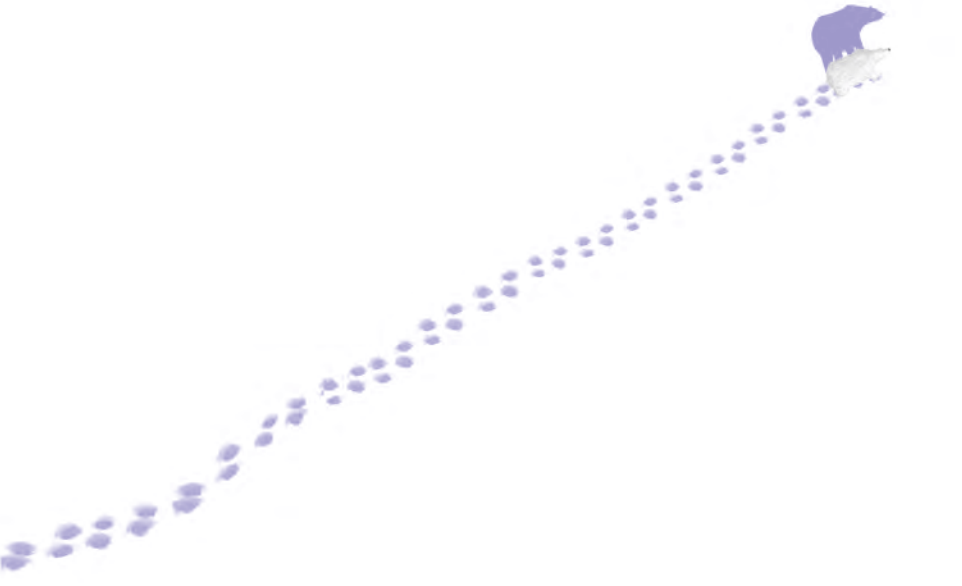


Rabbit & Bear

A Bad King is a Sad Thing

STORY BY
JULIAN GOUGH

ILLUSTRATIONS BY
JIM FIELD

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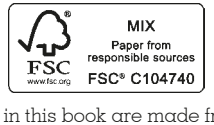
