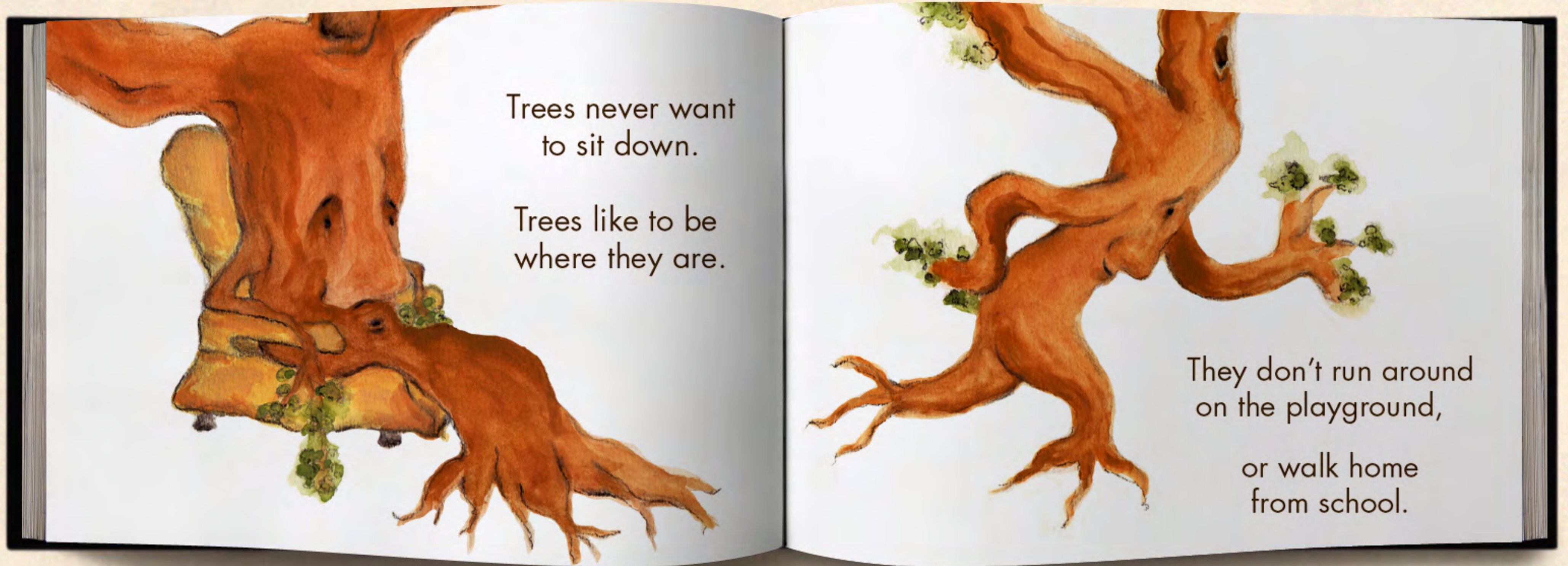
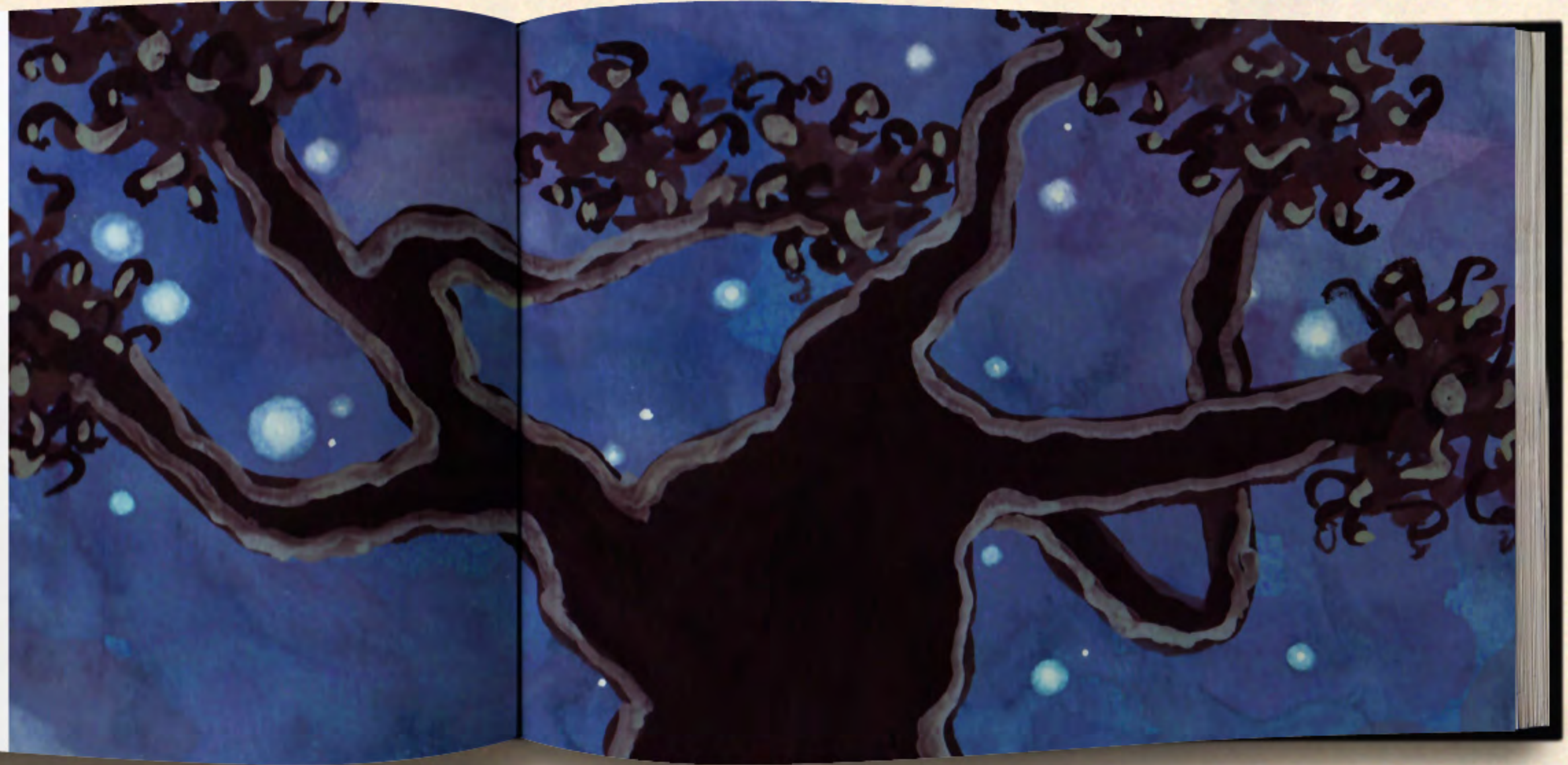
