. She kept her head down, so her hair would hide the tears that fell from her eyes.

A loud thump caused Celeste to stop in mid-scrub, but her mother continued to sweep the ceiling as if she hadn't heard.

Thump!

Celeste looked up. "Mom? What was that?"

Hannah didn't stop her sweeping as she said, "Probably something in the cellar falling over."

Celeste sat on her knees and looked up at her mother.

She froze.

Her mother's broom was dancing across the ceiling, and her mother wasn't holding it!

"Uh, Mom?" She wanted to jump up and run from the house, but she couldn't make herself move.

Hannah paused and wiped the sweat from her forehead. She smiled at Celeste, but there was something else in her eyes, something Celeste couldn't identify. "It's nothing, Leste. There's a hole in the outside cellar door. It's probably just a cat that came in. I'll check on it later." She grinned, and this time it lit up her eyes. "Let's get this done, so we'll have somewhere to put our stuff."

Celeste sat with her eyes wide and her mouth hanging open. She pointed to the broom but couldn't make her words come out.

Hannah laughed. "Oh, that." Hannah grabbed Celeste's hands and pulled her to her feet. She danced her around the room a couple of times before dropping onto the floor beside the bucket. "That, my darling, wonderful girl, is magic." She threw back her head and laughed again. "Welcome to Cripsey Hollow."

"But--."

Hannah pulled Celeste into a hug. "I know, Leste. I know. But this is who we are." She brushed her long, brown hair away from her eyes and looked at Celeste. "This is who we all are."

"I—I--."

Celeste still couldn't find the words she was looking for.

"Do you want to give it a try?" Hannah asked.

Celeste chewed her bottom lip a moment then nodded, though she wasn't sure at all that this was something she wanted to do.

"All right. Close your eyes and breathe in and out slowly. Relax. It isn't going to hurt."

Celeste followed her mother's instructions, and, after just a few breaths, she felt a warm tingling in her fingers.

"Now, open your eyes and focus on the broom. See what you want it to do."

Celeste tried.

The broom shot around the room and banged into her mother's leg. Then it took off toward her mother's bedroom and slammed into the wall.

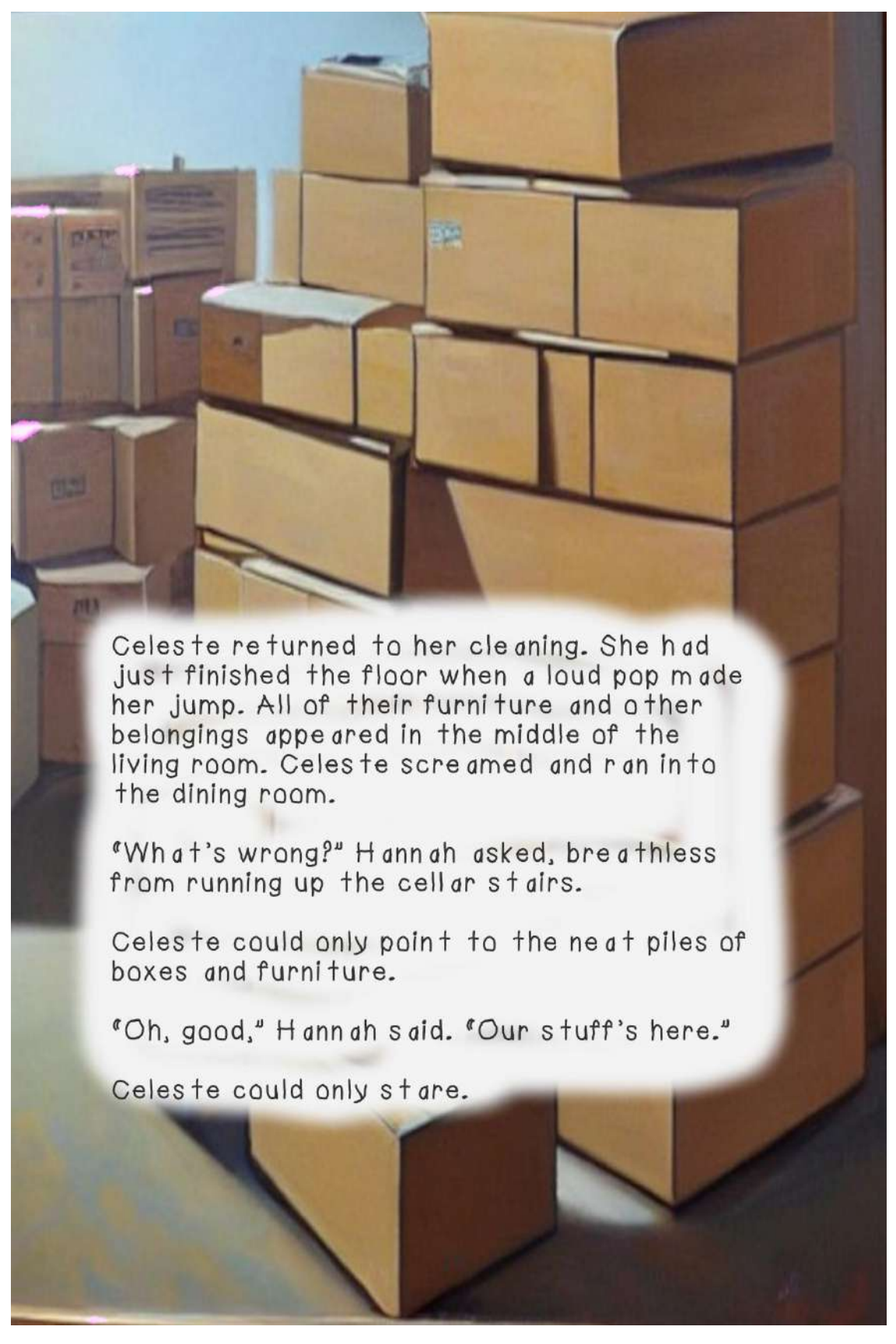
"I don't think I can do this," Celeste said.

Hannah hugged her and smiled. "It'll take some time, but you'll learn."

The sound of laughter sounded from somewhere in the house, and Celeste looked at her mother, concerned.

"I'll go check the cellar," Hannah said. "You keep working on this room. Our stuff will be here shortly."



A large stack of cardboard boxes, some open and some closed, arranged in a way that suggests a recent move or unpacking. The boxes are brown and vary in size. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

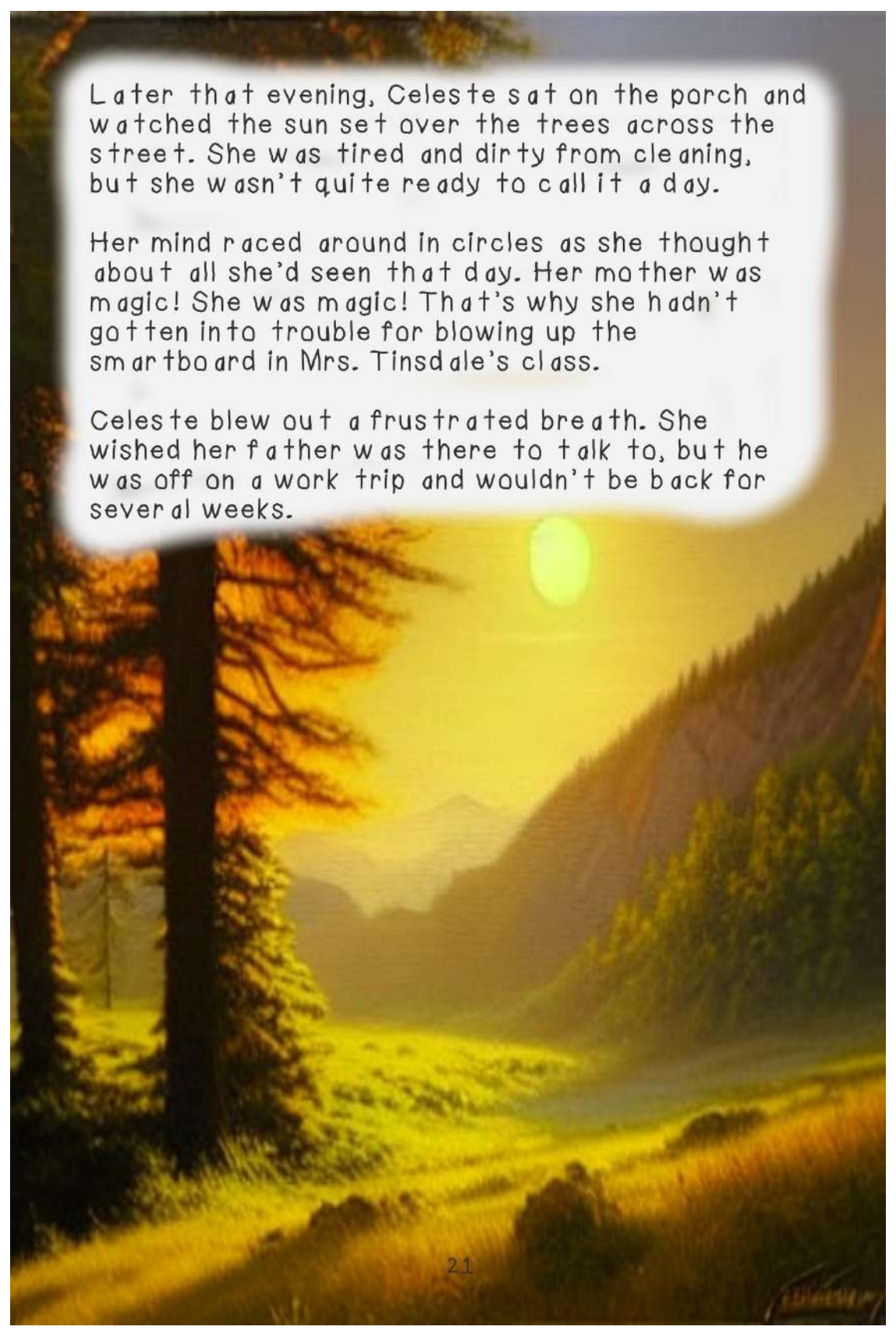
Celeste returned to her cleaning. She had just finished the floor when a loud pop made her jump. All of their furniture and other belongings appeared in the middle of the living room. Celeste screamed and ran into the dining room.