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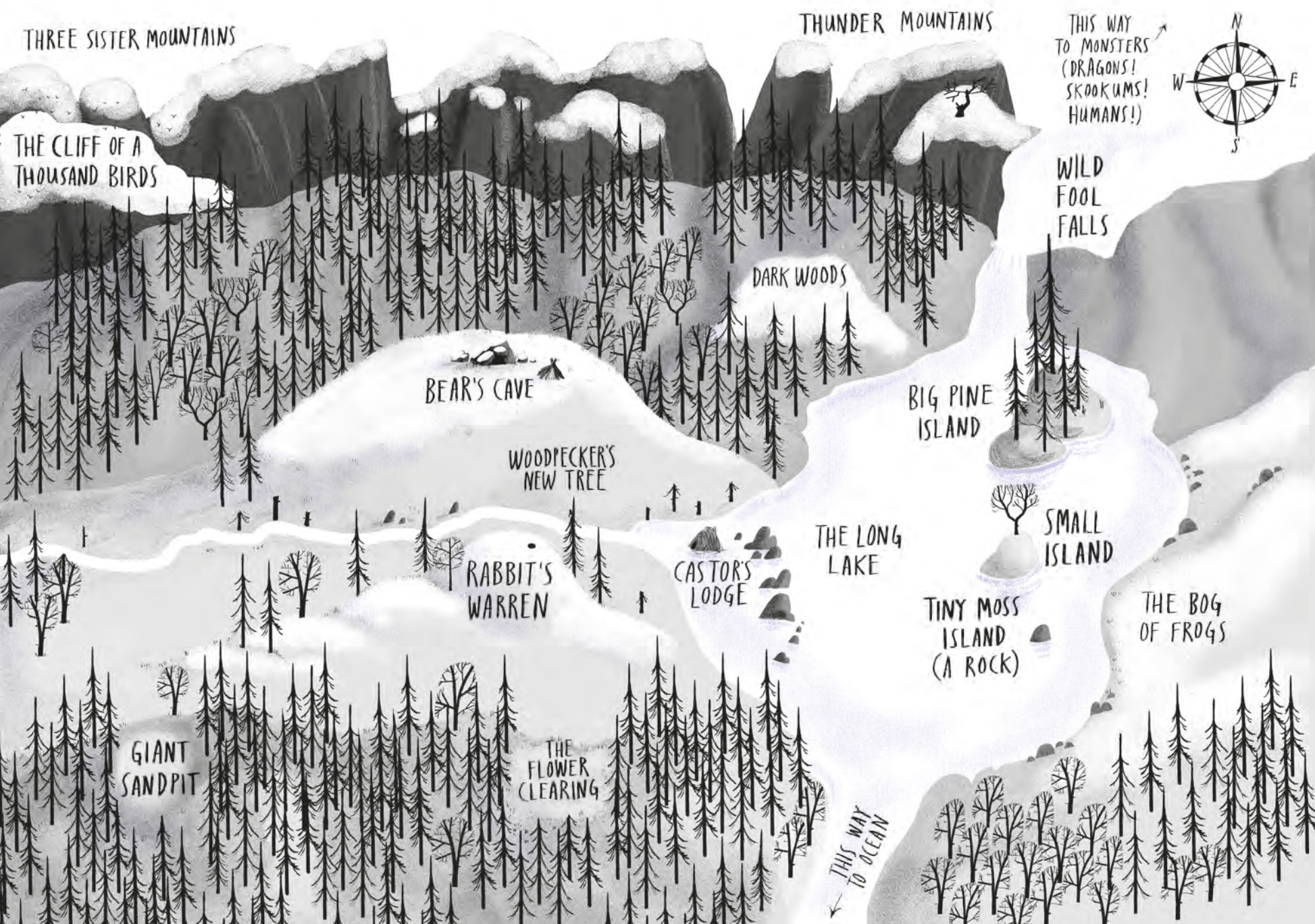
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For Eliz Hüseyin, who gave me
my first break in the children's
picture book industry.
Thanks, Eliz!

J.F.

