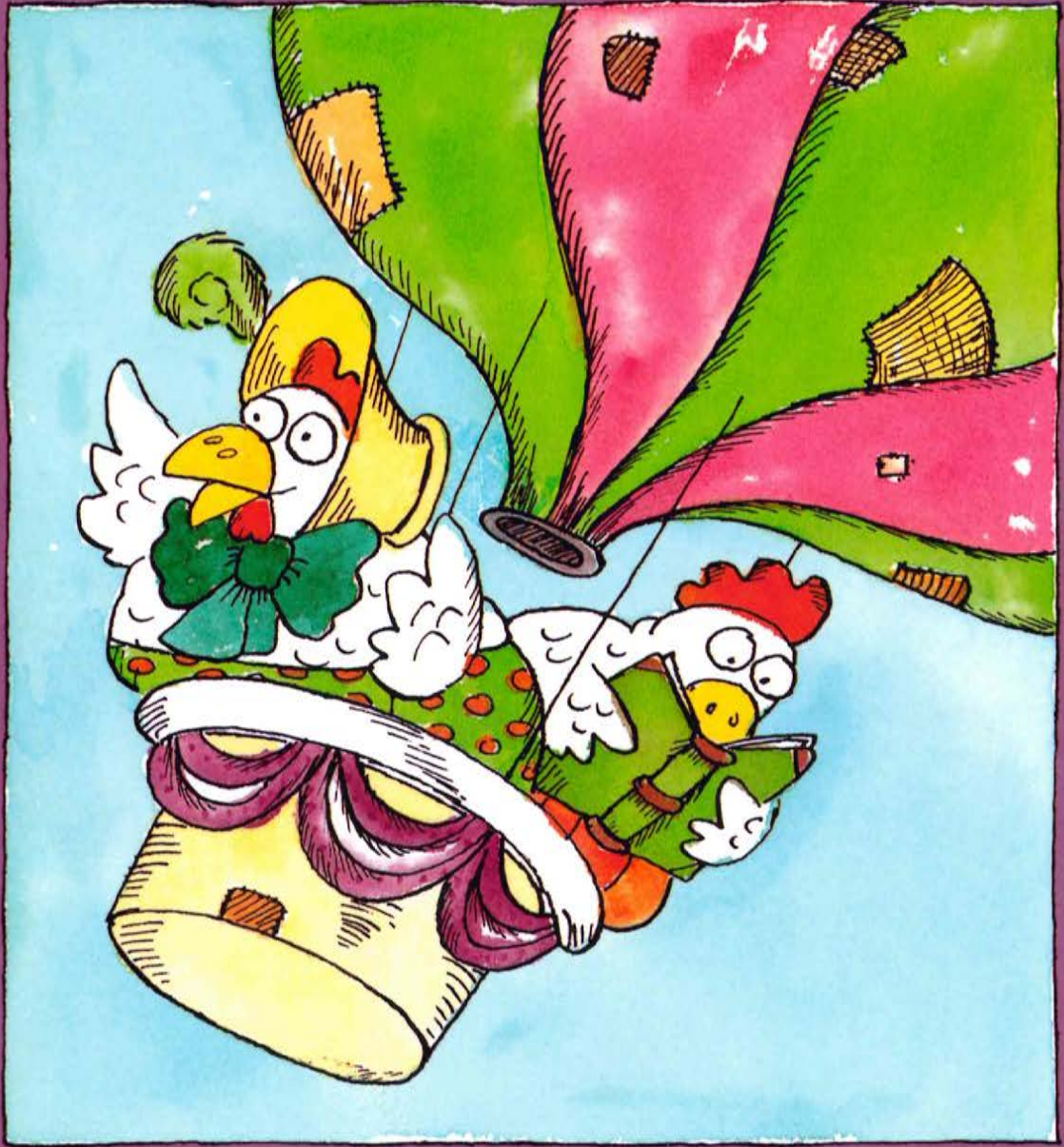


# WINGS

A Tale of Two Chickens



James Marshall



*For Muriel Korn*

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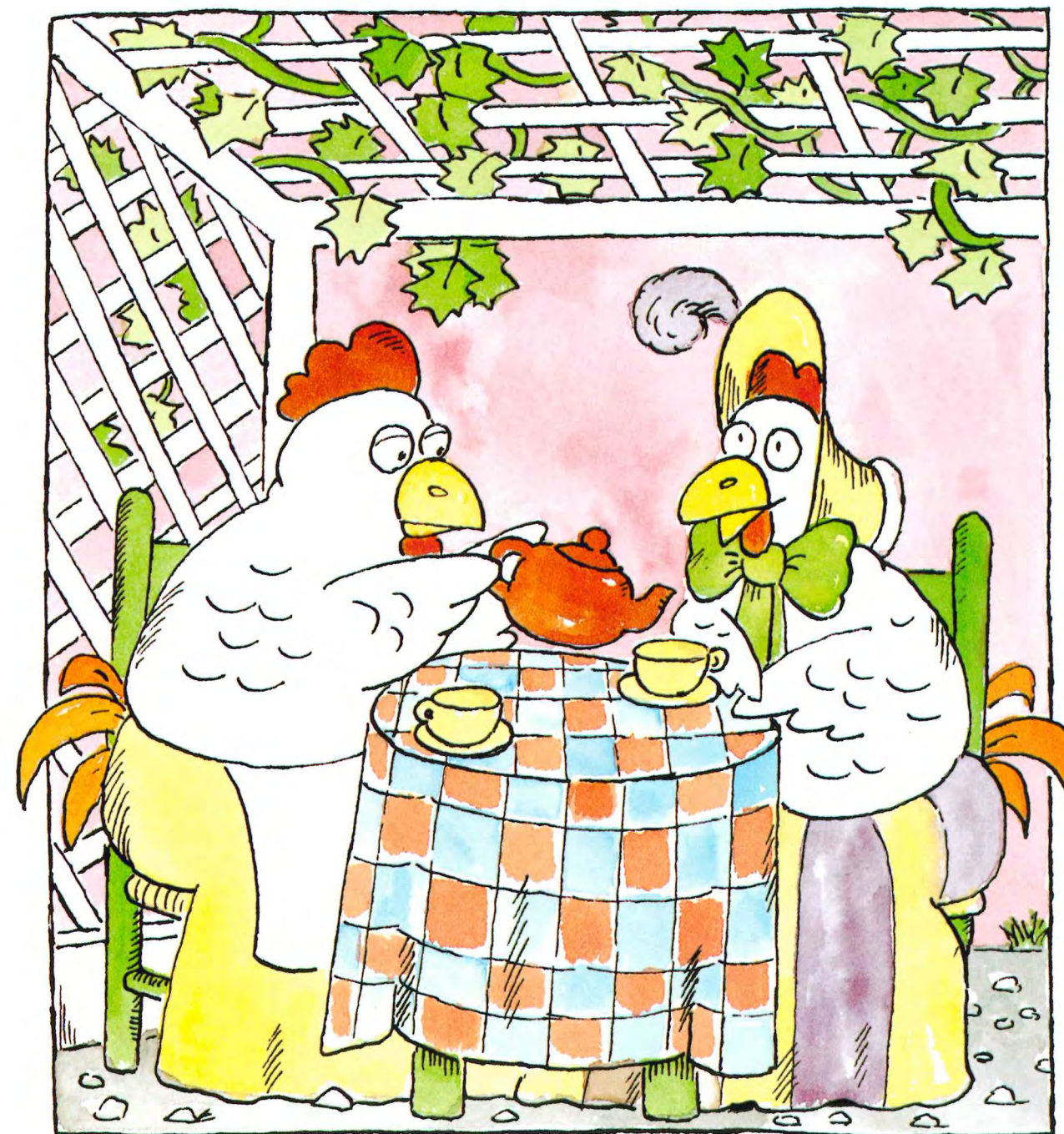
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**H**arriet and Winnie were as different  
as two chickens could possibly be.