"What's wrong?" Hannah asked, breathless from running up the cellar stairs.

Celeste could only point to the neat piles of boxes and furniture.

"Oh, good," Hannah said. "Our stuff's here."

Celeste could only stare.



Later that evening, Celeste sat on the porch and watched the sun set over the trees across the street. She was tired and dirty from cleaning, but she wasn't quite ready to call it a day.

Her mind raced around in circles as she thought about all she'd seen that day. Her mother was magic! She was magic! That's why she hadn't gotten into trouble for blowing up the smartboard in Mrs. Tinsdale's class.

Celeste blew out a frustrated breath. She wished her father was there to talk to, but he was off on a work trip and wouldn't be back for several weeks.



Celeste walked to the end of the porch and looked out over the yard. An old truck and several tires sat around it, more visible now that Mr. Scattermire had cut the grass. The quiet burble of the creek behind the house made her smile, and she closed her eyes for a moment to listen to the crickets and tree frogs sing their nightly symphony.

"Celeste!" Hannah called from inside.

Celeste looked up at the moon for a moment before answering.

She gasped.

Flying across the moon was a witch on a broomstick!

"Mom!" Celeste screamed.

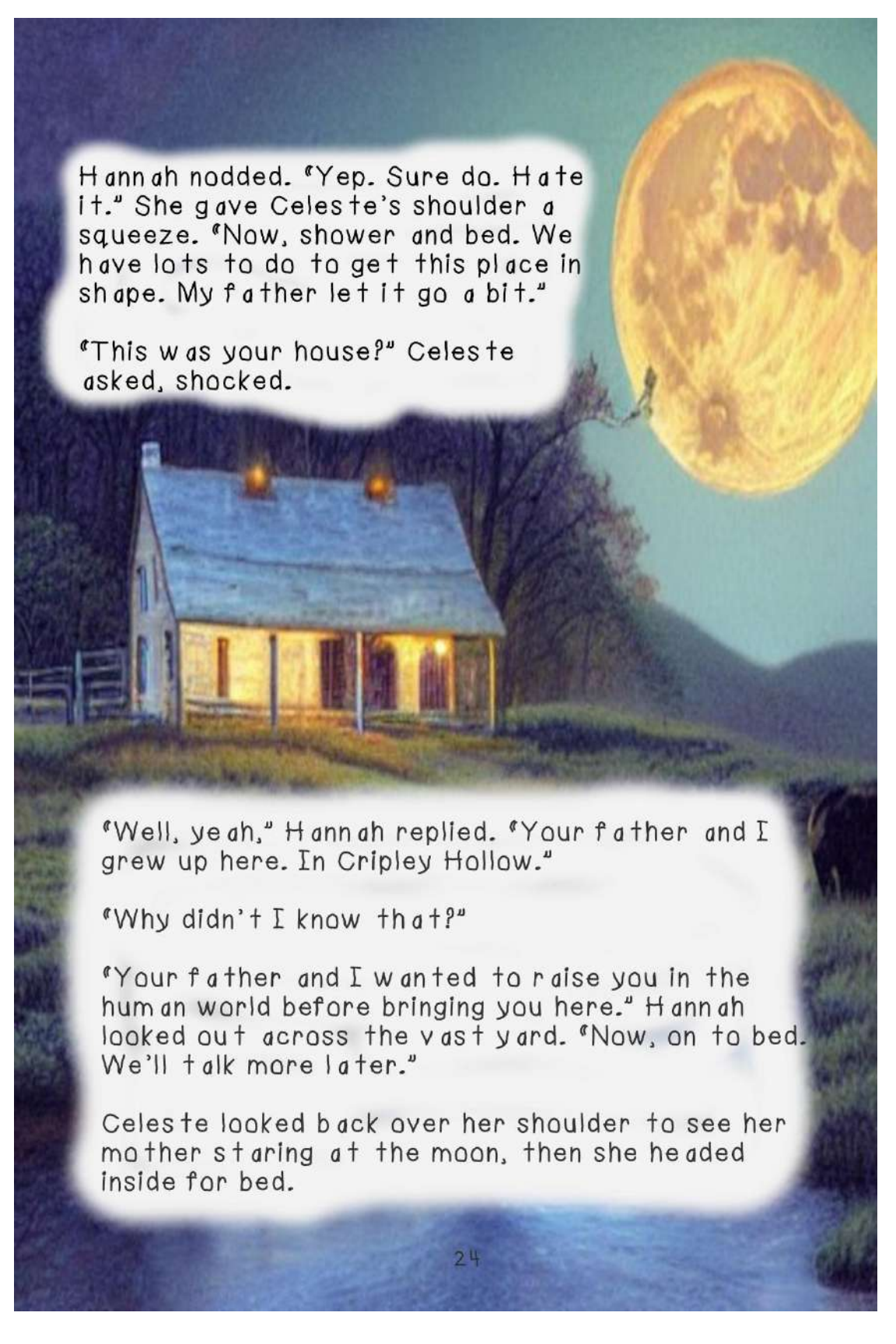
Celeste's mom rushed from the house and wrapped her arm around Celeste's shoulders.

"What's wrong?"

Celeste pointed.

Hannah laughed. "It's all right. You'll get used to it. Some of the witches here prefer the old ways. Me? I prefer to keep my feet on the ground."

Celeste stared at her mother. "You know how to fly a broom?"

A full moon in a dark sky above a small, lit-up house at night. The house has a blue roof and yellow lights inside. A small figure is visible on a branch near the moon.

Hannah nodded. "Yep. Sure do. Hate it." She gave Celeste's shoulder a squeeze. "Now, shower and bed. We have lots to do to get this place in shape. My father let it go a bit."

"This was your house?" Celeste asked, shocked.

"Well, yeah," Hannah replied. "Your father and I grew up here. In Cripely Hollow."

"Why didn't I know that?"

"Your father and I wanted to raise you in the human world before bringing you here." Hannah looked out across the vast yard. "Now, on to bed. We'll talk more later."

Celeste looked back over her shoulder to see her mother staring at the moon, then she headed inside for bed.



Once Celeste and Hannah had gone to their rooms for the night, Grumblemunch and Professor Prettypaws got to work. Grumblemunch took a branch from the woods behind the house and banged on the stairs. The dull thud shook the walls, and he giggled when he heard the humans heading for the cellar door.