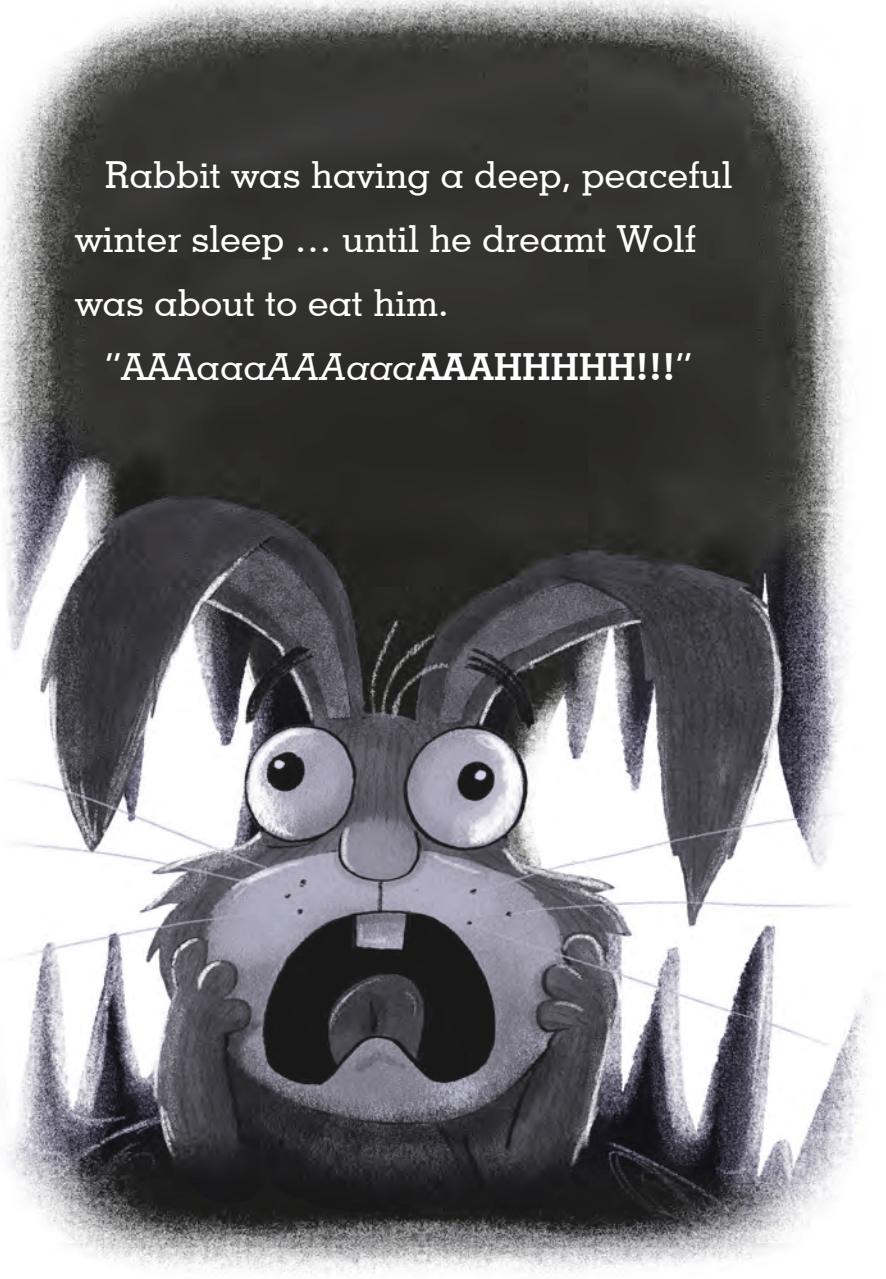
For my son Arlo, who arrived
as I was writing this book.
I love you.

J.G.


THREE SISTER MOUNTAINS
THUNDER MOUNTAINS
THIS WAY TO MONSTERS (DRAGONS! SKOOKUMS! HUMANS!)
N
W
E
S
THE CLIFF OF A THOUSAND BIRDS
WILD FOOL FALLS
DARK WOODS
BEAR'S CAVE
BIG PINE ISLAND
WOODPECKER'S NEW TREE
SMALL ISLAND
THE LONG LAKE
RABBIT'S WARREN
CASTOR'S LODGE
TINY MOSS ISLAND (A ROCK)
THE BOG OF FROGS
GIANT SANDPIT
THE FLOWER CLEARING
THIS WAY TO OCEAN

Rabbit was having a deep, peaceful winter sleep … until he dreamt Wolf was about to eat him.

"AAAaaaAAAaaa**AAAHHHHH!!!**"



Rabbit bounced awake. "Oh, what a *relief!* Only a dream." He yawned, and tried to stretch. "Wait, this isn't my lovely, big burrow. Why am I in a tiny, smelly cave?"

"Hrmmfff … don't call me schmelly," said Wolf. His voice was a little muffled, because …

"Oh no! I'M IN WOLF'S STINKY MOUTH!!!" shouted Rabbit.



As Wolf opened his mouth to say, "It's NOT stinky!", Rabbit leaped free.

"Come back, you cowardly breakfast!" cried Wolf, and chased Rabbit out of his burrow, down the hill, and up the other side.

Rabbit burst into Bear's cave, gasping, and shook Bear awake.

"Hmmmm …?" said Bear. "Oh! What is *Wolf* doing here, Rabbit?"

"HE'S—" But Wolf slapped a paw over Rabbit's mouth.

