

Friends

written and illustrated by
Helme Heine

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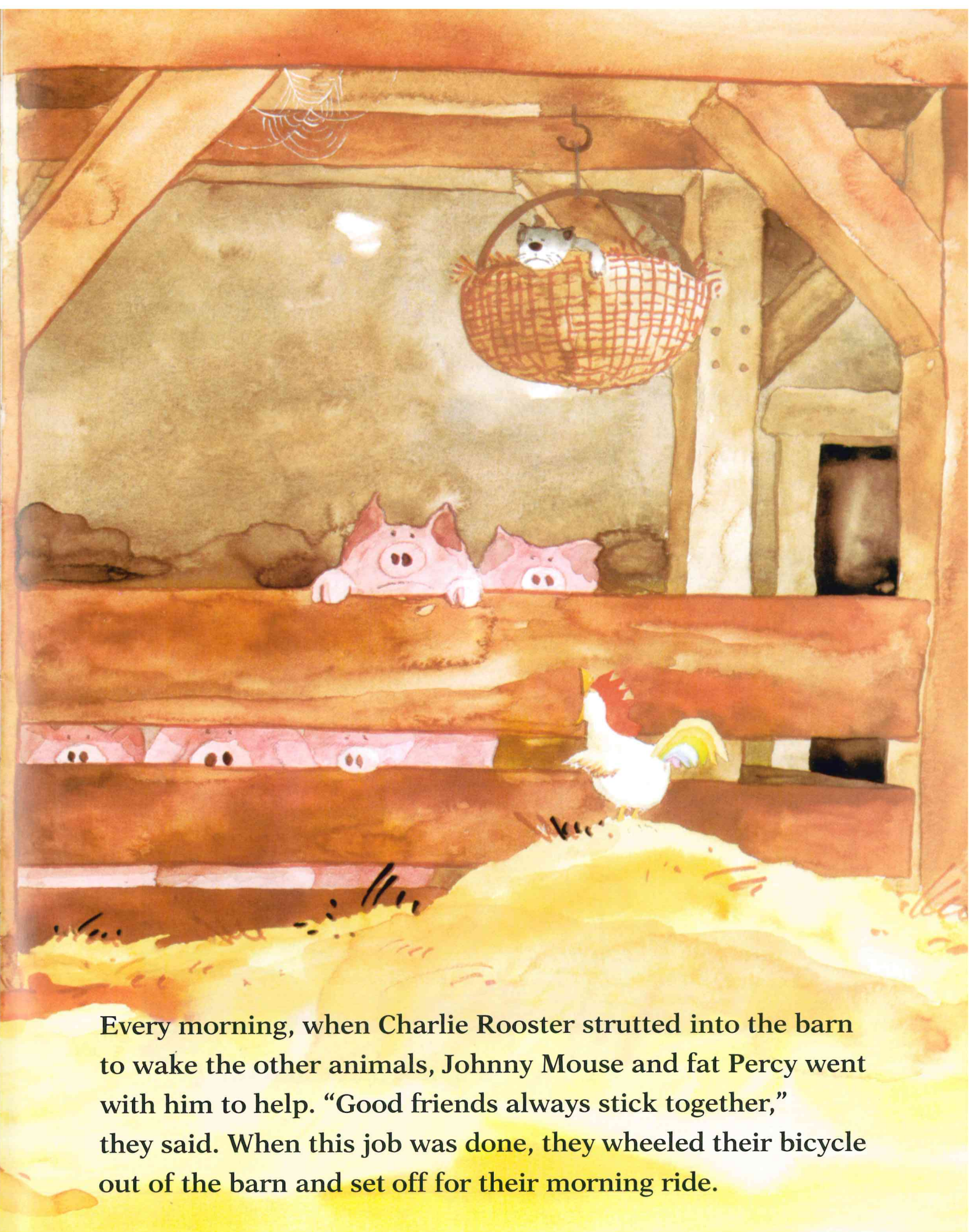
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"A Margaret K. McElderry book."
Three friends who love to be together come to the
realization that sometimes it's just not possible.
Animals—Fiction.
Friendship—Fiction.