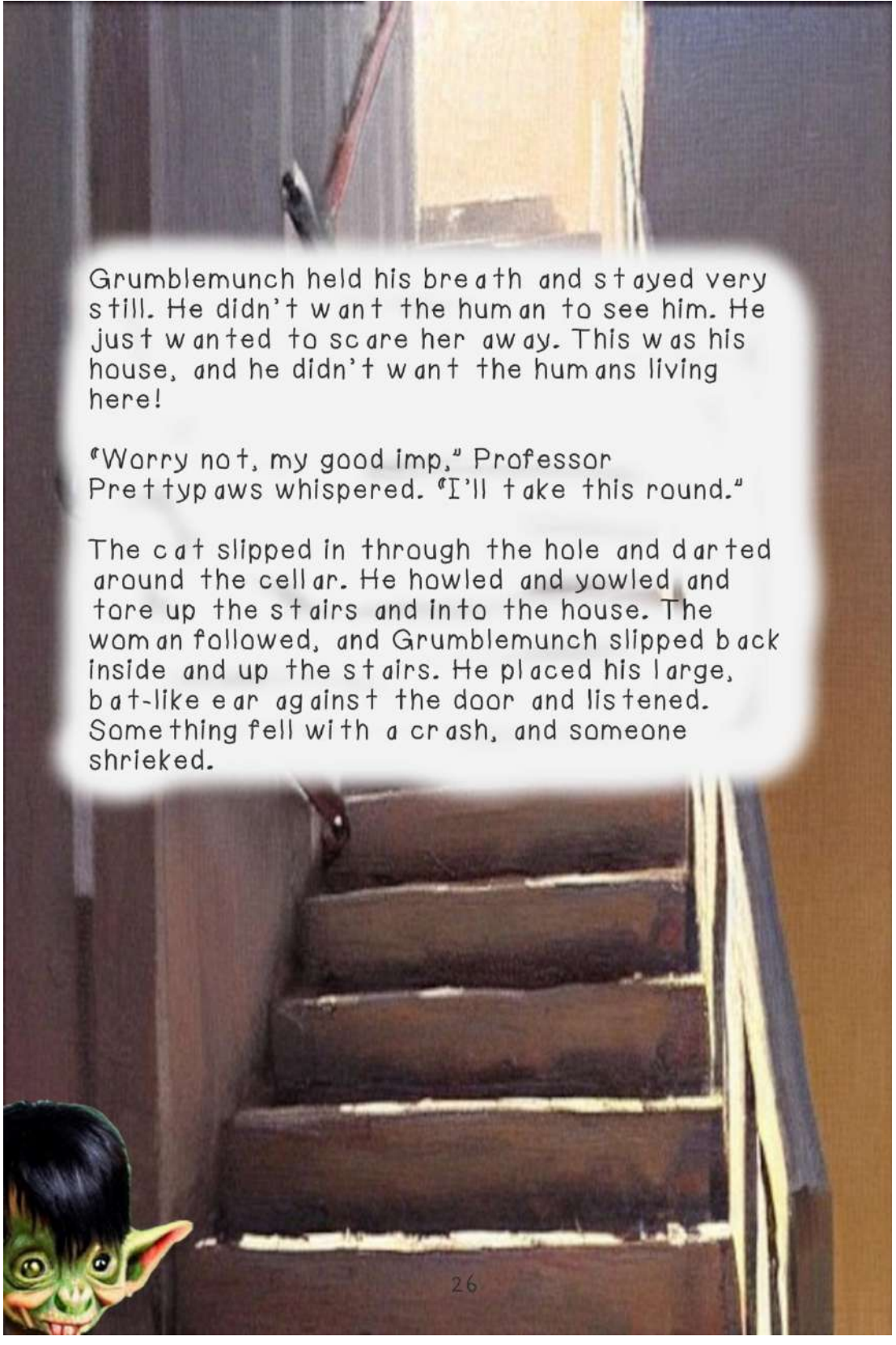
"What's making that sound, Mom?" Celeste asked, her voice sleepy.

"I don't know, Celeste. Grab me a flashlight so I can check."

Hannah made her way down the rickety stairs. A ball of yellow light bobbed in front of her, and it was all Grumblemunch could do to duck out of the way. He headed for the hole in the door and slipped outside.

"Hello!" the woman called. "Who's down here?"





Grumblemunch held his breath and stayed very still. He didn't want the human to see him. He just wanted to scare her away. This was his house, and he didn't want the humans living here!

"Worry not, my good imp," Professor Prettypaws whispered. "I'll take this round."

The cat slipped in through the hole and darted around the cellar. He howled and yowled and tore up the stairs and into the house. The woman followed, and Grumblemunch slipped back inside and up the stairs. He placed his large, bat-like ear against the door and listened. Something fell with a crash, and someone shrieked.



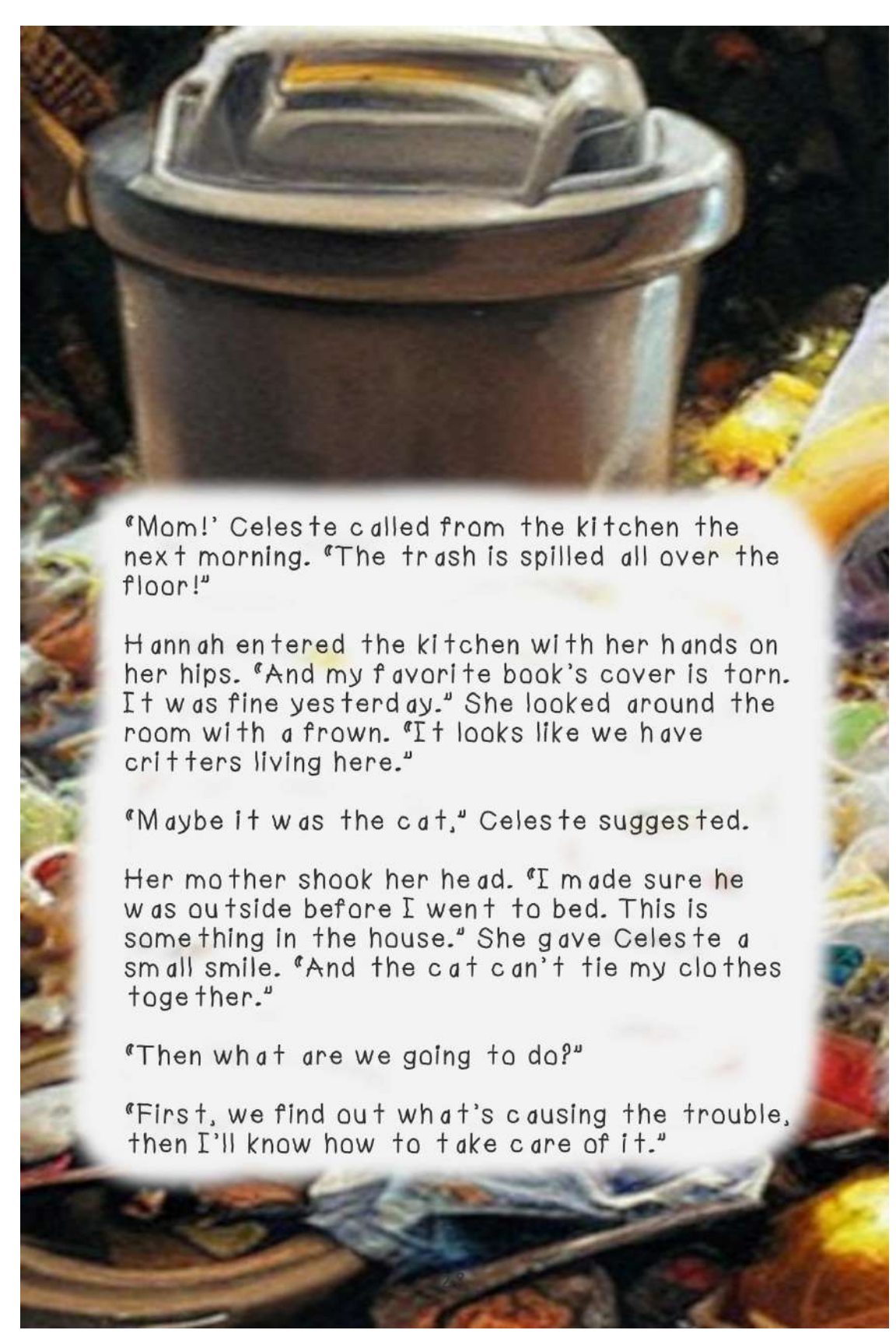
"Mom, can I keep the cat?" Celeste asked once things had settled down.

"We'll have to see," her mother replied. "He may belong to someone. I found him in the cellar. There's a hole in the door we'll have to fix tomorrow."

"Can I at least feed him?"

"Yeah. Get him some leftovers from dinner and put it on the porch. Then head back to bed."

"Bogs and bother," Grumblemunch sighed. That part of the plan hadn't worked. The girl looked at Professor Pretty-paws as a pet.



"Mom!" Celeste called from the kitchen the next morning. "The trash is spilled all over the floor!"

Hannah entered the kitchen with her hands on her hips. "And my favorite book's cover is torn. It was fine yesterday." She looked around the room with a frown. "It looks like we have critters living here."

"Maybe it was the cat," Celeste suggested.

Her mother shook her head. "I made sure he was outside before I went to bed. This is something in the house." She gave Celeste a small smile. "And the cat can't tie my clothes together."