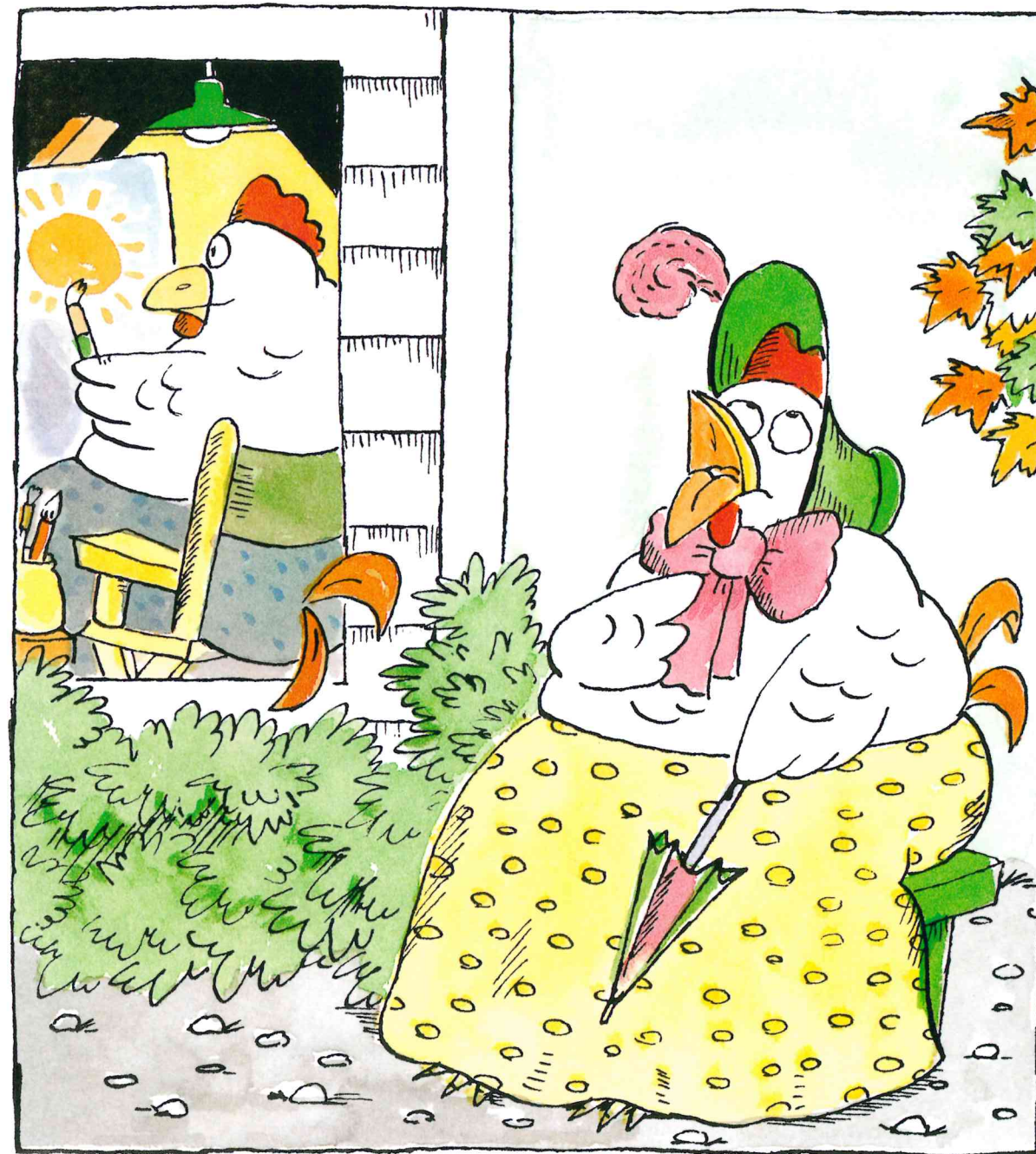


Harriet was enormously fond of reading.



“Frankly, I’d rather swat flies,” said Winnie.

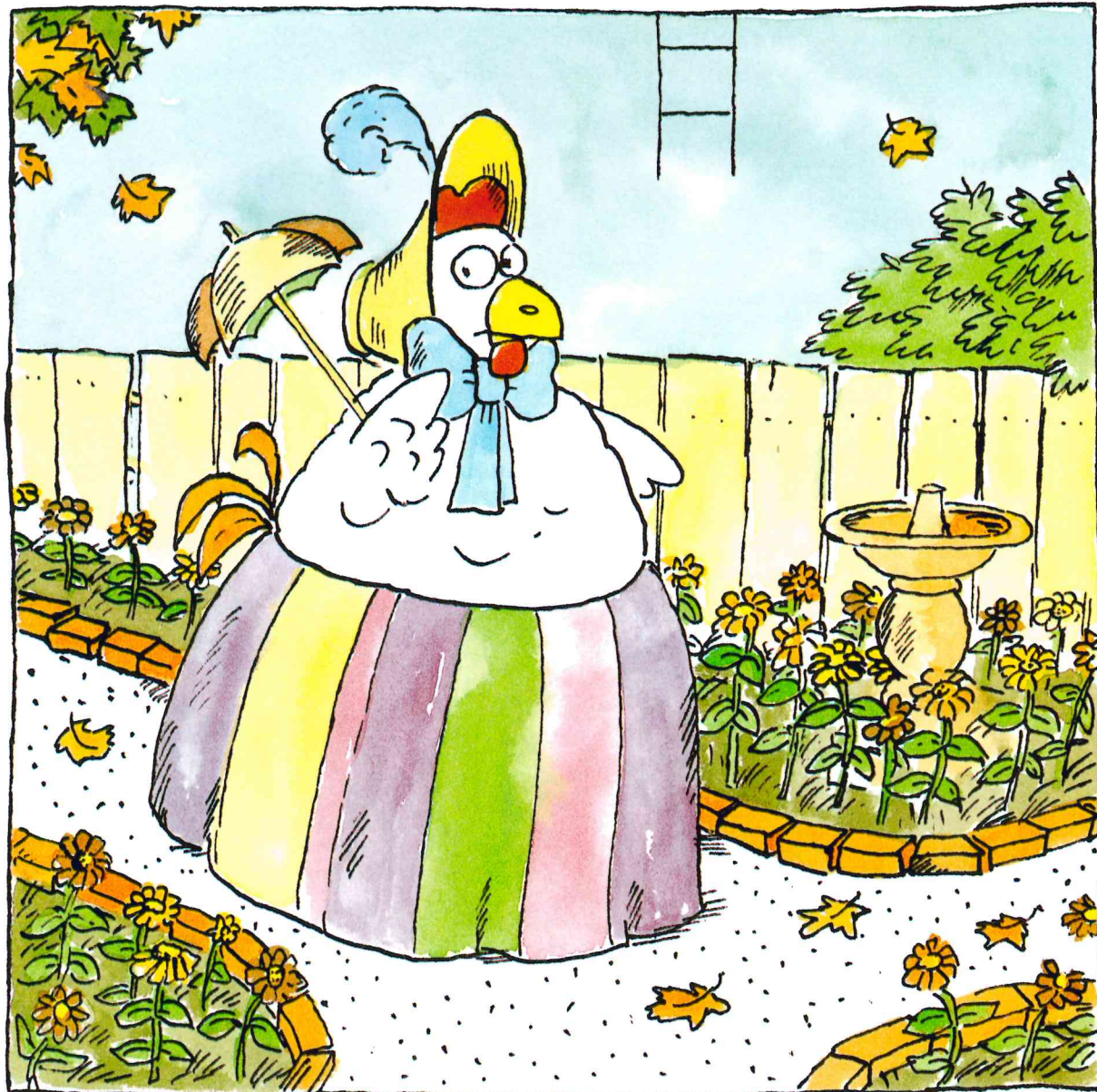
Many interesting hobbies kept Harriet busy all day.