"… visiting you, dear Bear!" said Wolf. "For Company. Perhaps we could play a board game. Just you and me … and some of your more delicious friends …"

"Mmm! Nnnnnn! MMMMMM!" said Rabbit.





Bear frowned at Wolf. "But you always argue with me about the rules—"

"No I don't!" cried Wolf.

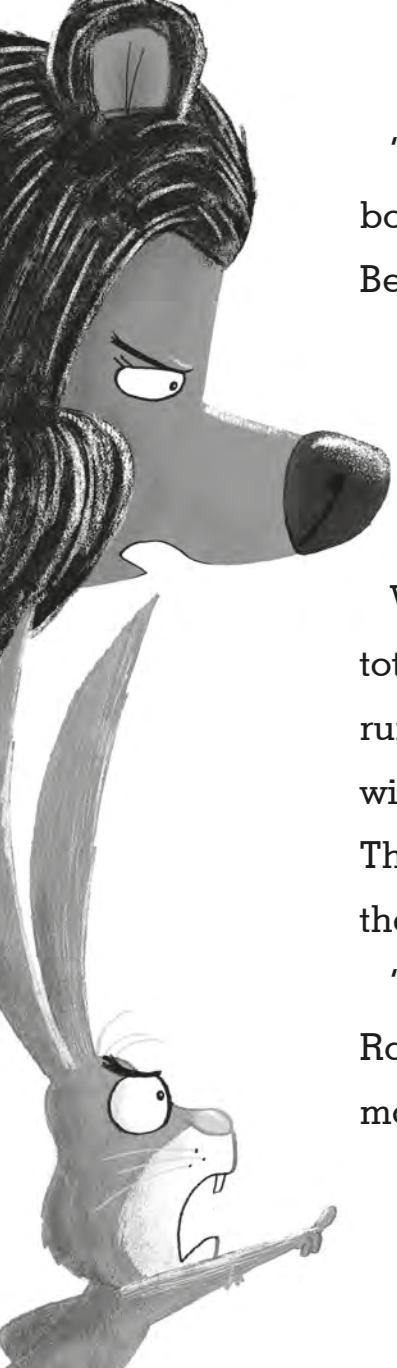
"—and you make sneaky, illegal moves—"

"Never!" cried Wolf, and ran out of the cave carrying Rabbit.

"—and!" said Bear, grabbing Wolf by the ear, "you eat my friends when I'm not looking."

"Ouch … NO! Well, yes," said Wolf, as Rabbit wriggled free. "But I would probably only eat a couple of your *smallest* friends. You have so many, you won't even miss them."

"*I* will miss me!" said Rabbit, and hid behind Bear.