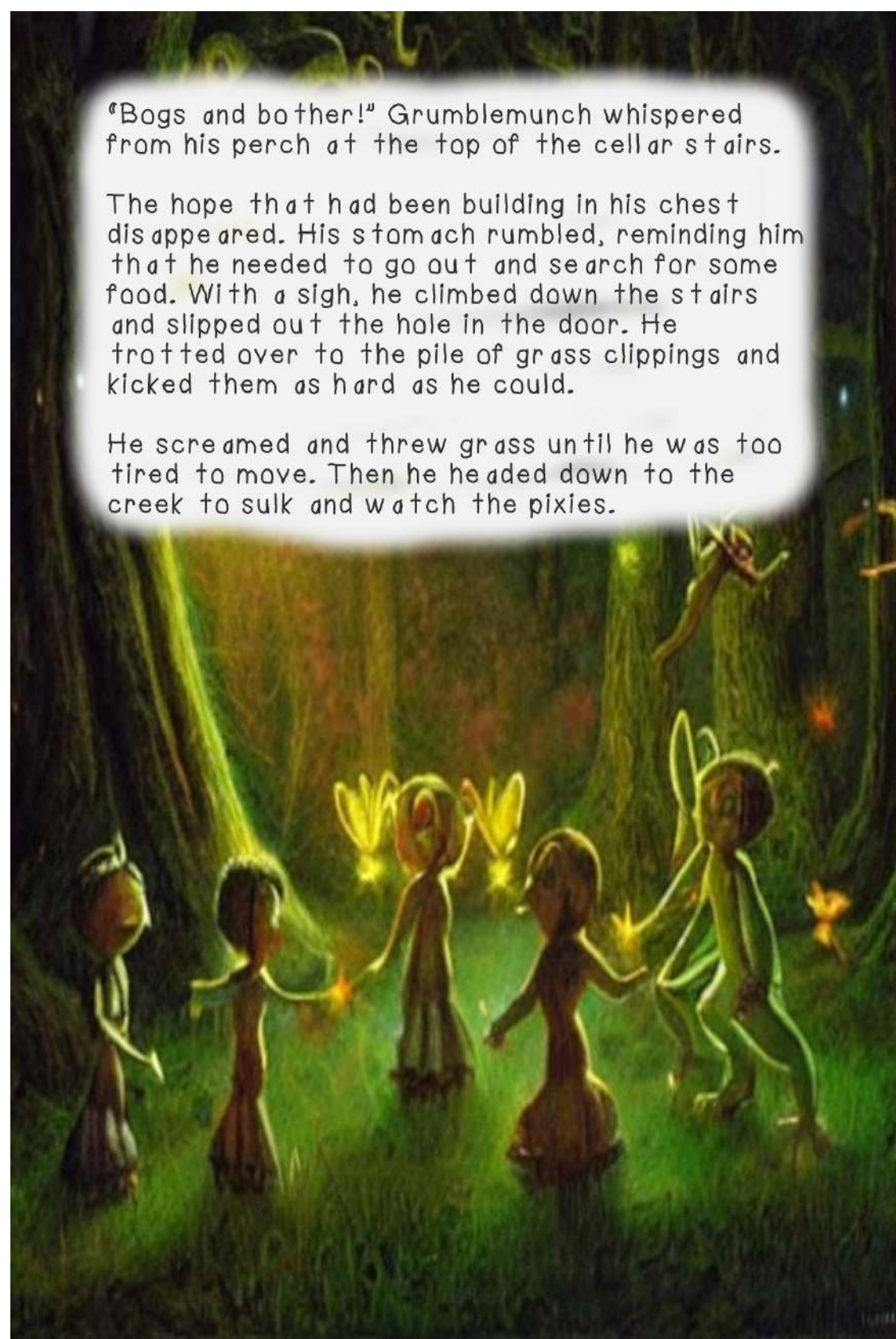
"Then what are we going to do?"

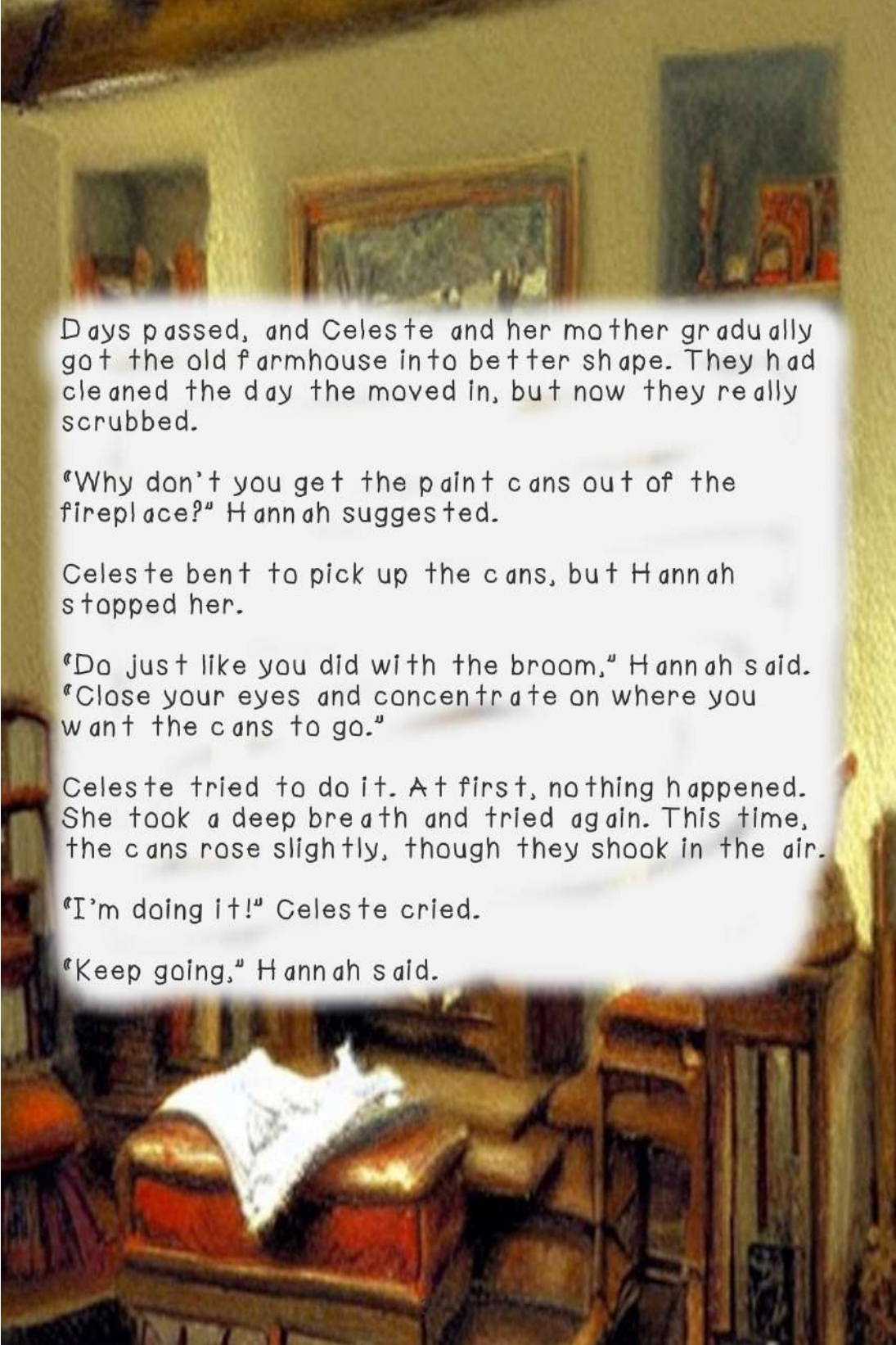
"First, we find out what's causing the trouble, then I'll know how to take care of it."

"Bogs and bother!" Grumblemunch whispered from his perch at the top of the cellar stairs.

The hope that had been building in his chest disappeared. His stomach rumbled, reminding him that he needed to go out and search for some food. With a sigh, he climbed down the stairs and slipped out the hole in the door. He trotted over to the pile of grass clippings and kicked them as hard as he could.

He screamed and threw grass until he was too tired to move. Then he headed down to the creek to sulk and watch the pixies.



The background is a painting of a rustic interior. In the upper part, there's a fireplace mantel with three framed pictures. The central picture is larger and shows a landscape with trees. The two side pictures are smaller and show abstract or still-life scenes. Below the mantel, the room is filled with various wooden furniture, including a large chair with a red cushion and a white cloth draped over it in the foreground. The overall style is impressionistic with warm, earthy tones.

Days passed, and Celeste and her mother gradually got the old farmhouse into better shape. They had cleaned the day they moved in, but now they really scrubbed.

"Why don't you get the paint cans out of the fireplace?" Hannah suggested.