“I’m so bored I could just die,” said Winnie.

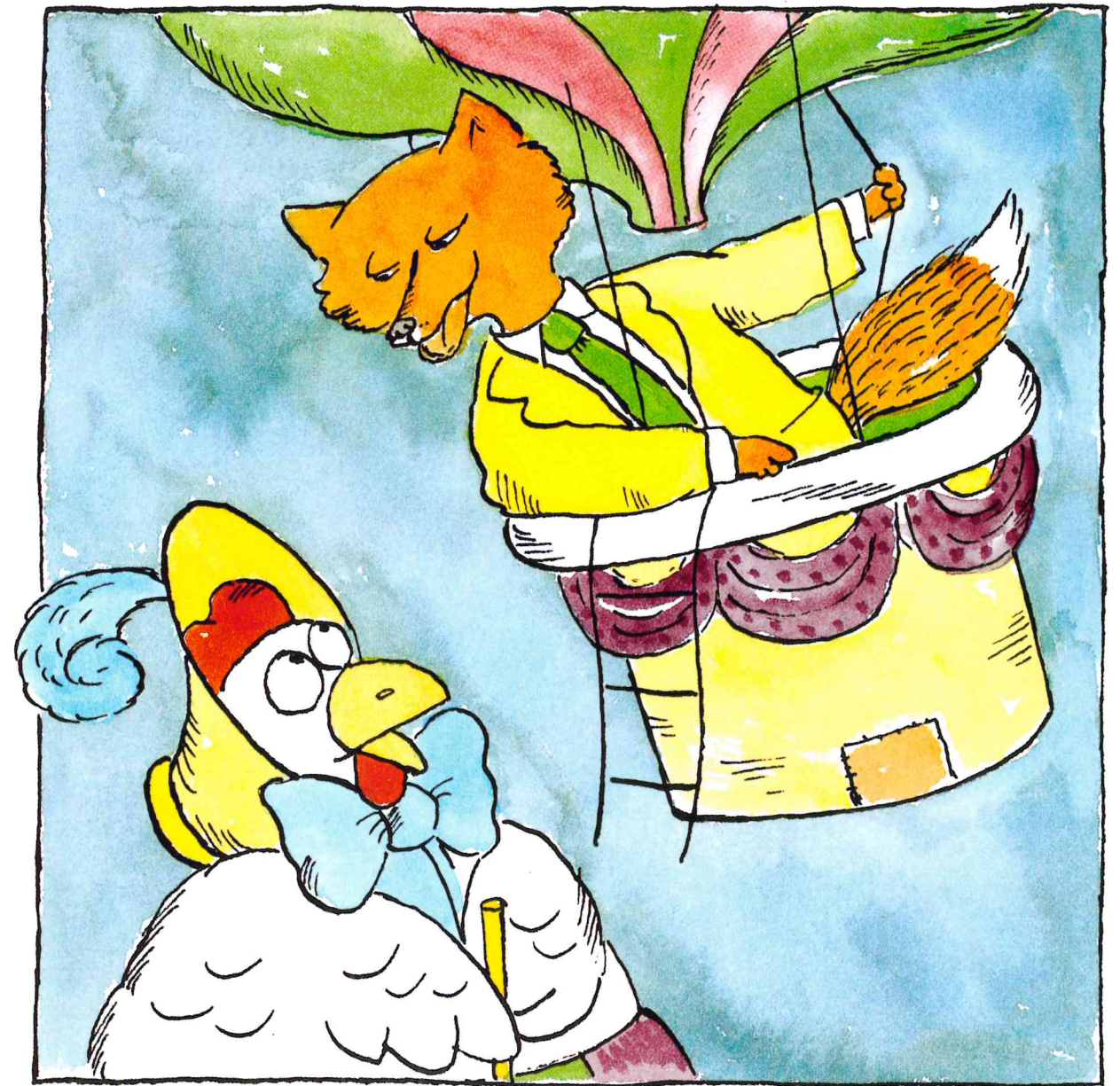


One afternoon, Winnie was wandering in the garden.  
“Nothing really wild ever happens around here,” she said.  
“Good afternoon,” said a silky voice.  
But there was no one there.



“Look up!” said the voice.

“My, my,” said Winnie.



“Care to go for a spin?” said the stranger.

“Oh, I couldn’t,” said Winnie.

“Oh, come on,” said the stranger. “Live a little.”

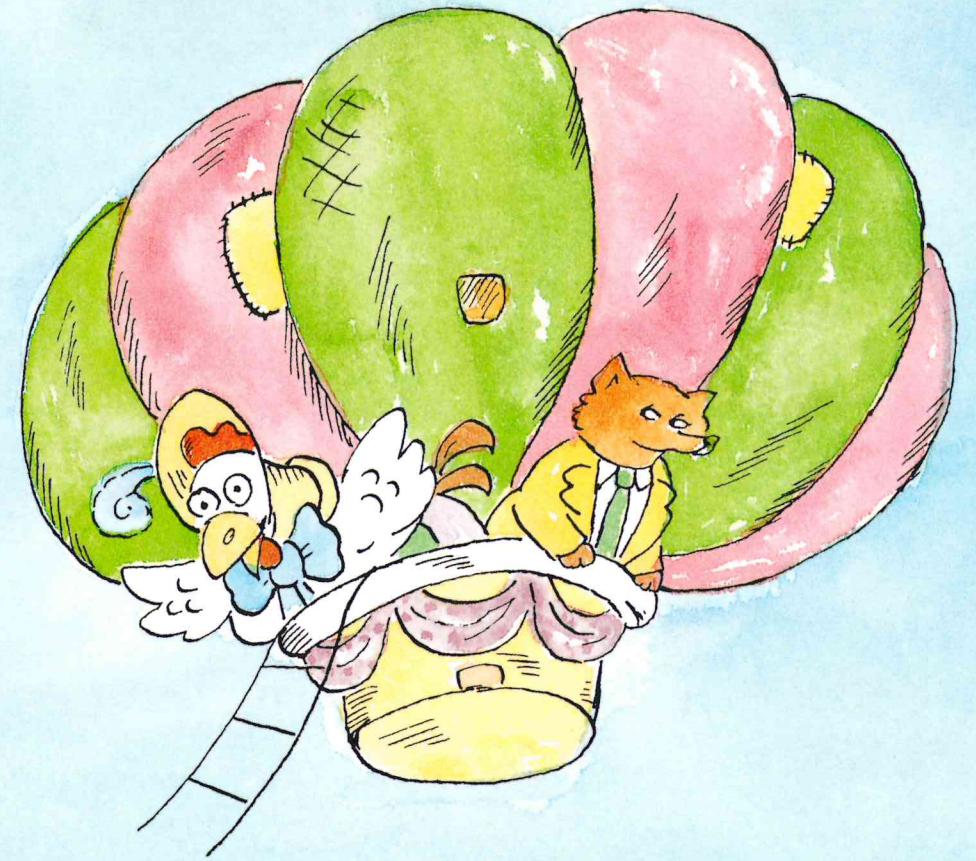


"Why not?" said Winnie.