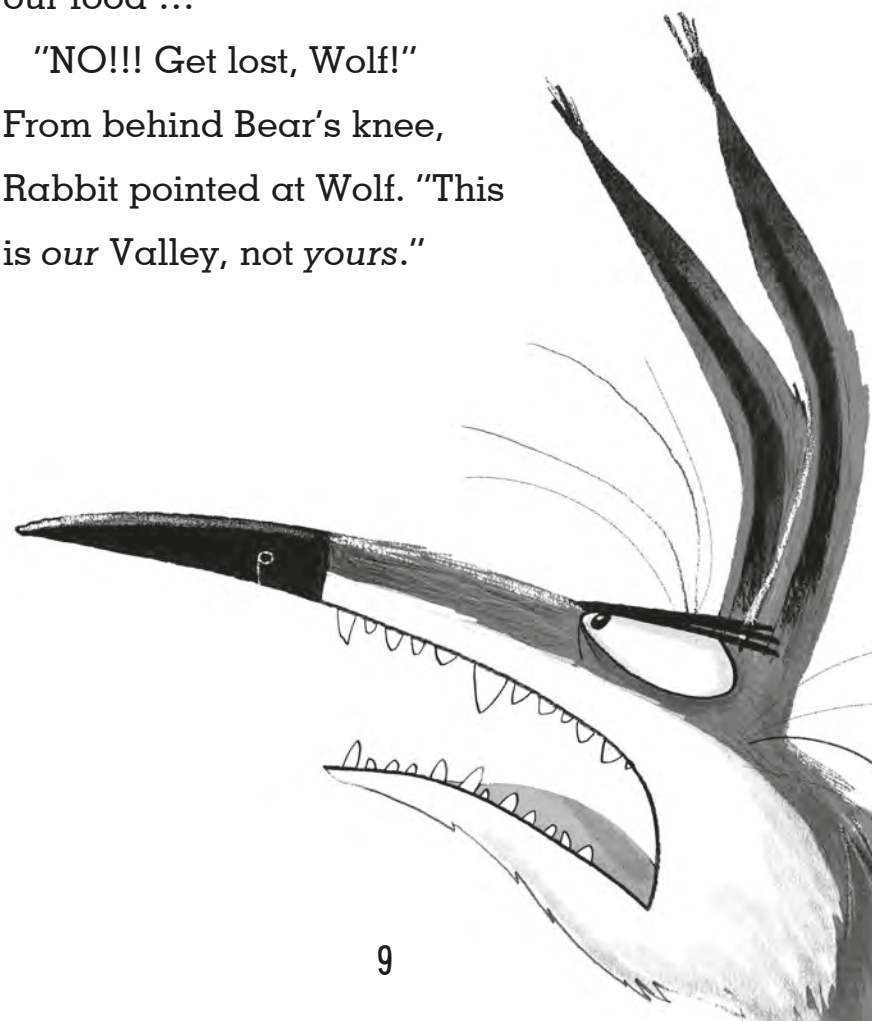
"You are not here to play board games, Wolf," said Bear. "Why *are* you here?"

Wolf sighed. "I'm totally *starving*." His belly rumbled in agreement. "This winter's gone on too long. There's nothing left to eat in the Dark Woods."

"Then STARVE!" shouted Rabbit. "Come *on*, Bear, make Wolf go away!"

"But ..." Bear wished she was awake enough to solve this difficult problem. "Perhaps we could share some of our food ..."

"NO!!! Get lost, Wolf!" From behind Bear's knee, Rabbit pointed at Wolf. "This is *our* Valley, not *yours*."