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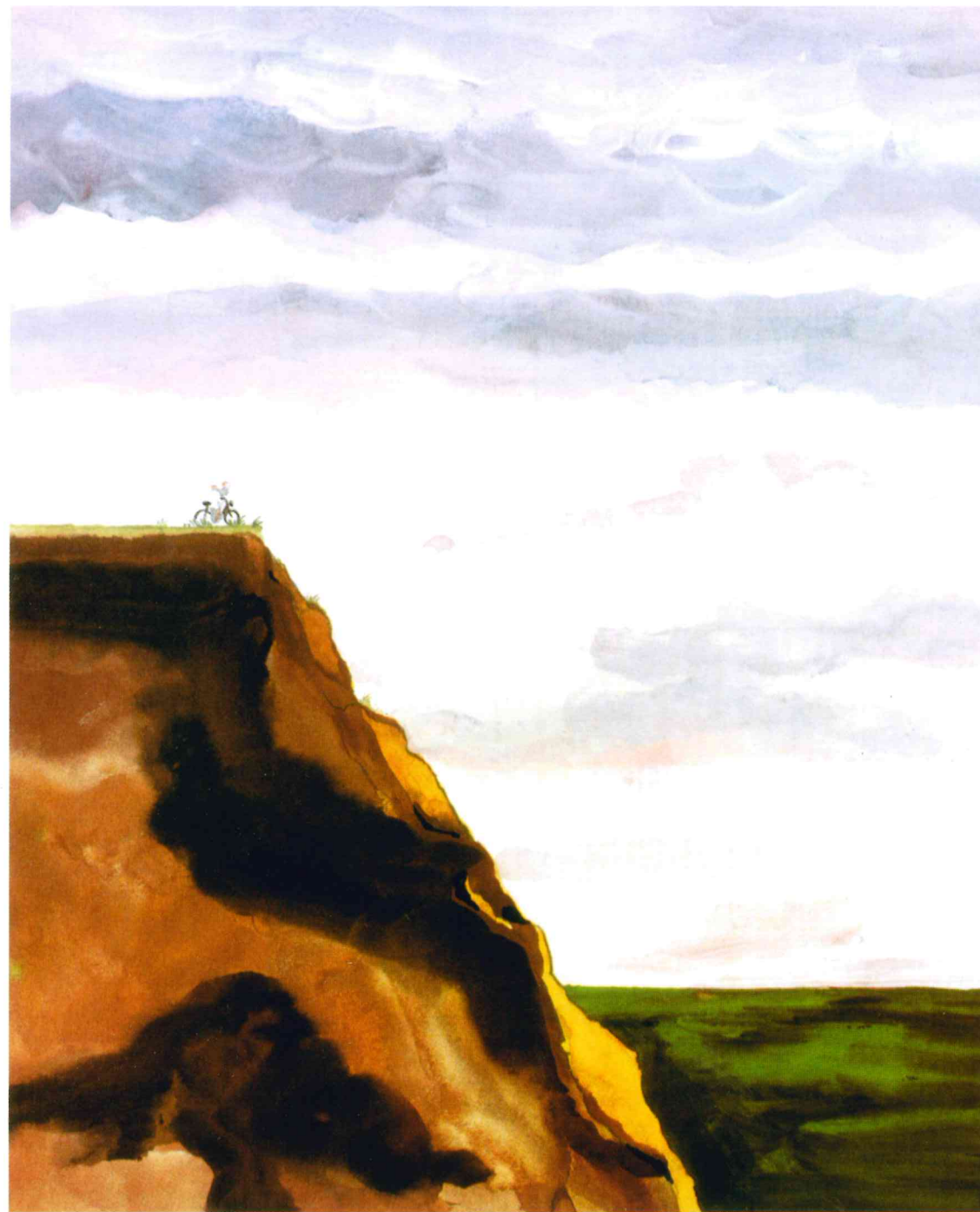
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Every morning, when Charlie Rooster strutted into the barn to wake the other animals, Johnny Mouse and fat Percy went with him to help. "Good friends always stick together," they said. When this job was done, they wheeled their bicycle out of the barn and set off for their morning ride.