And she climbed up the ladder and into the basket.

"Blast off!" cried the stranger.

"Stop! Stop!" cried Harriet.



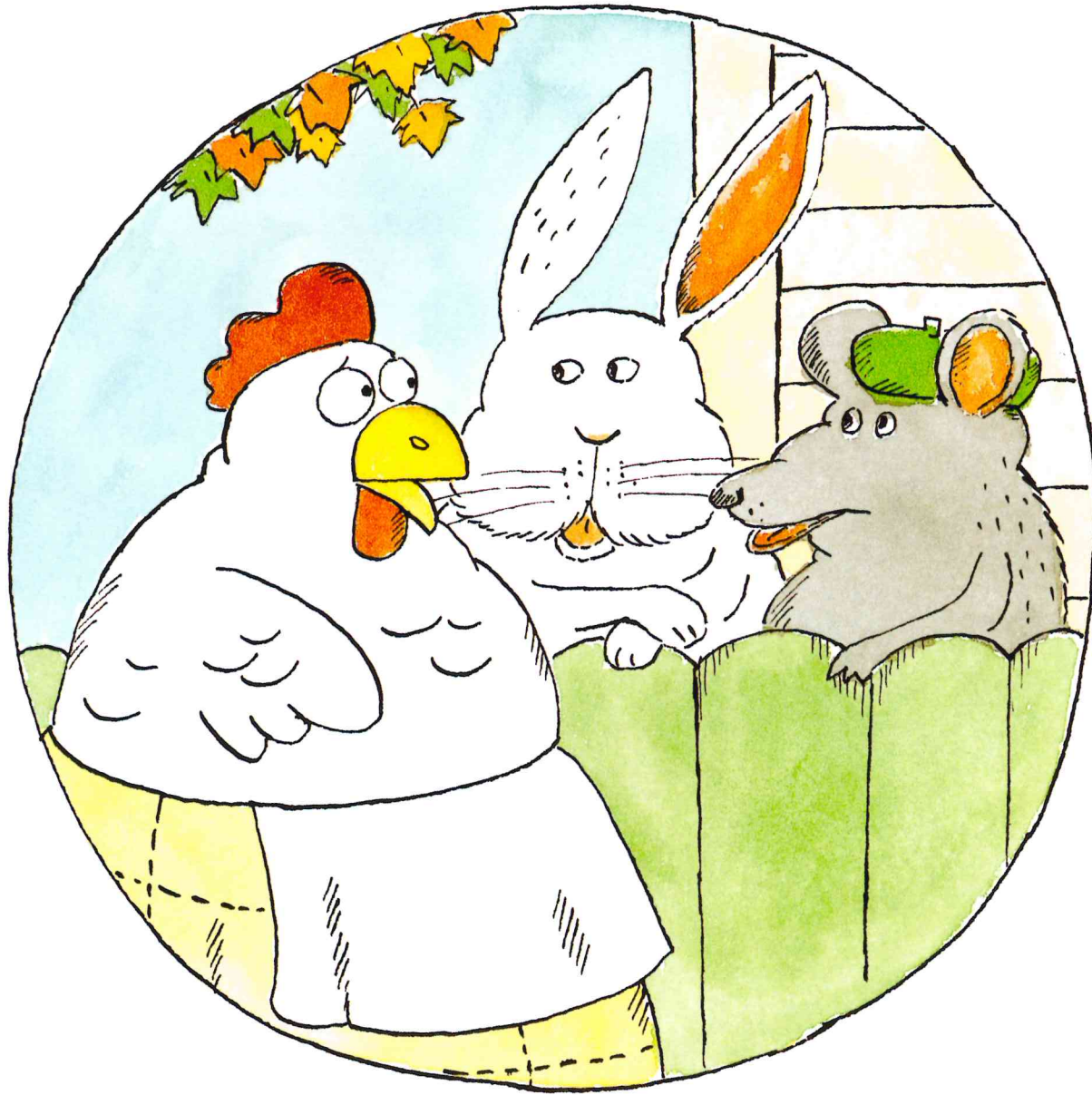
But it was too late.

"I'll be back for dinner!" shouted Winnie.

And they were gone.



"She never did have a lick of sense," said the neighbors.



"Didn't she *know* it was a fox?"  
"She never reads," said Harriet.



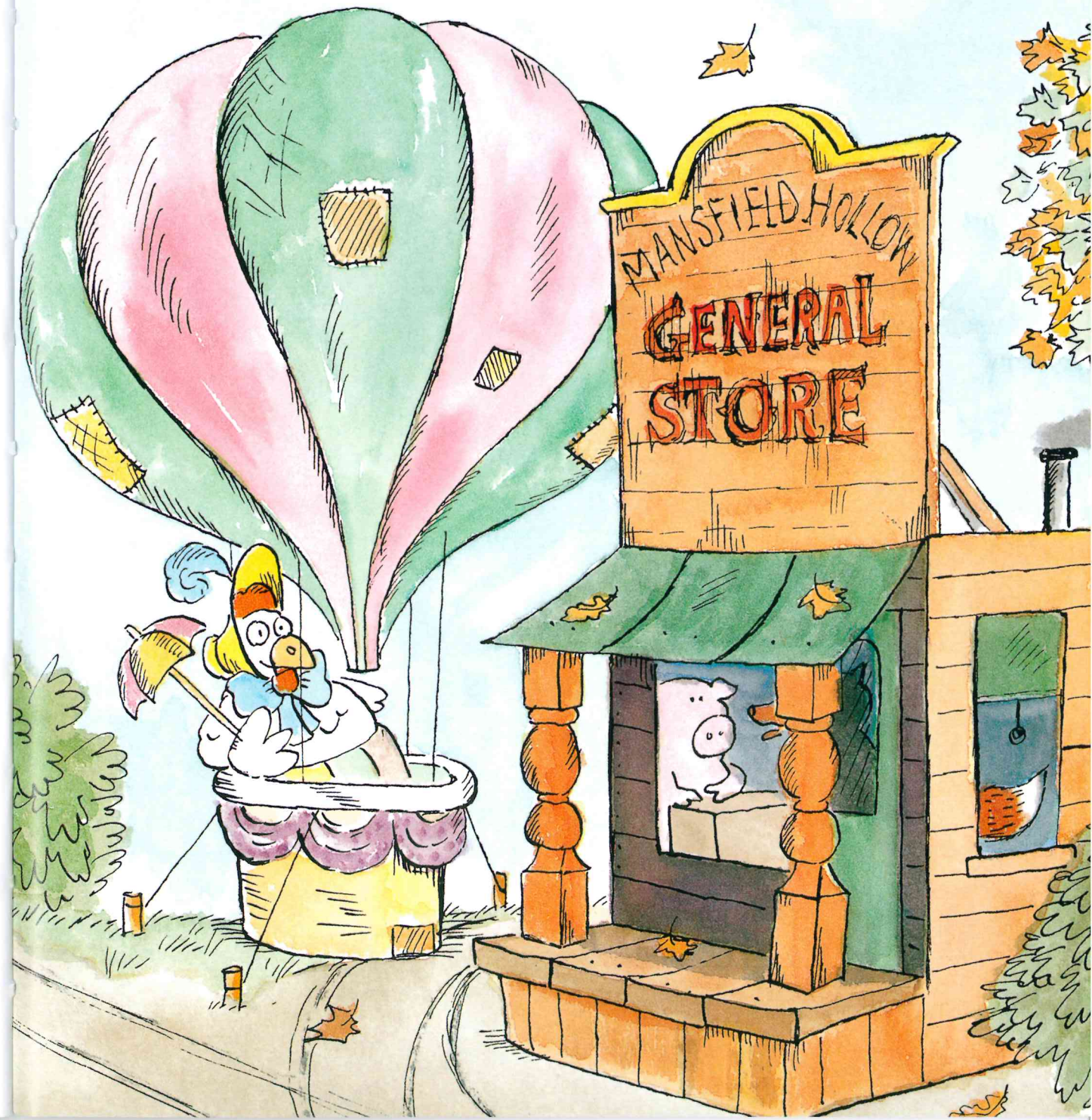
The stranger introduced himself as Mr. Johnson.  
"Have a raspberry tart," he said.  
"I don't want to get too plump," said Winnie.  
"Plump is nice," said Mr. Johnson.