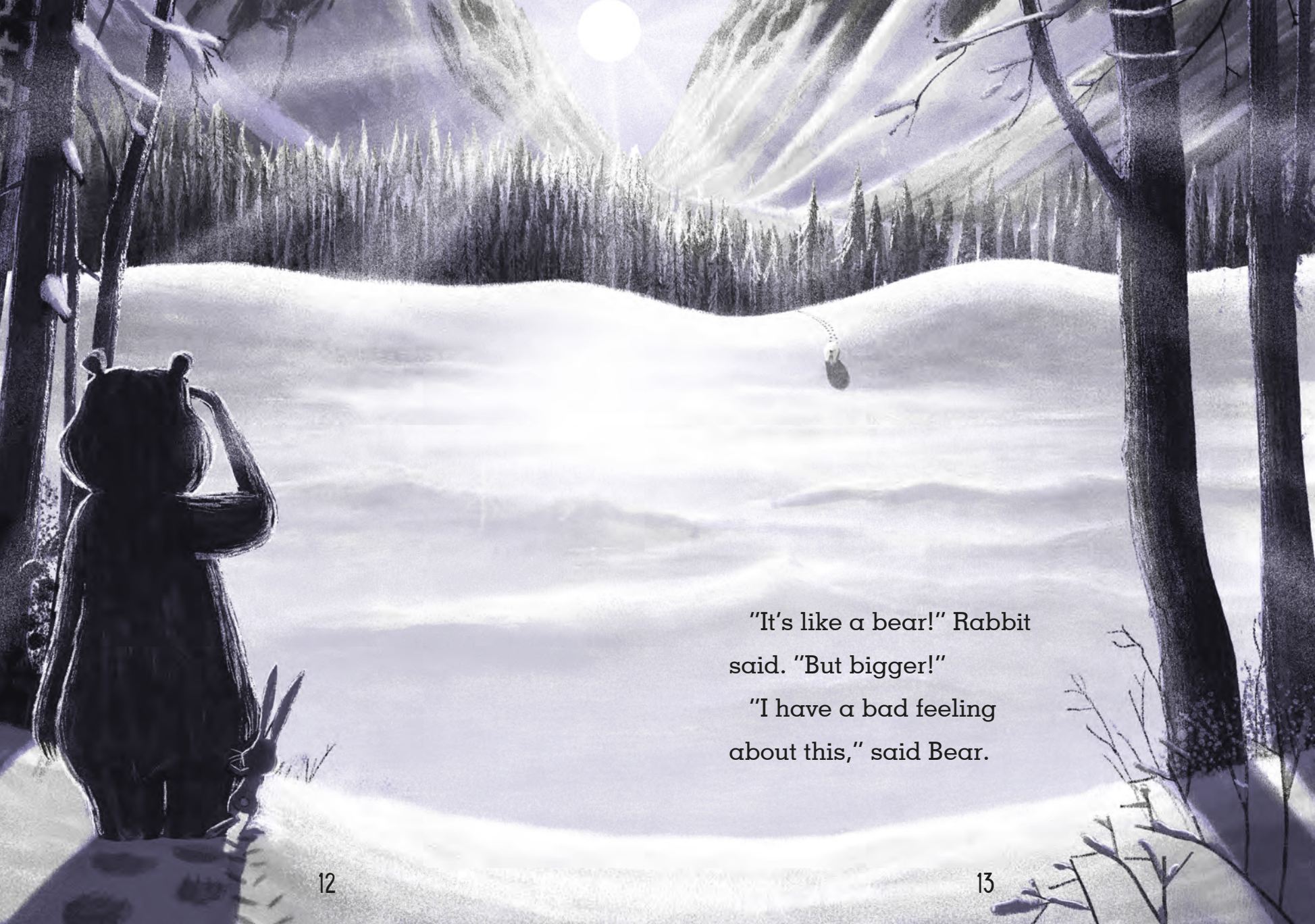
Wolf snarled, but he was too weak with hunger to fight. With a last, angry swish of his tail, he slunk off towards the Dark Woods.

"Hurray!" shouted Rabbit. "No more Wolf! Everything is perfect!" And Rabbit hugged Bear's tummy.

But Bear was distracted.

