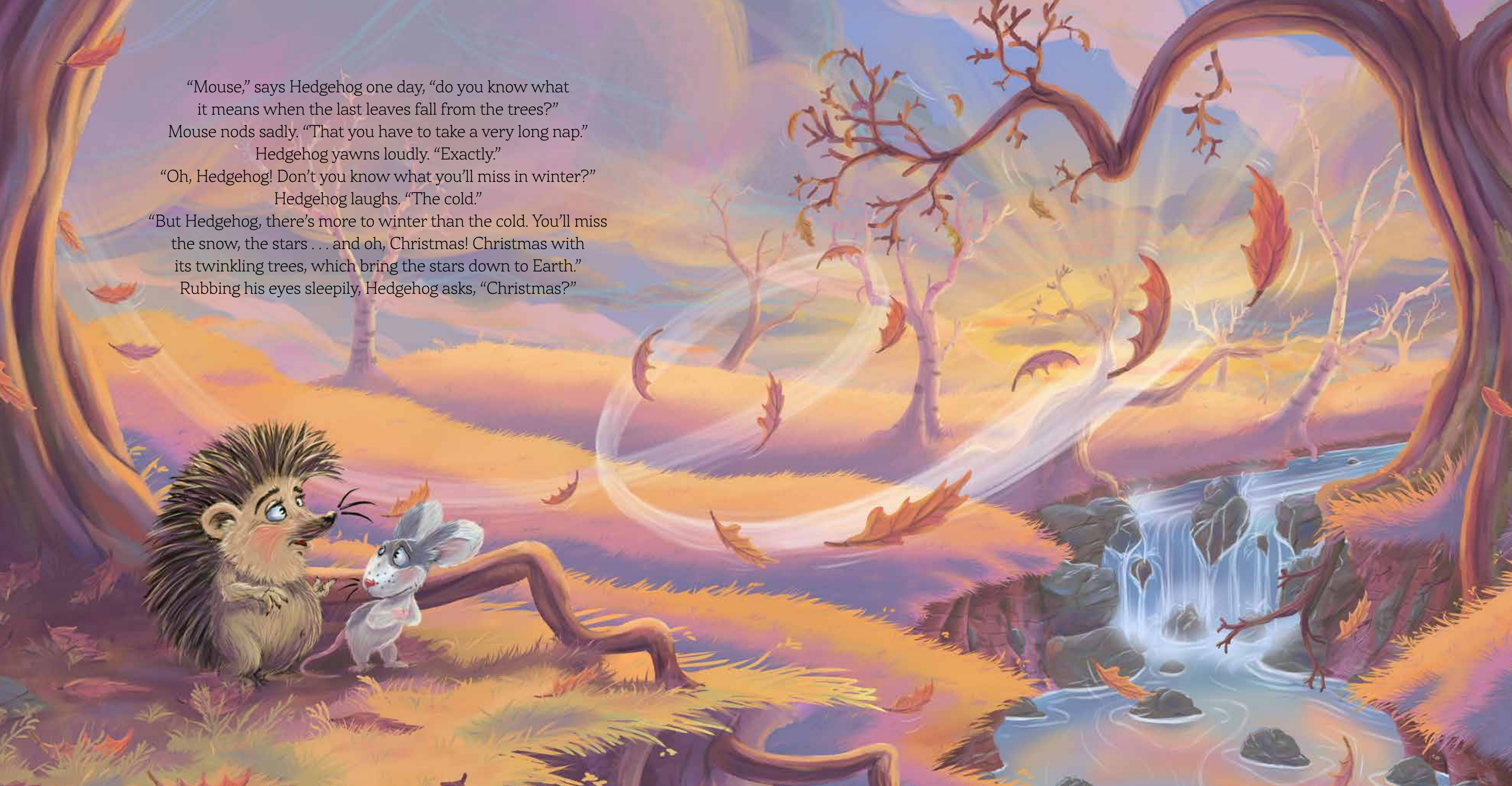


“Mouse,” says Hedgehog one day, “do you know what it means when the last leaves fall from the trees?”
Mouse nods sadly. “That you have to take a very long nap.”
Hedgehog yawns loudly. “Exactly.”
“Oh, Hedgehog! Don’t you know what you’ll miss in winter?”
Hedgehog laughs. “The cold.”
“But Hedgehog, there’s more to winter than the cold. You’ll miss the snow, the stars . . . and oh, Christmas! Christmas with its twinkling trees, which bring the stars down to Earth.”
Rubbing his eyes sleepily, Hedgehog asks, “Christmas?”



“Christmas,” Mouse explains,
“is a time to be with those you love.”
“You’re the one I love,” says Hedgehog.
“And I love you,” replies Mouse with
teary eyes. “But you’re never here.”
Hedgehog thinks for a moment, then says
softly, “I’ll be there, Mouse. I promise.”

Mouse’s eyes glisten. “Then I’ll see you
at Christmas. By the star-filled trees.”
“All right,” replies Hedgehog. “But now—yawn!—
I need to squeeze into my sweater and sleep.”