Harriet went to the cops.  
 "We'll do our best," said the officer, "but foxes *are* clever."  
 "We'll see about that," said Harriet.

Mr. Johnson made an unscheduled stop.  
 "I'll be right back," he said, rushing into a grocery store.  
 "Quick!" he told the grocer.  
 "I need a package of instant dumplings!"

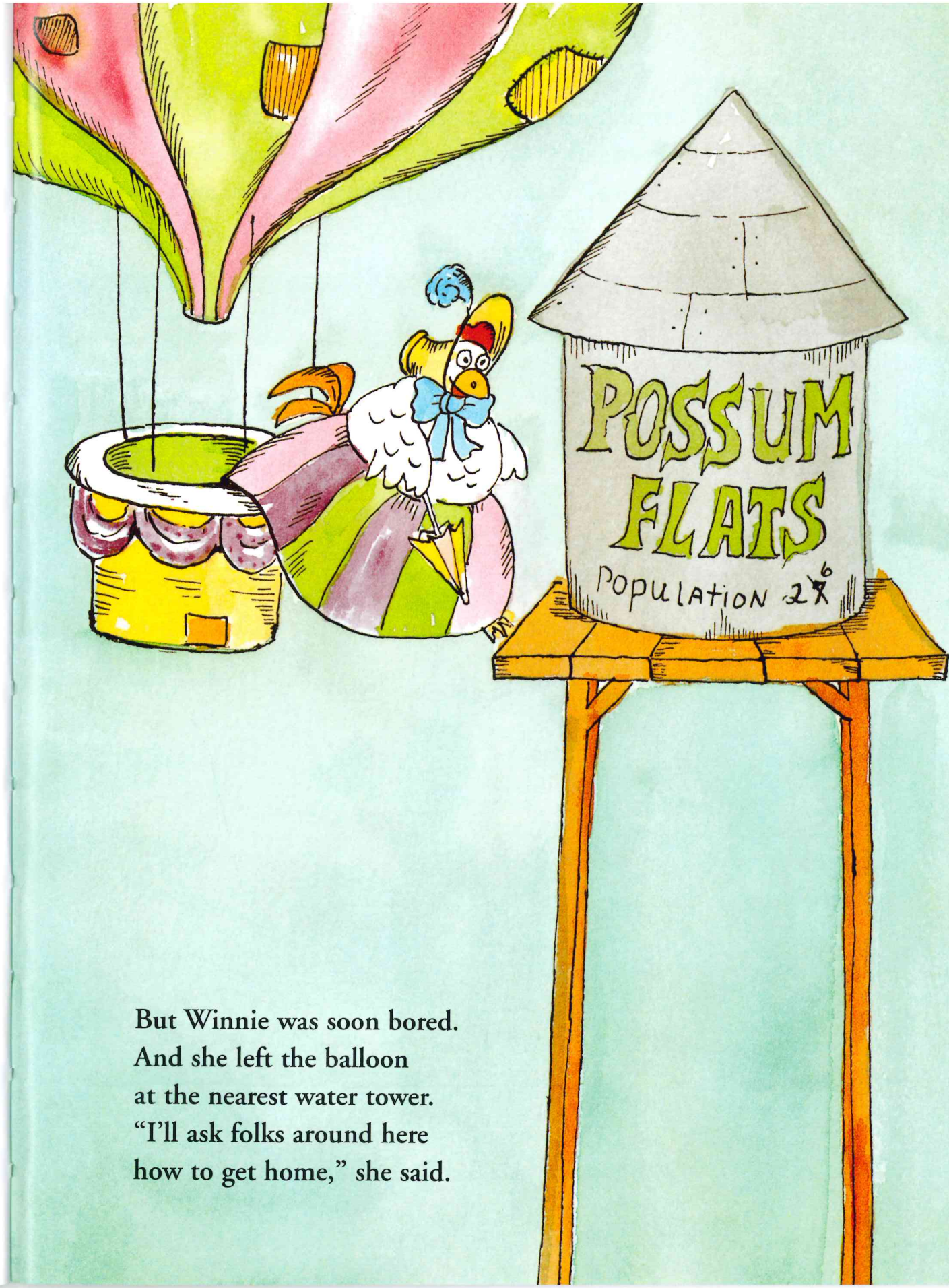




Winnie decided to make herself more comfortable.  
“I’ll just get rid of these useless old sandbags,” she said.



Mr. Johnson came out just in time  
to see the balloon heading south.



But Winnie was soon bored.  
And she left the balloon  
at the nearest water tower.  
“I’ll ask folks around here  
how to get home,” she said.



Meanwhile, Mr. Johnson hadn't given up hope of a chicken dinner.

"A chicken costume?" said the clerk in the costume store.



"You heard me," said Mr. Johnson.

So, wearing his clever new disguise, he went to a place where chickens were known to cross the road.

"Hee-hee," he said. "They'll think I'm one of them."



"Yoo-hoo," said a voice.



Mr. Johnson couldn't believe his luck.  
"Is this where chickens cross over?" said Winnie.  
"Indeed it is," said Mr. Johnson.



"Travel makes me *so* hungry," said Winnie.