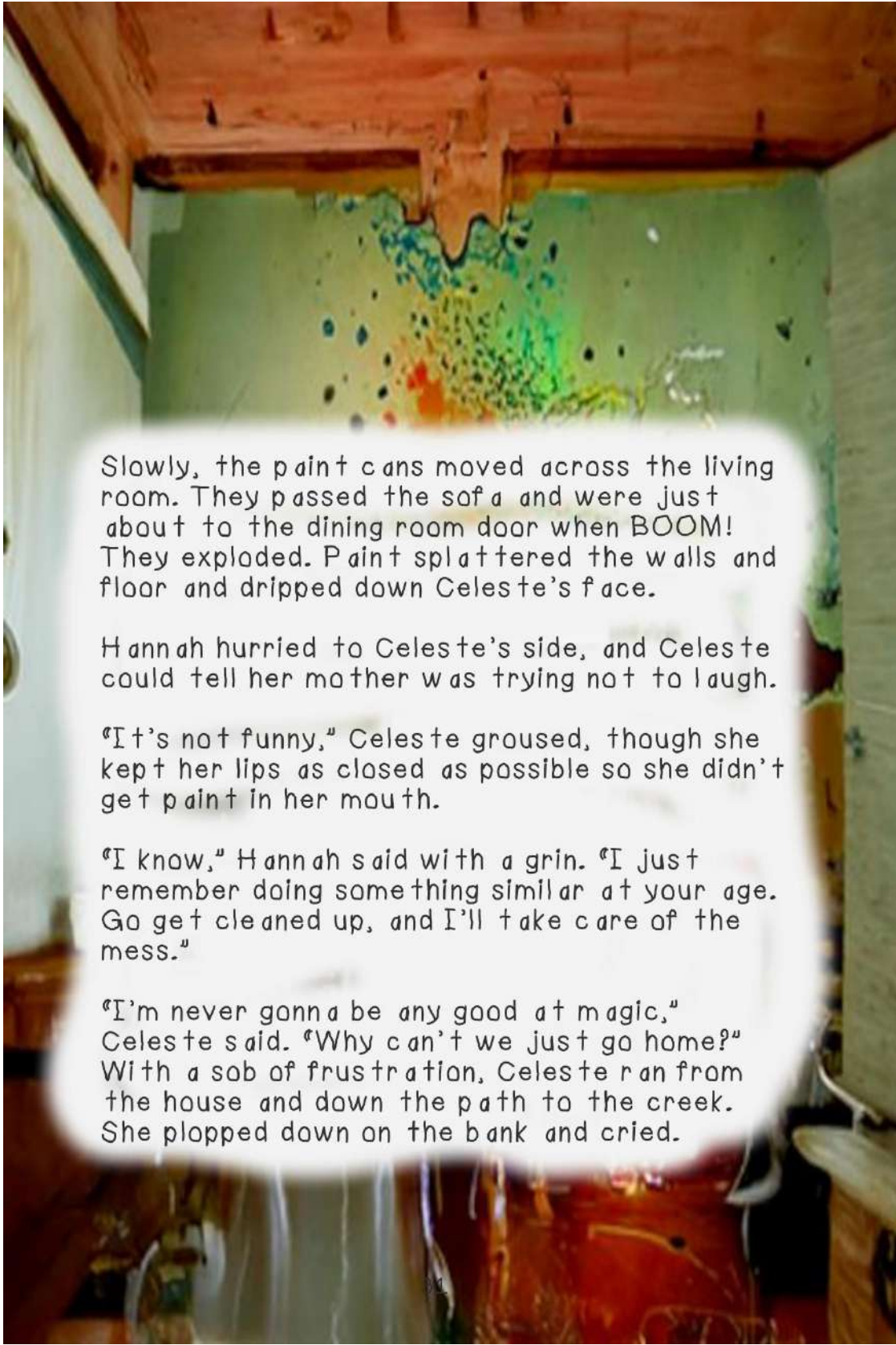
Celeste bent to pick up the cans, but Hannah stopped her.

"Do just like you did with the broom," Hannah said. "Close your eyes and concentrate on where you want the cans to go."

Celeste tried to do it. At first, nothing happened. She took a deep breath and tried again. This time, the cans rose slightly, though they shook in the air.

"I'm doing it!" Celeste cried.

"Keep going," Hannah said.



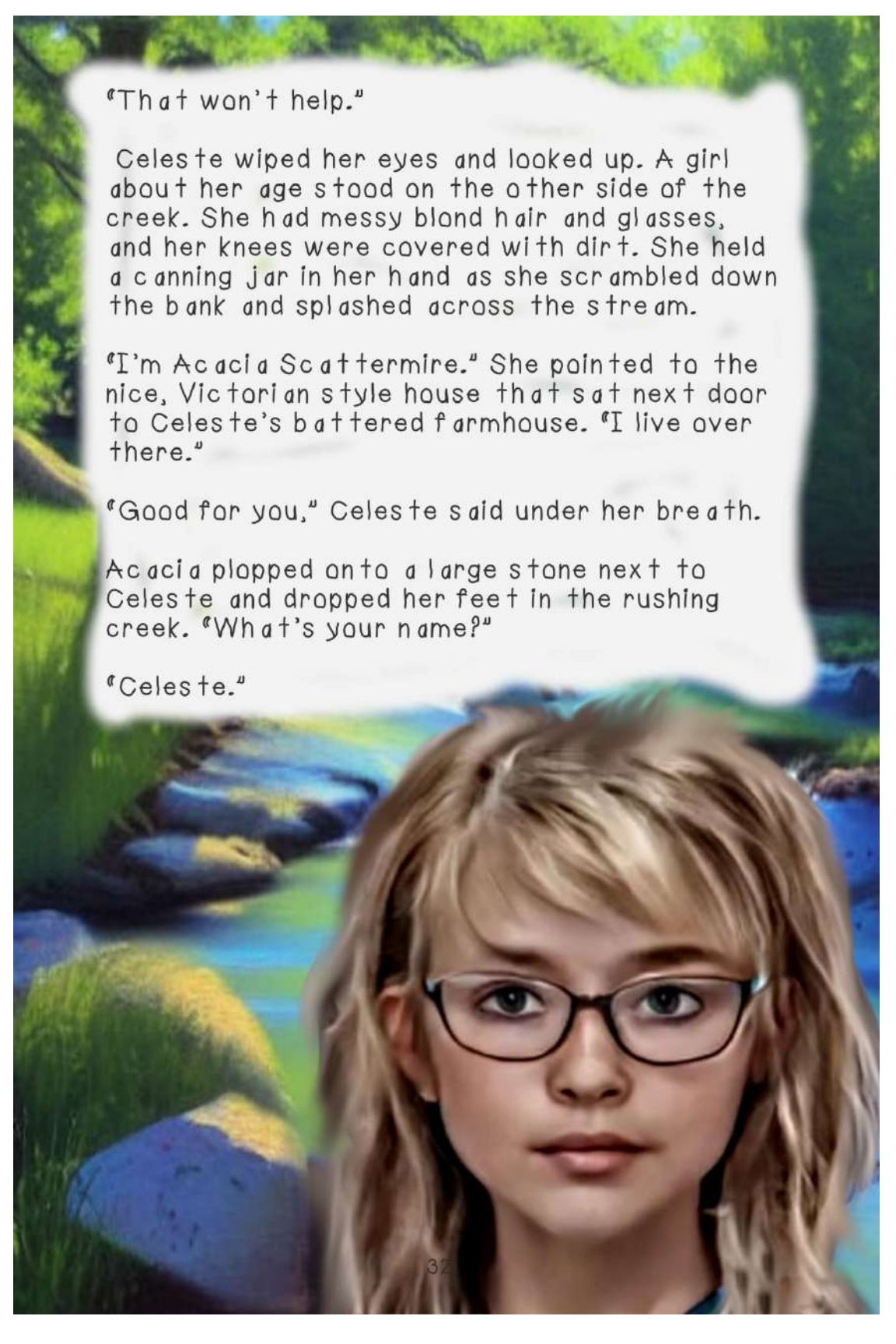
Slowly, the paint cans moved across the living room. They passed the sofa and were just about to the dining room door when BOOM! They exploded. Paint splattered the walls and floor and dripped down Celeste's face.

Hannah hurried to Celeste's side, and Celeste could tell her mother was trying not to laugh.

"It's not funny," Celeste grouched, though she kept her lips as closed as possible so she didn't get paint in her mouth.

"I know," Hannah said with a grin. "I just remember doing something similar at your age. Go get cleaned up, and I'll take care of the mess."

"I'm never gonna be any good at magic," Celeste said. "Why can't we just go home?" With a sob of frustration, Celeste ran from the house and down the path to the creek. She plopped down on the bank and cried.

A young girl with blonde hair and glasses is looking over her shoulder at a creek in a forest. The creek is surrounded by green trees and rocks. The girl is in the foreground, looking back over her shoulder. The background shows a creek flowing through a forest with green trees and rocks.

"That won't help."

