For my friends, with gratitude for their support. E.M.



OLD OAK AND THE WILD FLOWERS

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Old Oak

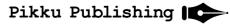
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Wild Flowers



Elena Mannion

Erin Brown



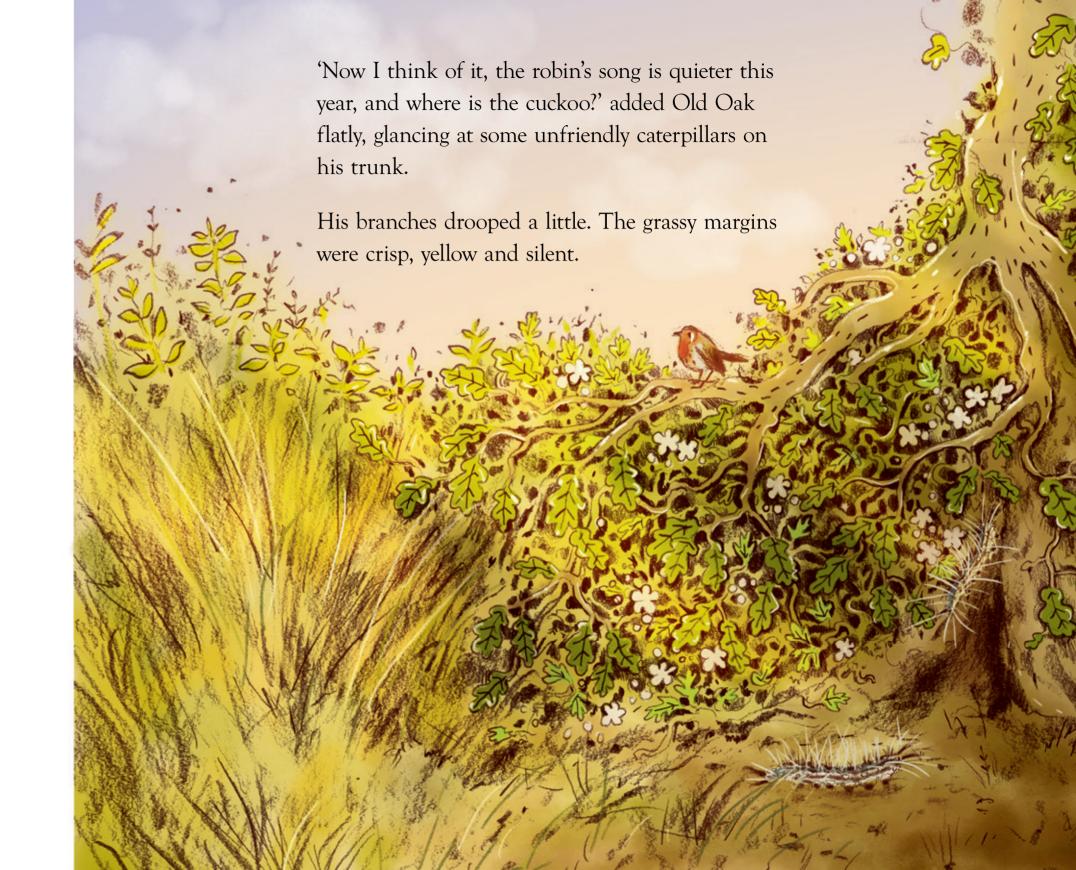


Old Oak frowned. A lone wasp alighted on his nose. He and Mr Shield stared gloomily at the field. The barley was short and thin this year. Something was amiss.



'Winter was too long,' mused Old Oak, 'and now the summer is hot and dry.'

'No rain for weeks,' said Mr Shield. 'No rain.'









'What's happened here?' exclaimed the farmer, coming to a stop. 'More problems! A poor harvest and now this!'





'At least the weather has been kind to dear Blackthorn,' said Old Oak brightly. 'You are full of juicy fruit this year.' 'But my haws are rather small,' ventured Hawthorn meekly.

'Don't worry,' said Old Oak. 'Do you remember when the Far Hedgerow was felled? Now there she is, grown strong once more. Better times always come along.'





But still he knew there had been fewer birds and little wanderings in his branches these last two summers...