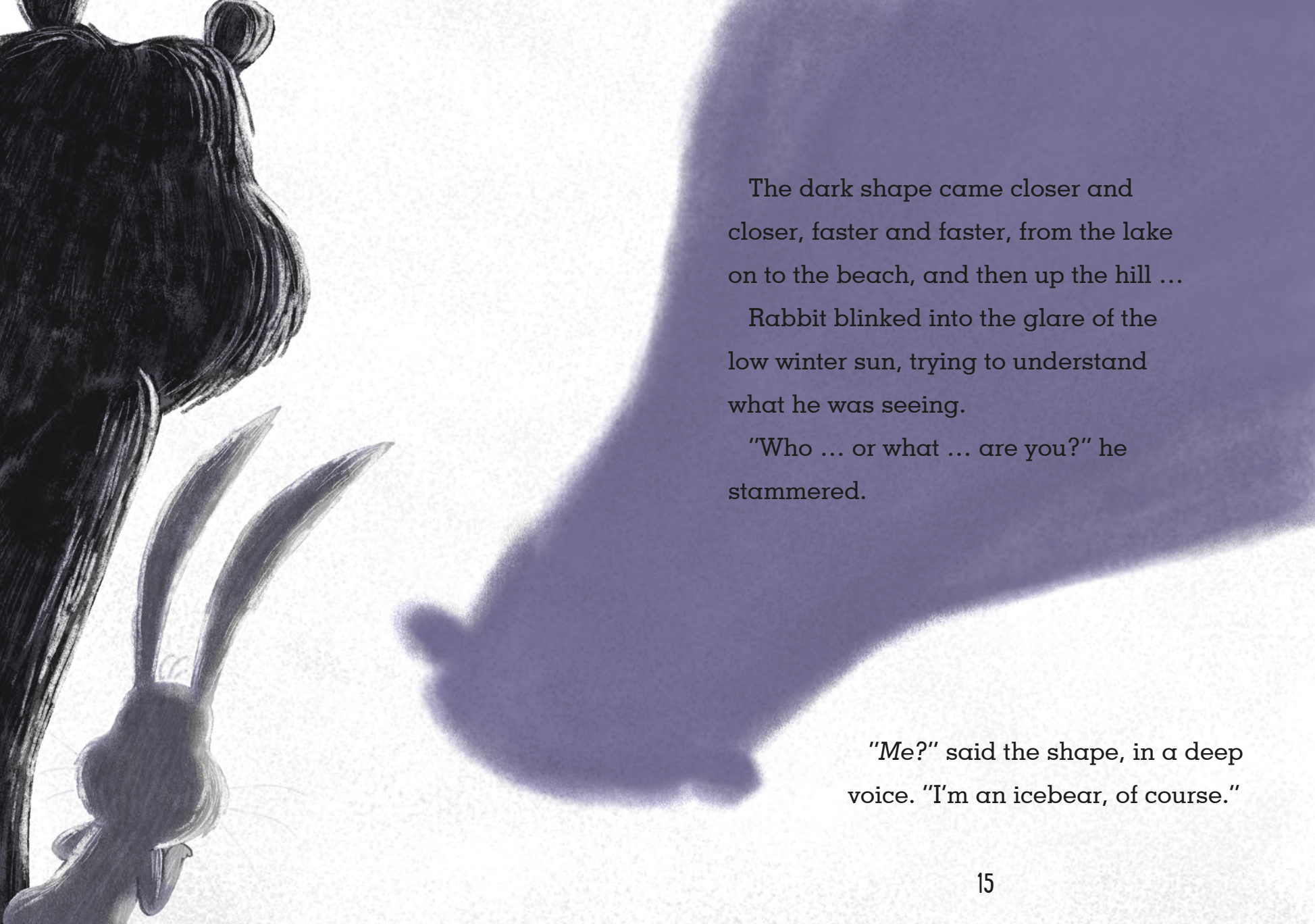
"Look …" she said. "Something strange is coming towards us." They squinted as a large, dark shape strode swiftly across the frozen lake.





"It's like a bear!" Rabbit said. "But bigger!"

"I have a bad feeling about this," said Bear.



The dark shape came closer and closer, faster and faster, from the lake on to the beach, and then up the hill …

Rabbit blinked into the glare of the low winter sun, trying to understand what he was seeing.

"Who … or what … are you?" he stammered.

"*Me*?" said the shape, in a deep voice. "I'm an icebear, of course."

But the voice seemed to come from *beside* the huge shape. How odd …

Rabbit blinked again. Ah! He had been staring at a shadow. The shadow cast by a huge, white animal against the white snow.

"Are there any … wolves around here?" asked the Icebear.

"No," said Rabbit, proudly. He swung a stick like a sword, but so wildly that he hit himself on the back of the head. "Ouch … We got rid of the last of THEM."

"Good," said the Icebear. "I don't like wolves … What a perfect, uninhabited valley!"

"What does uninhabited mean?" said Bear.



"It means NOBODY lives here," said the Icebear, and he walked straight into Bear's cave without asking.

"But *we* live here!" said Bear, puzzled.

"And I'm SOMEBODY!" said Rabbit.