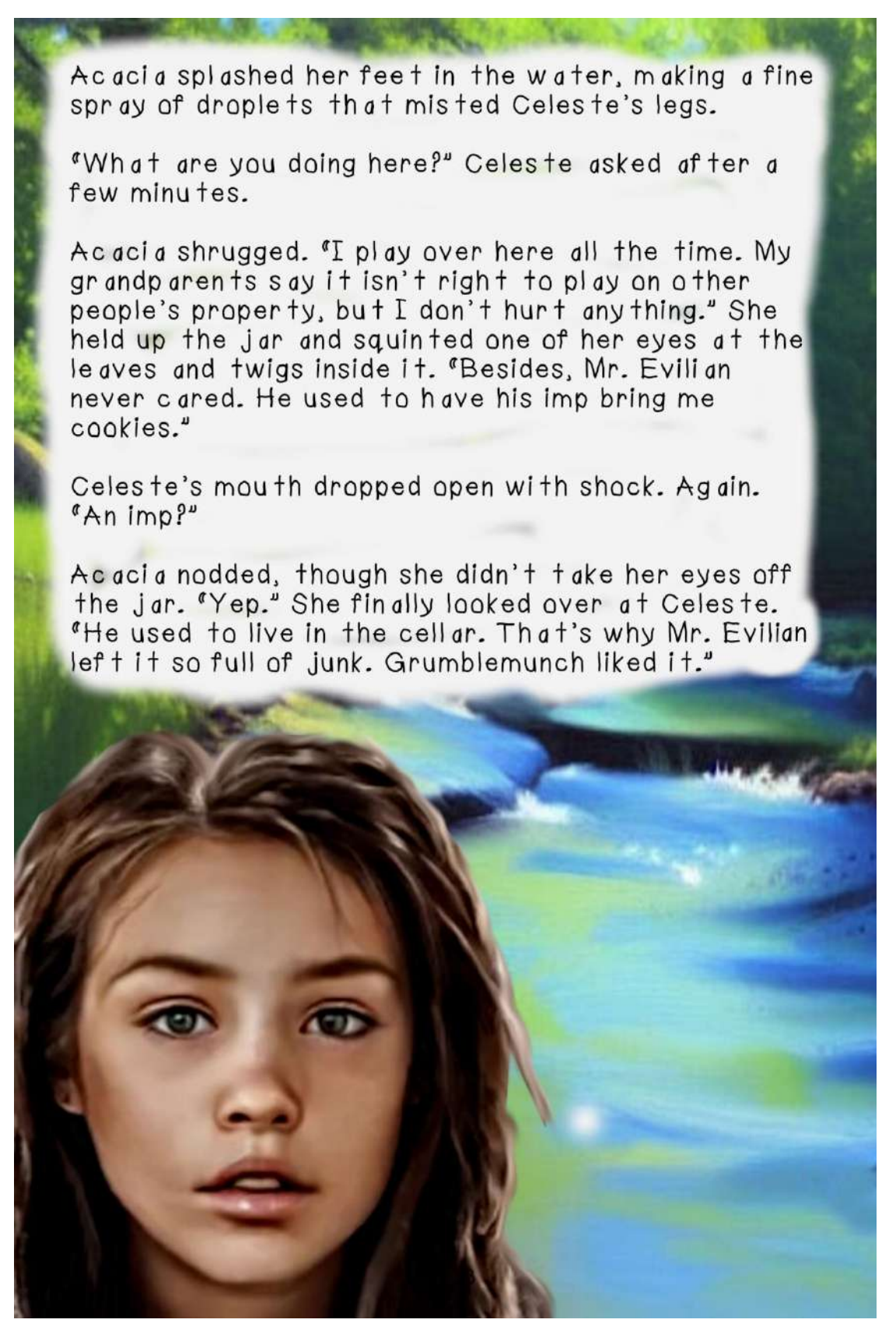
Celeste wiped her eyes and looked up. A girl about her age stood on the other side of the creek. She had messy blond hair and glasses, and her knees were covered with dirt. She held a canning jar in her hand as she scrambled down the bank and splashed across the stream.

"I'm Acacia Scattermire." She pointed to the nice, Victorian style house that sat next door to Celeste's battered farmhouse. "I live over there."

"Good for you," Celeste said under her breath.

Acacia plopped onto a large stone next to Celeste and dropped her feet in the rushing creek. "What's your name?"

"Celeste."

A young girl with long, wavy brown hair and large, expressive green eyes is shown from the chest up. She has a surprised or curious expression on her face. The background is a soft-focus image of a stream with blue water and green foliage.

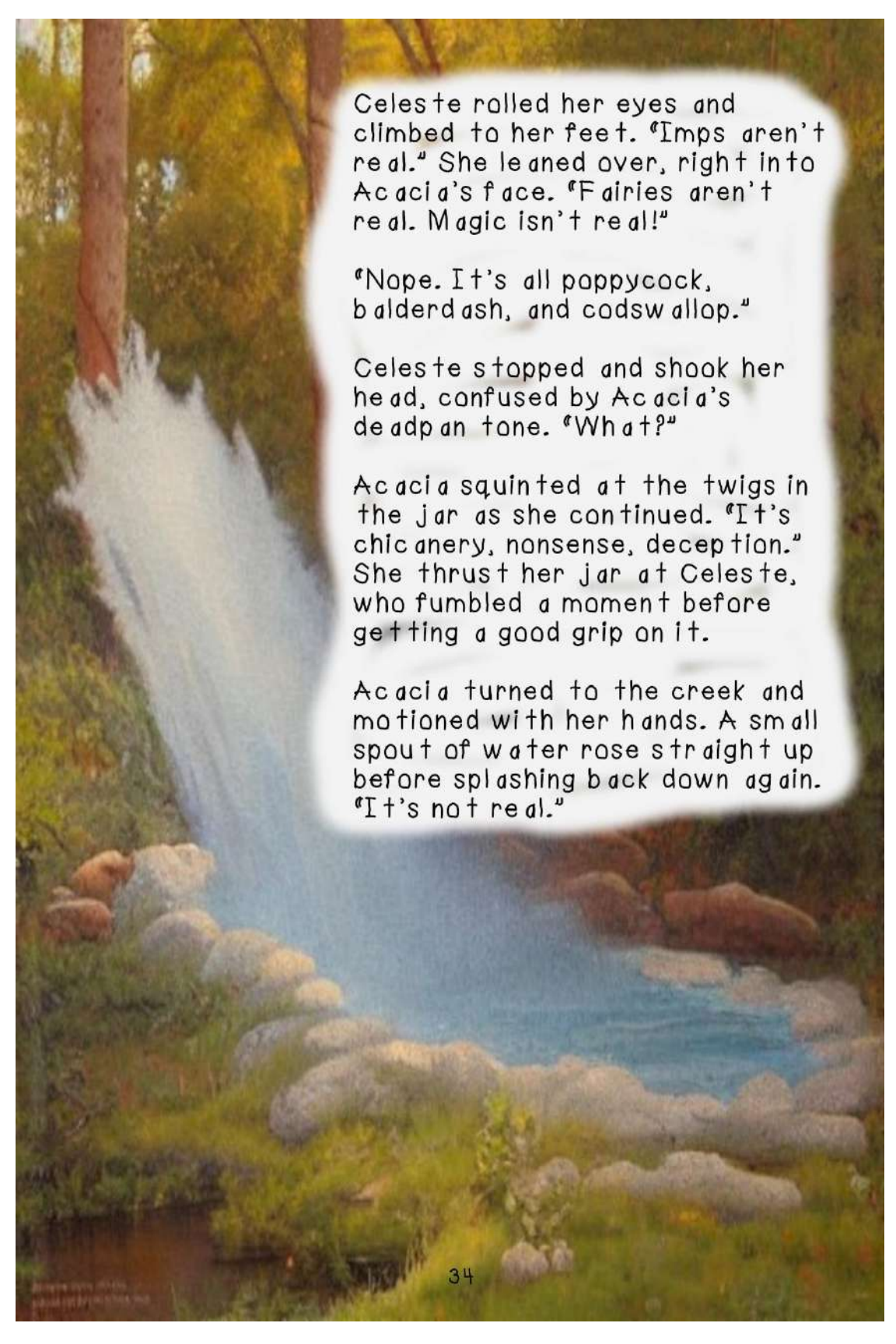
Acacia splashed her feet in the water, making a fine spray of droplets that misted Celeste's legs.

"What are you doing here?" Celeste asked after a few minutes.

Acacia shrugged. "I play over here all the time. My grandparents say it isn't right to play on other people's property, but I don't hurt anything." She held up the jar and squinted one of her eyes at the leaves and twigs inside it. "Besides, Mr. Evilian never cared. He used to have his imp bring me cookies."

Celeste's mouth dropped open with shock. Again. "An imp?"

Acacia nodded, though she didn't take her eyes off the jar. "Yep." She finally looked over at Celeste. "He used to live in the cellar. That's why Mr. Evilian left it so full of junk. Grumblemunch liked it."



Celeste rolled her eyes and climbed to her feet. "Imps aren't real." She leaned over, right into Acacia's face. "Fairies aren't real. Magic isn't real!"

"Nope. It's all poppycock, balderdash, and codswallop."

Celeste stopped and shook her head, confused by Acacia's deadpan tone. "What?"

Acacia squinted at the twigs in the jar as she continued. "It's chicanery, nonsense, deception." She thrust her jar at Celeste, who fumbled a moment before getting a good grip on it.

Acacia turned to the creek and motioned with her hands. A small spout of water rose straight up before splashing back down again. "It's not real."

Celeste stared, open mouthed, then shoved the jar into Acacia's hand. She turned and stomped up the path back to the house, but Acacia was right on her heels.

"Will you wait up a minute?" Acacia said.

"No!" Celeste yelled. "Leave me alone!"

"But I can help you," Acacia insisted.

Celeste stopped and turned to face the girl.

"Fine. Come on then."

Celeste led the way back up to the house, but she refused to answer any of Acacia's thousand questions.

"Where are you from?" Acacia asked as they crossed the yard. "People move out of Cripsey Hollow, but no one ever moves here from somewhere else."

Celeste ignored her and stepped up onto the porch. She jerked open the front door and stomped inside. "Mom!"

Hannah came into the living room, wiping her hands on a tea towel. "Yeah?"

Celeste slung her hand toward Acacia. "This is Acacia. She says there's an imp in the house." Celeste turned back to the girl. "My mom knows all about this stuff." Then she headed to her room and shut the door.