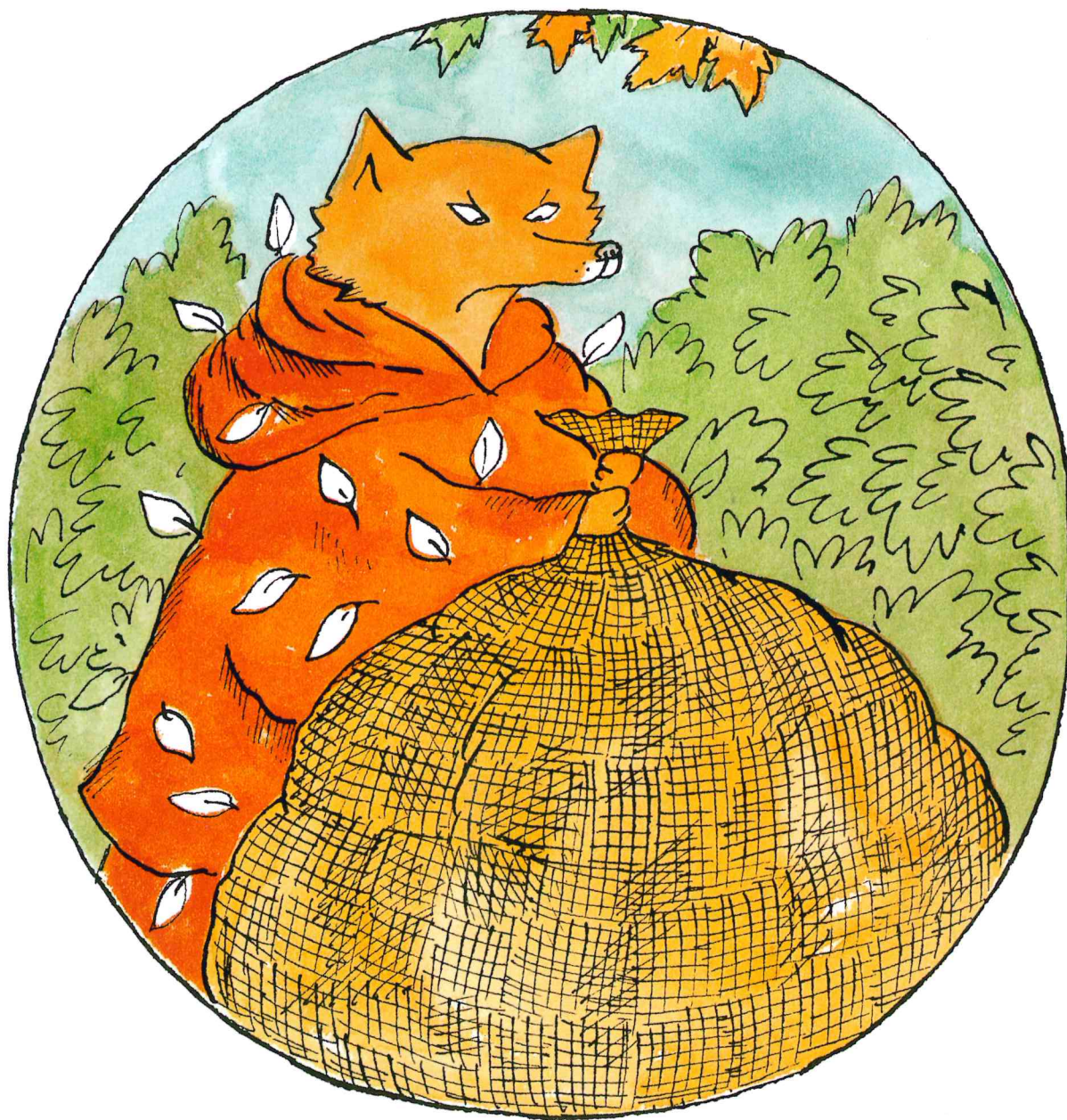
"Care for some sardines?" said Mr. Johnson,  
opening his big burlap bag.  
"Oooh," said Winnie. "I *love* sardines."



"In you go!" said Mr. Johnson.



"If at first you don't succeed . . ." said Mr. Johnson.  
But he soon found the bag was quite heavy.



Just then he heard the sound of bicycle tires on dry leaves.

"May I be of some assistance?" said a plump gray fox.



"I'd be ever so grateful," said Mr. Johnson.



They loaded the bag onto the bicycle and rode away.



“What is in the bag?” asked the plump gray fox.  
“My laundry,” said Mr. Johnson.

At Three Corners it began to rain.

Nothing worse than plucking soggy feathers, thought Mr. Johnson.  
“Shall we take shelter at this church?” he suggested.





Inside, the preacher was talking about charity.  
“It is our duty to help the needy,” he said.



“Humpf,” muttered Mr. Johnson.

“And what have we here?” said the preacher.  
“Two kind souls have brought a bag of food  
to share with the poor.”



“No! No!” cried Mr. Johnson.  
“Be generous!” cried the preacher.  
And the bag ripped open.