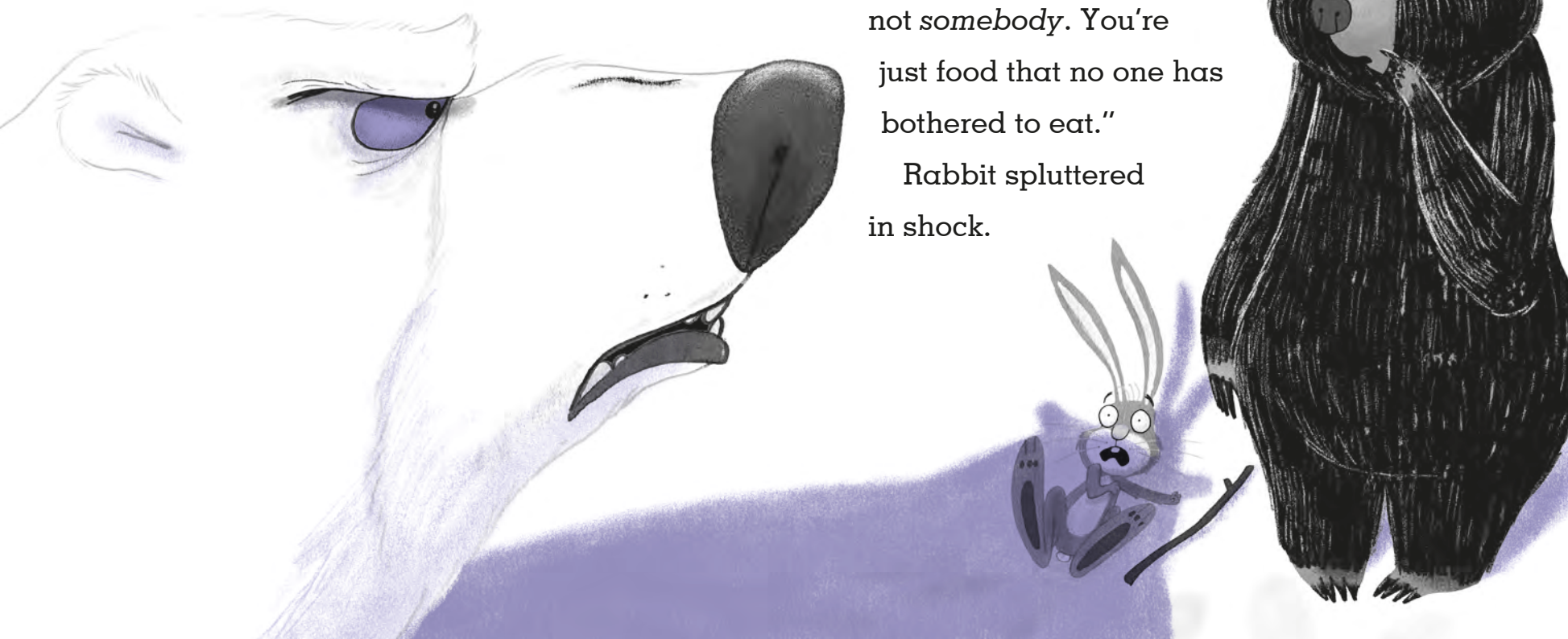
The Icebear stuck his head back out of Bear's cave so fast, Rabbit fell over backwards.

"Really?" said the huge Icebear. "Hmmm. Can you hurt me? Kill me? Eat me?"

"Um … no," said Rabbit.

"Then you're not *somebody*. You're just food that no one has bothered to eat."

Rabbit spluttered in shock.





"But I won't eat you … yet," said the Icebear. "I need slaves, to build a Palace. This cave is far too small for me!"

"Palace?" said Bear, even more puzzled.

"For the King," said the Icebear.

"But we don't *have* a king," said Rabbit.

"You will in a minute," said the Icebear. And he roared so loud that all of Rabbit and Bear's friends came running, jumping, and flying to see. Even Mole started tunnelling, but the frozen ground slowed him down.