Grumblemunch listened as Acacia told Hannah all about him. He gritted his teeth and tugged on the hair in his ears. "Bogs and bother," he muttered under his breath.

"Grumblemunch!" Acacia called. "I know you're in here. Come on out!"

Grumblemunch grumbled. He tugged on his ear hair again. Acacia was fun to play with sometimes, and the two of them had shared cookies when Mr. Evilian was still alive. But now she was interfering in his plans.

"Come on, Grumblemunch!" Acacia called again.

"I thought he'd gone years ago," Hannah said.

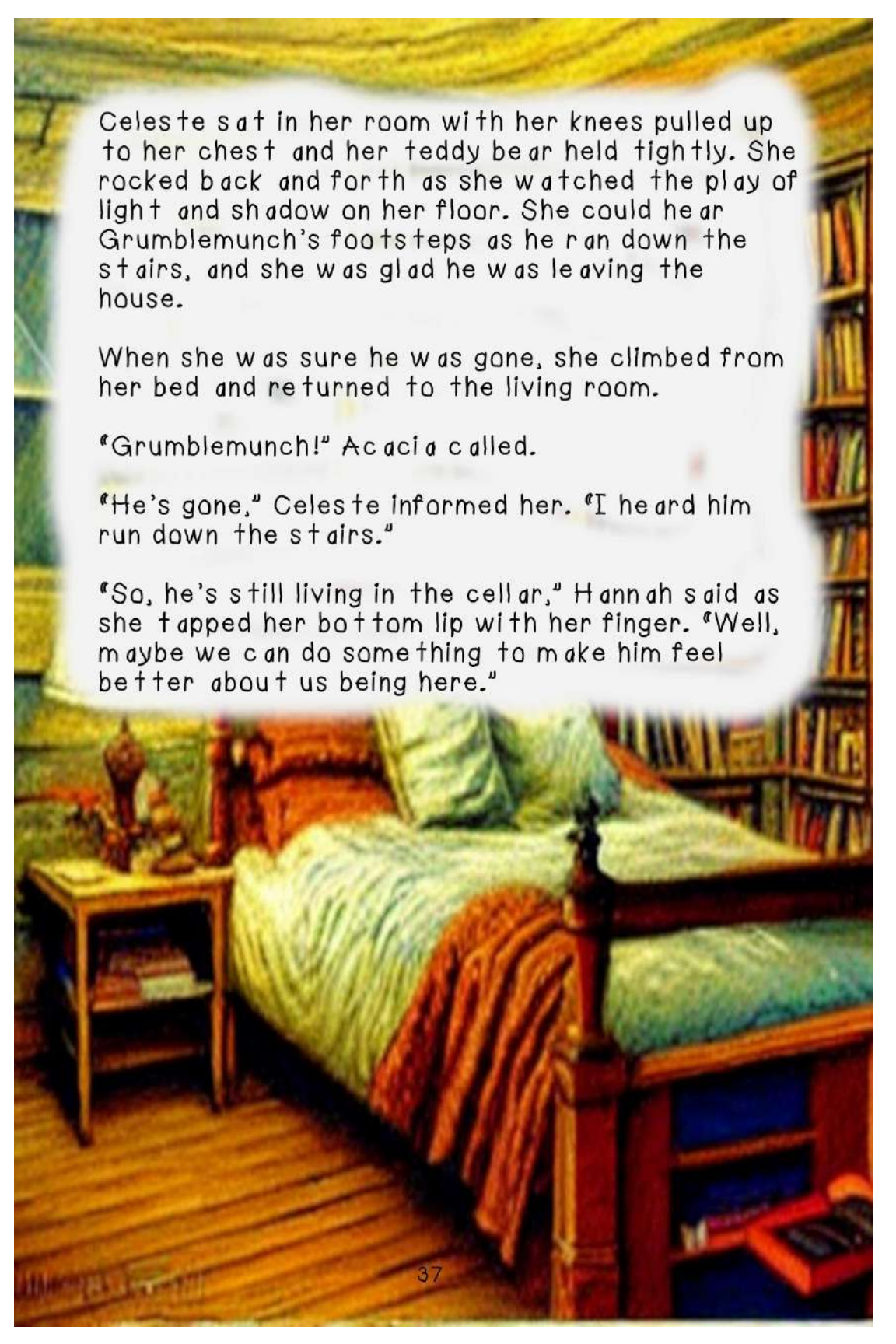
"Grumblemunch!" Acacia continued to call.
"Hannah's come home."

Grumblemunch stopped his grumbling. Hannah? He'd known her long ago, but she'd left him. She'd gone away, and she hadn't come back, and he'd been left alone with Mr. Evilian, who wasn't always very nice.

"Come on, Grumblemunch," Acacia pleaded. "We don't have all day. Don't make me tell Gram."

Grumblemunch tugged on his ear hair one more time. "Bogs and bother," he said.



A painting of a child's bedroom. In the center is a bed with a wooden frame, covered with a light green striped sheet and a red blanket. To the left of the bed is a small wooden nightstand with a lamp and some books. To the right is a tall wooden bookshelf filled with books. The floor is made of wooden planks. The scene is lit with warm, golden light.

Celeste sat in her room with her knees pulled up to her chest and her teddy bear held tightly. She rocked back and forth as she watched the play of light and shadow on her floor. She could hear Grumblemunch's footsteps as he ran down the stairs, and she was glad he was leaving the house.

When she was sure he was gone, she climbed from her bed and returned to the living room.

"Grumblemunch!" Acacia called.

"He's gone," Celeste informed her. "I heard him run down the stairs."

"So, he's still living in the cellar," Hannah said as she tapped her bottom lip with her finger. "Well, maybe we can do something to make him feel better about us being here."

"How can we do that?" Celeste asked.

A grin broke across Acacia's face. "Cookies!"

Hannah grinned back. "Yep. Grumblemunch and I always used to eat cookies together."

"Us, too," Acacia replied. "Can we make them now?"

Hannah nodded, and led the way to the kitchen with Acacia close behind her. Celeste brought up the rear, still not sure exactly what was going on.



The moon shone down on the farmyard like a quiet mother checking on her child.

Grumblemunch sat alone near the creek with giant tears in his eyes. He wanted to go back into the house and hide in the cellar, but he was afraid of the humans. He was afraid Acacia had told them too much, and he was angry at Hannah for leaving him so many years ago.

Grumblemunch's stomach rumbled, and he sighed as the lights from the pixies lit up the woods on the other side of the creek.

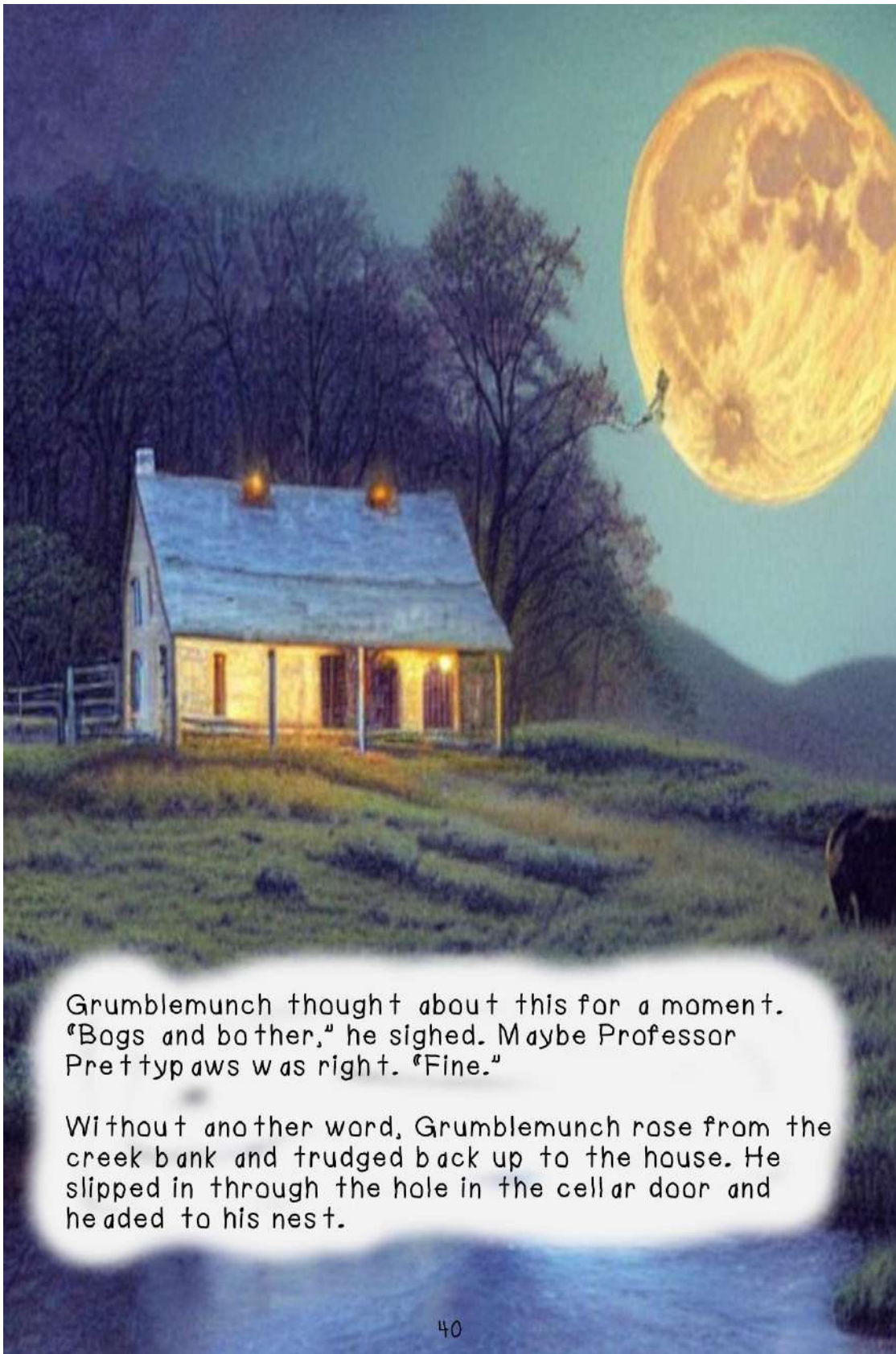
"What ails you, friend imp?" Professor Prettypaws asked before plopping down and cleaning his paw.