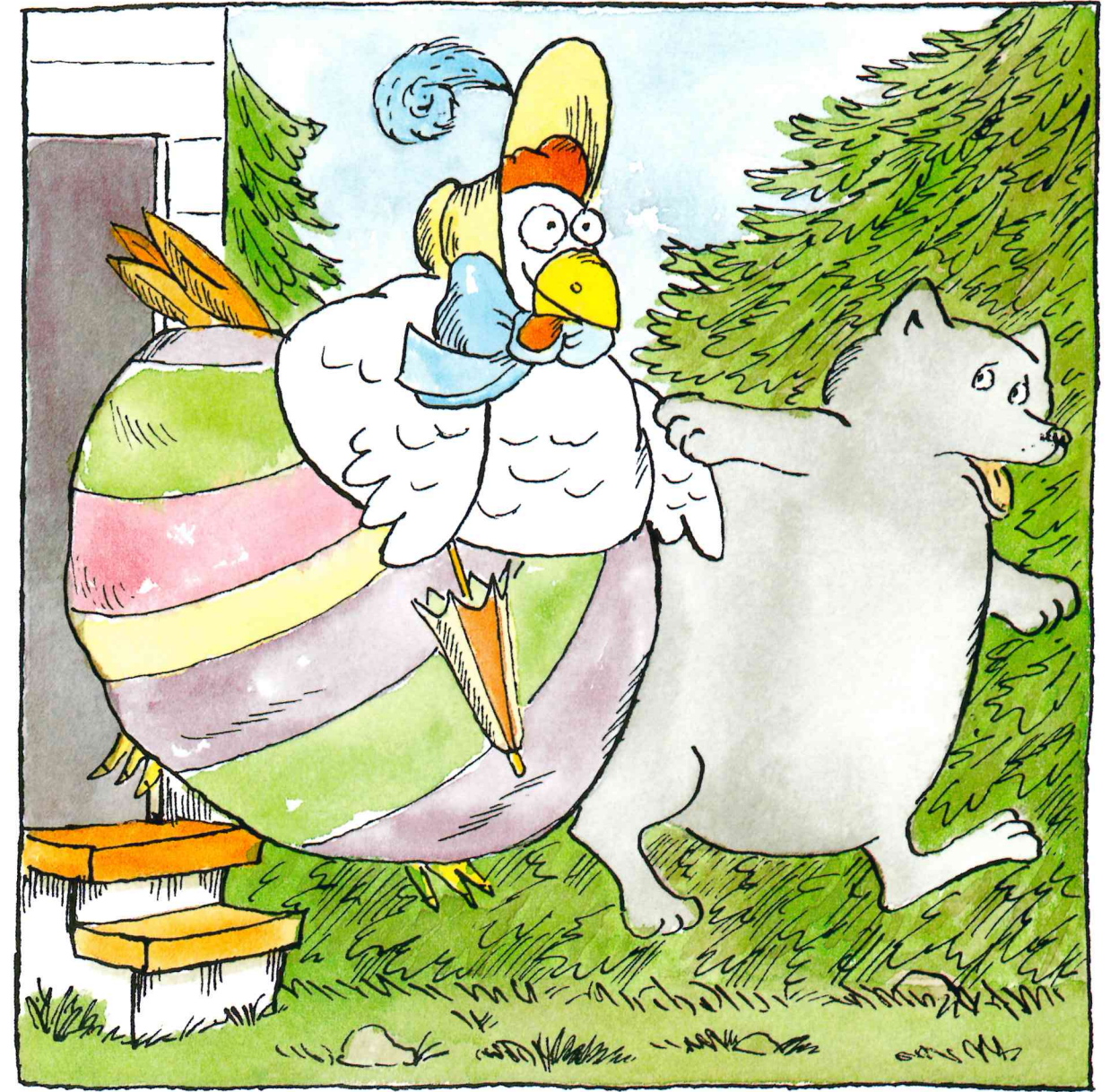


"I didn't see any sardines," said Winnie.  
"What's this?" cried the preacher.



"Chicken stealing is wicked!"  
Mr. Johnson tore out of the church.

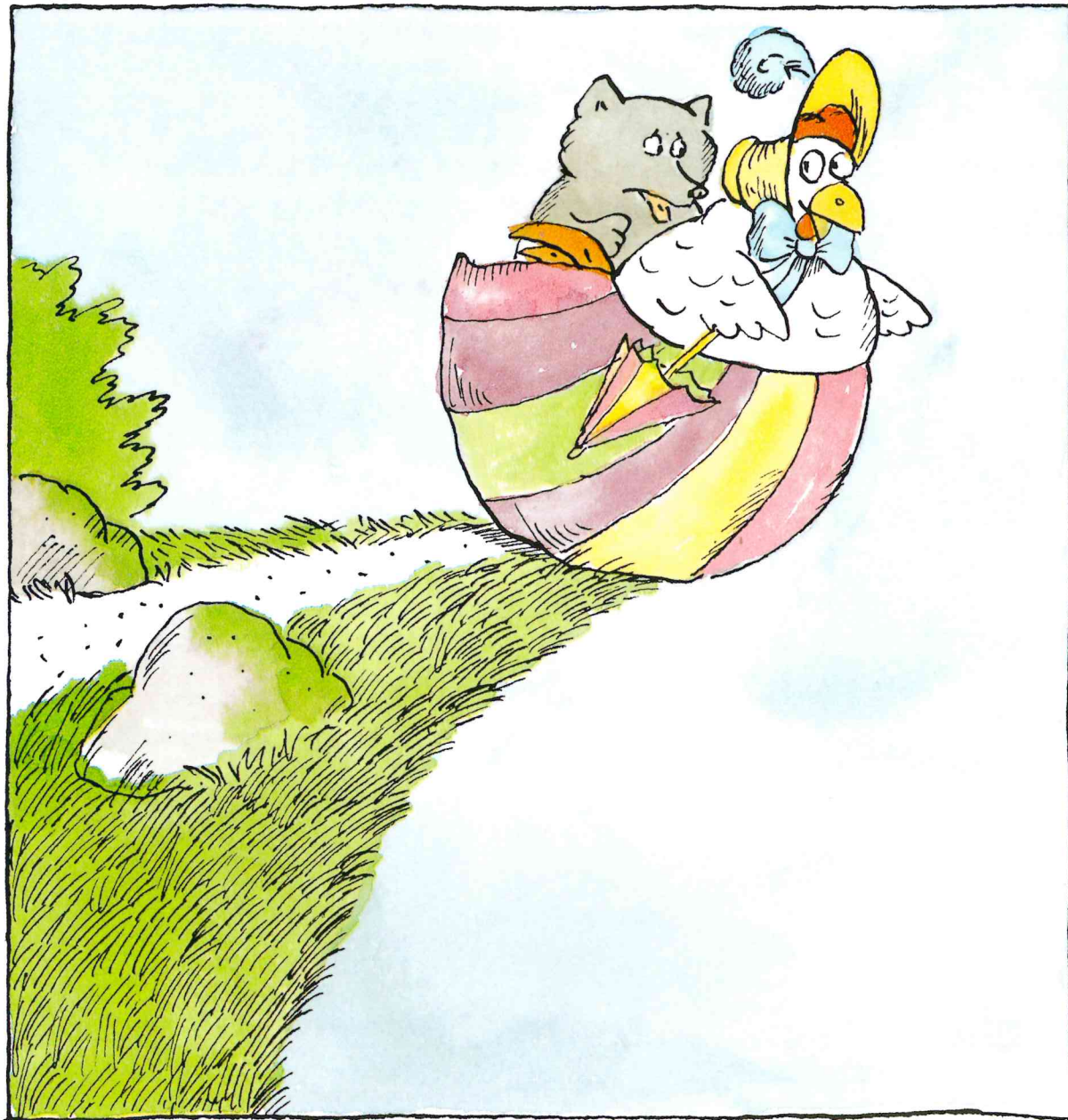
The plump gray fox took Winnie by the wing,  
and they slipped out the back door.



"Are we playing a game?" said Winnie.  
"Just run!" said the fox.



Soon they found themselves at the edge of a steep cliff.  
“Phooey!” said the plump gray fox. “We’ll have to turn back.”



“Oh, lookie,” said Winnie. “Here comes nice Mr. Johnson.”  
And Mr. Johnson was almost upon them.

“Unhand that chicken!” he cried. “She’s mine!”