They could ride down the roughest paths and up the steepest cliffs.



No curve was too sharp for them and their bicycle. No puddle was deep enough to stop them.

One day, they played a game of hide-and-seek
by the village pond.





While Johnny Mouse was hiding, he discovered an old boat lying in the tall grass. He showed his friends,



and they decided to play pirates. "Good friends always decide things together," they said.

Johnny Mouse took the tiller, Charlie Rooster
opened his wings to make the sail, and fat
Percy plugged up the hole in the side of the
boat by sitting on it.





They sailed out on the open water, and as the
day went on, they felt very brave and bold.
They conquered the village pond!



But hunger finally sent them back to the shore.



First they tried to catch a fish. But their stomachs rumbled so loudly that they frightened all the fish away.



Then they went looking for cherries. They shared them: some for Johnny Mouse, some for Charlie Rooster, and twice as many for fat Percy.



Johnny Mouse didn't mind, but Charlie Rooster complained. He said it was unfair. So they gave him the cherry stones. "Friends are always fair," they said.

They ate so many cherries that they all got
stomachaches and had to sit down for a while
before they started back.





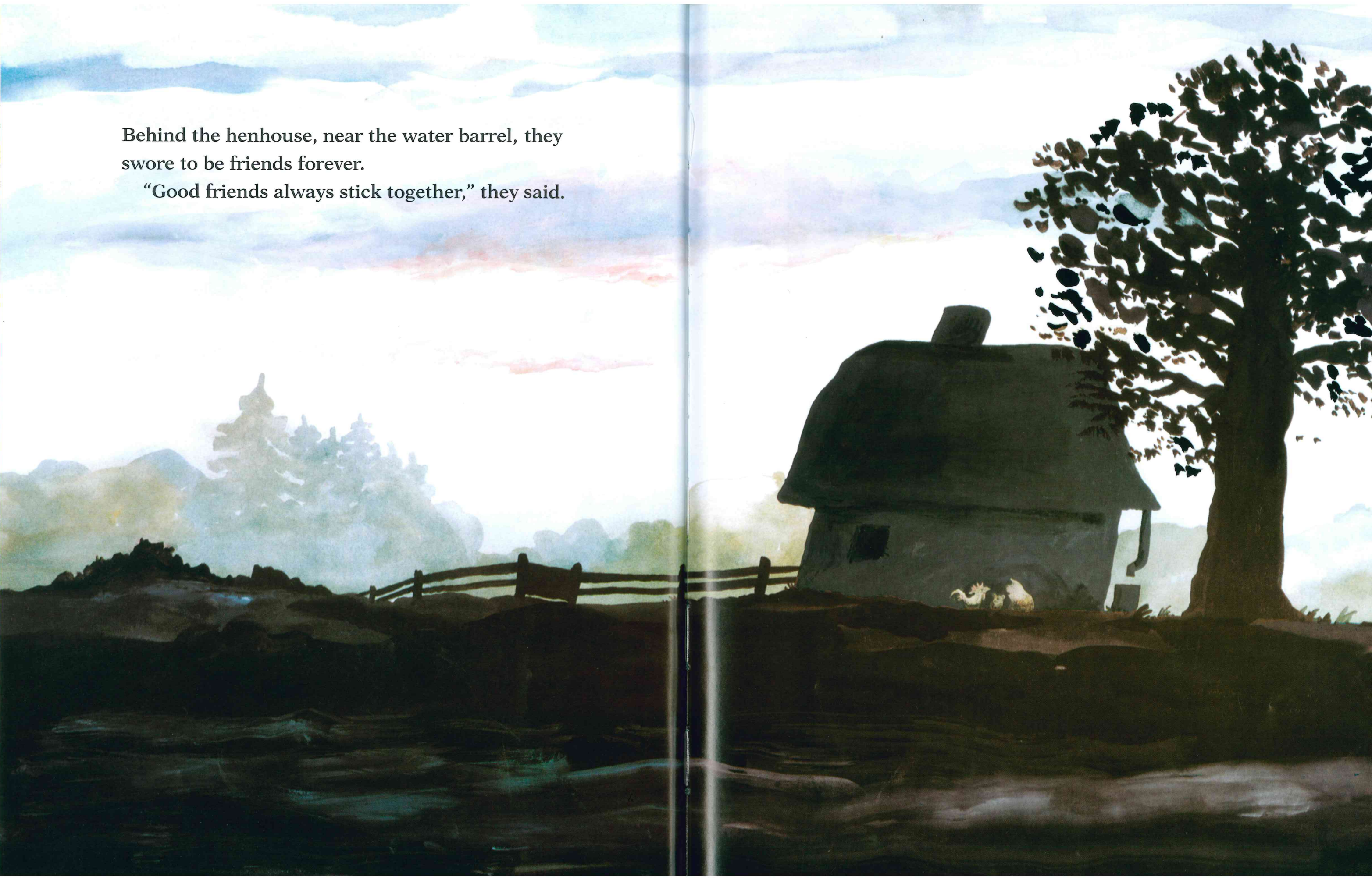
As evening fell and the shadows grew longer



they bicycled home.

Behind the henhouse, near the water barrel, they
swore to be friends forever.

“Good friends always stick together,” they said.





They decided to spend the night in Johnny Mouse's house. But Charlie Rooster got stuck in the doorway.