"I want things back the way they were."

Professor Prettypaws paused mid-lick and looked up at the imp. "Perhaps your situation will improve with the ingress of new blood to this abode. Perhaps the one you knew as a youngster has matured into a creature of utmost integrity who will accept your presence as a blessing."

Grumblemunch tugged on the hair growing from his ears. "What?"

Professor Prettypaws sighed. "Maybe you'll like Hannah better now that she's an adult."



Grumblemunch thought about this for a moment. "Bogs and bother," he sighed. Maybe Professor Pretty-paws was right. "Fine."

Without another word, Grumblemunch rose from the creek bank and trudged back up to the house. He slipped in through the hole in the cellar door and headed to his nest.

Grumblemunch stopped.

He sniffed.

He followed the aroma up the stairs and paused at the door into the house.

He sniffed again.

He knew that smell.

Grumblemunch's face broke into a grin. Oh, yes. He knew that smell all right.

Grumblemunch eased open the door and peeked into the house. All was quiet and dark. He snuck down the hallway, through the dining room, and into the kitchen.

A small table sat in the center of the kitchen with a giant plate of chocolate chip sitting in the middle. Grumblemunch grinned again and chuckled, then he dove for the plate. He gobbled down one cookie without even tasting it, then he plopped on his bottom and ate another one more slowly.



Light flooded the kitchen, and Grumblemunch dove under the table, cookie still in his hand. He made himself as small as he could and whispered a word to make himself invisible.

"You're forgetting that I know all your tricks," said a kindly voice. "Come on out, Grumblemunch. It's all right."

Grumblemunch peeked out from under the table to see a woman sitting cross-legged on the kitchen floor. She had long, brown hair and deep brown eyes. At first, he didn't know her, but there was something about her eyes that reminded him of his friend from long ago. Slowly, he crawled out from under the table and stood in front of her.

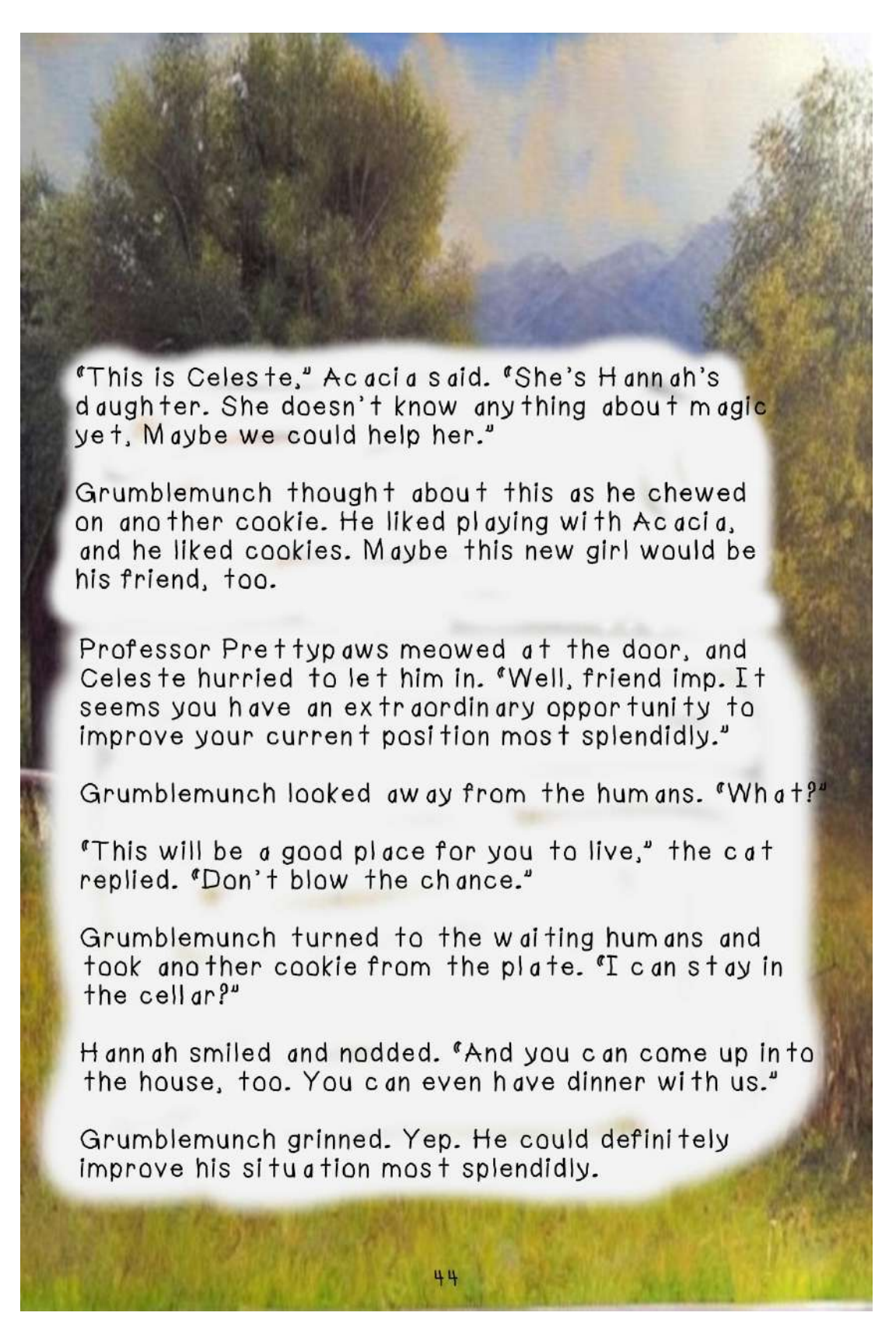
"You'll send me away," he said.

Hannah smiled. "No, Grumblemunch. I won't." Her voice became stern. "But you have to stop the mischief. No more tying my clothes together or dumping trash all over my floor."

Acacia came into the room and stood behind Hannah. "And there's someone new to play with," she said. "Come on in, Celeste."

A girl that looked much like Hannah had at that age came into the room. Grumblemunch thought she was afraid.





"This is Celeste," Acacia said. "She's Hannah's daughter. She doesn't know anything about magic yet. Maybe we could help her."

Grumblemunch thought about this as he chewed on another cookie. He liked playing with Acacia, and he liked cookies. Maybe this new girl would be his friend, too.

Professor Pretty-paws meowed at the door, and Celeste hurried to let him in. "Well, friend imp. It seems you have an extraordinary opportunity to improve your current position most splendidly."

Grumblemunch looked away from the humans. "What?"

"This will be a good place for you to live," the cat replied. "Don't blow the chance."

Grumblemunch turned to the waiting humans and took another cookie from the plate. "I can stay in the cellar?"

Hannah smiled and nodded. "And you can come up into the house, too. You can even have dinner with us."

Grumblemunch grinned. Yep. He could definitely improve his situation most splendidly.

Hannah's Chocolate Chip Cookies

Grumblemunch loves cookies, and Hannah and Celeste love to bake them. You, too, can bake cookies for the imp in your life. Ask an adult to help.

Ingredients:

- 2 cups self-rising flour
- 2/3 cup brown sugar
- 1/3 cup sugar
- 1/2 cup butter or margarine
- 4 tablespoons of cooking oil
- 2 tablespoons of water
- 1 bag of chocolate chips
- 1 small bag of nuts (optional)

Preheat the oven to 325°.

Mix all the ingredients, except the chocolate chips and nuts, in a bowl. Once the dough has come together, add the chocolate chips and nuts and mix thoroughly. Use a spoon to place small dollops of dough onto a baking sheet about 2" apart. Bake about 10 minutes or until the edges are golden brown.



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