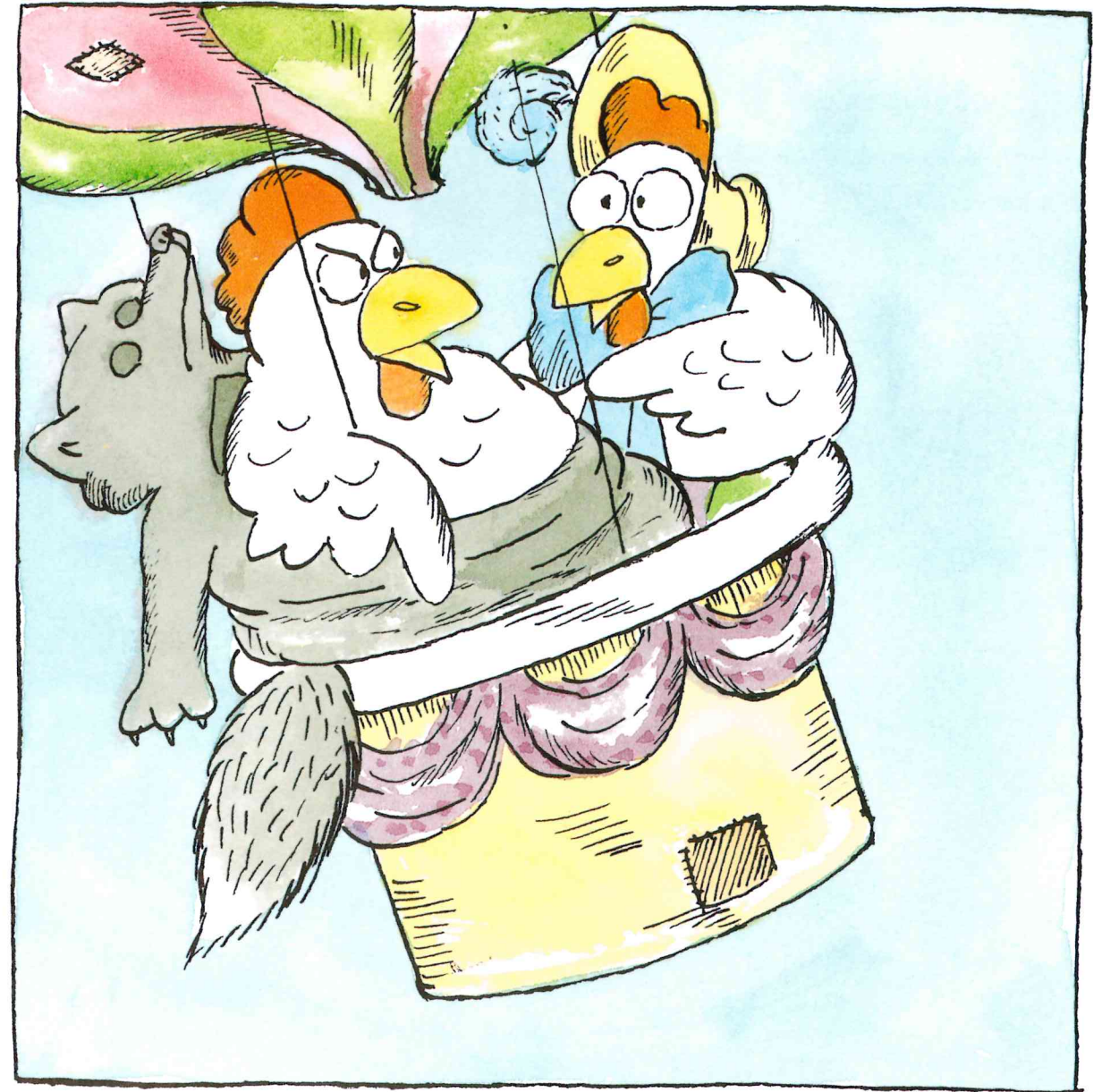


At that moment, Mr. Johnson's balloon floated by.  
The plump gray fox threw Winnie into the basket,  
jumped in after her,



and they were gone.  
Mr. Johnson was fit to be tied.

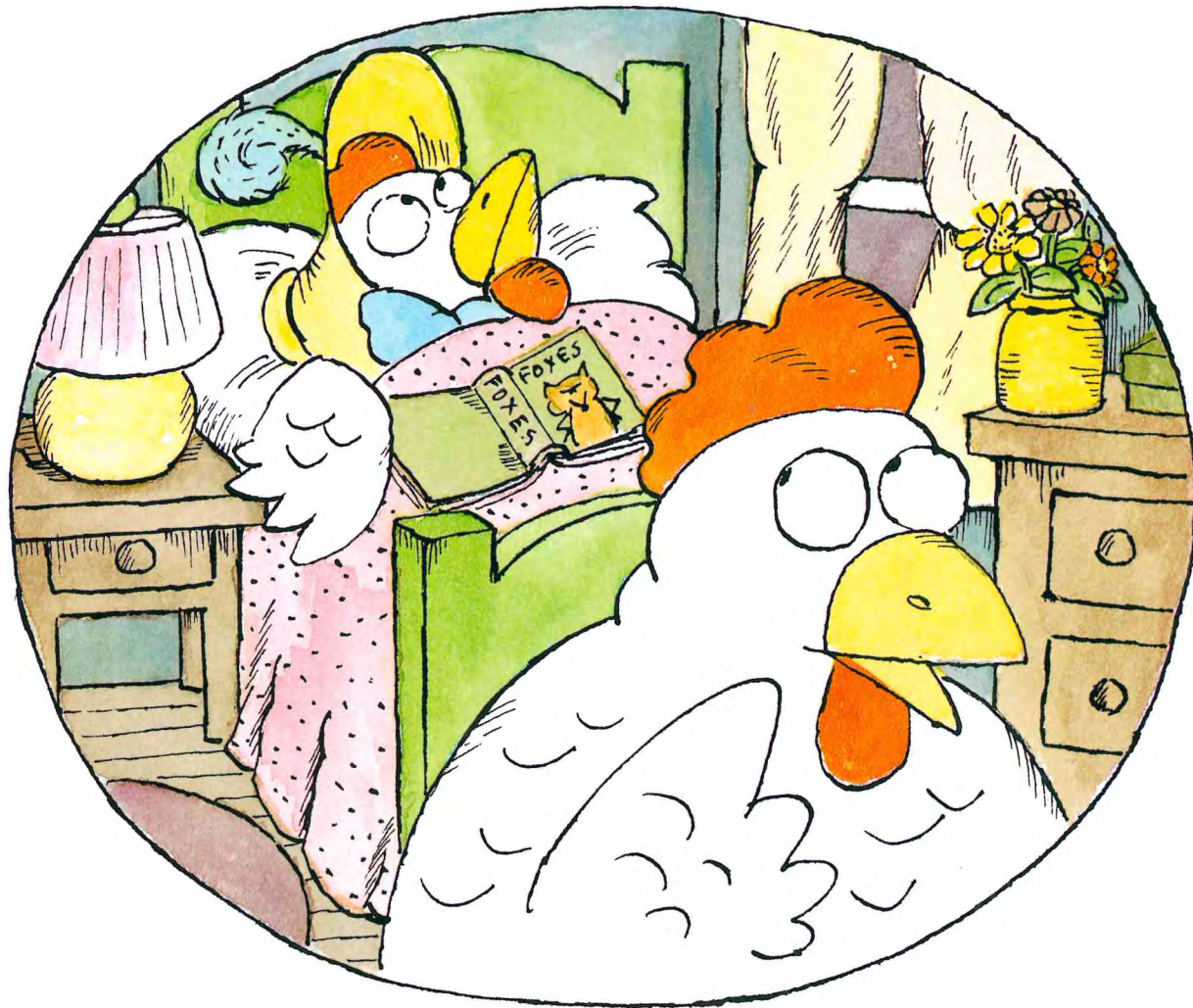
"You have caused me a lot of trouble,"  
said the plump gray fox.  
"Now help me out of this embarrassing costume!"



Winnie was so surprised, she nearly fell out of the balloon.  
"Harriet!" she cried. "You!"



That evening Harriet put Winnie to bed with a good book.  
“Oh, my stars!” cried Winnie. “Mr. Johnson was a *fox!*”  
And she nearly died of fright.



“Maybe there’s hope for her yet,” said Harriet.

**JAMES MARSHALL** (1942–1992) was the beloved author and illustrator of several classics for children, including the *George and Martha* series. He received a Caldecott Honor medal in 1988 for *Goldilocks* and illustrated the popular *Miss Nelson* and *The Stupids* series, as well as works by authors such as Ogden Nash and Maurice Sendak.

Also by James Marshall:

*The Four Little Troubles: Eugene; Sing Out, Irene;  
Someone Is Talking About Hortense; Snake, His Story*

*Portly McSwine*

*The Guest*

*Taking Care of Carruthers*

*Willis*

*Yummers!*