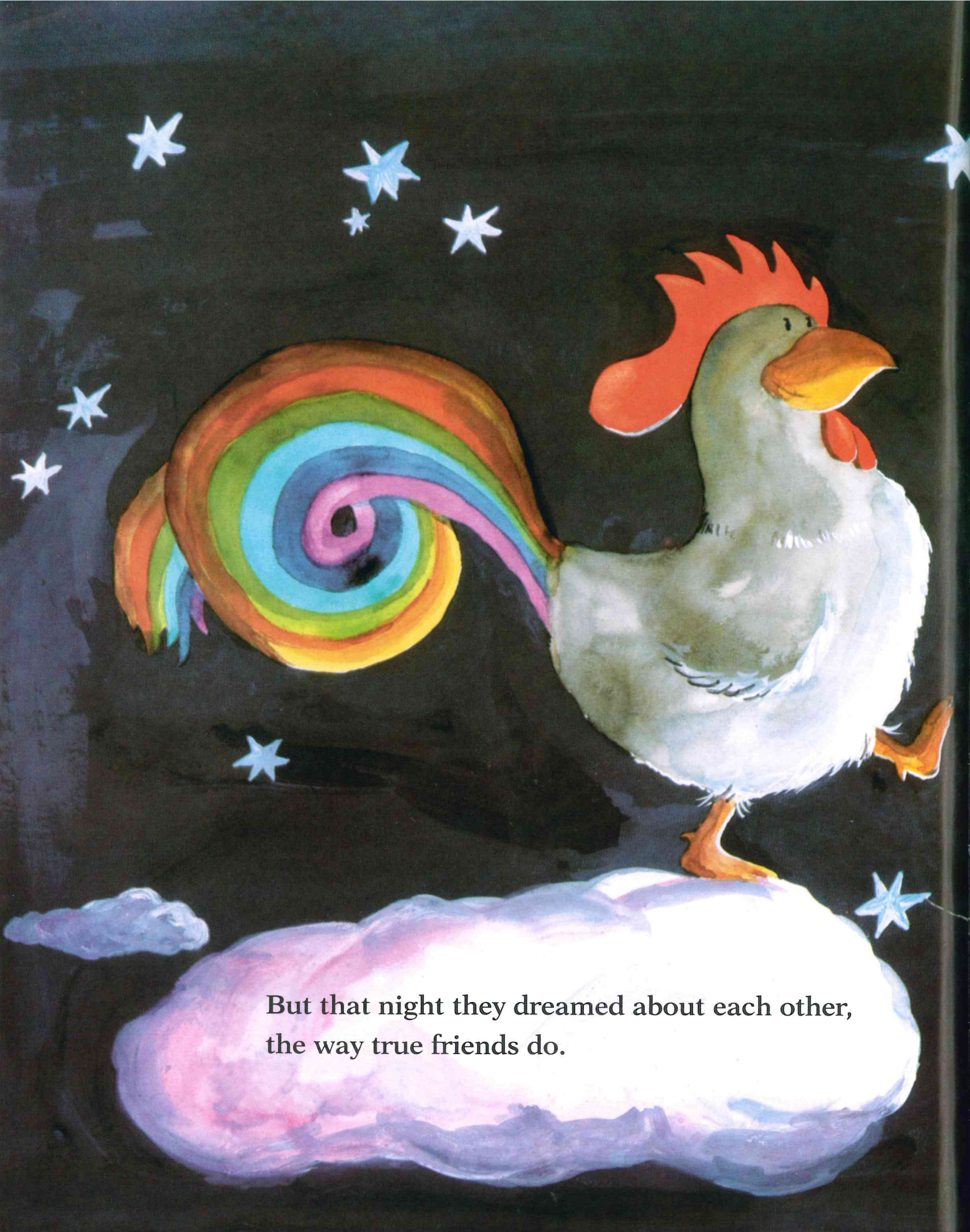
Then fat Percy invited them to spend the night with him; but Johnny Mouse said he didn't want to sleep in a pigsty.



Finally, Charlie Rooster suggested sleeping in the henhouse. They tried to rest on a perch high above the ground . . .



but it broke. So, sadly, they said good night to each other and went to their own beds. "Sometimes good friends can't be together," they said.



But that night they dreamed about each other,
the way true friends do.





I love my friends and I look after them well. In Africa, for example, where I lived for twelve years, I had a wild pig that stayed with me in my house. Whenever I went to town, I put a collar with its name and address on my pet just in case it got lost. As soon as the collar was on, the pig jumped onto the front seat of my car and urged me to go.

I also had chickens in my backyard. Each one had a name. None of them ended up in my pot because friends with names you simply cannot eat. They thanked me by sharing their eggs with me.

I was not at all fond of the mice in my house until one day I found a baby mouse caught in a glass jar. Of course I saved its life. It overwhelmed me with its charm, and I changed my attitude completely. We lived together happily ever after.

For the time being, my best friend is a sheep that likes to go fishing with me in New Zealand where I spend long sunny winters.

—Helme Heine