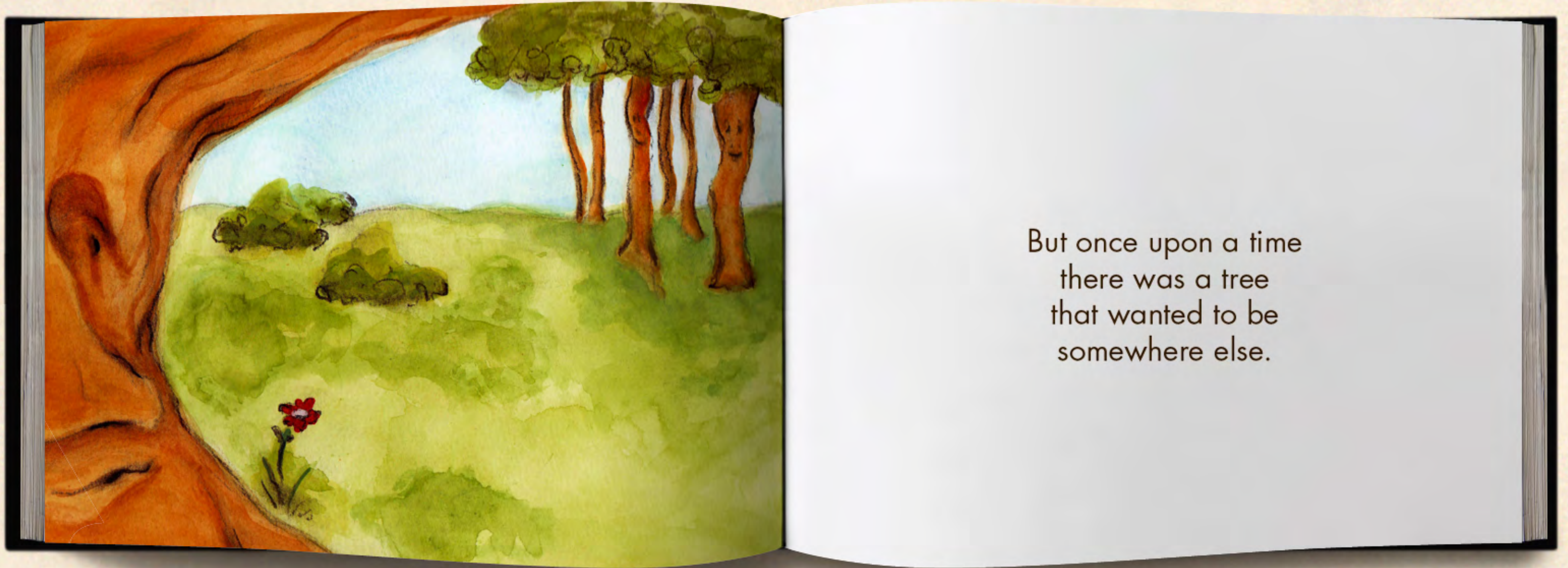


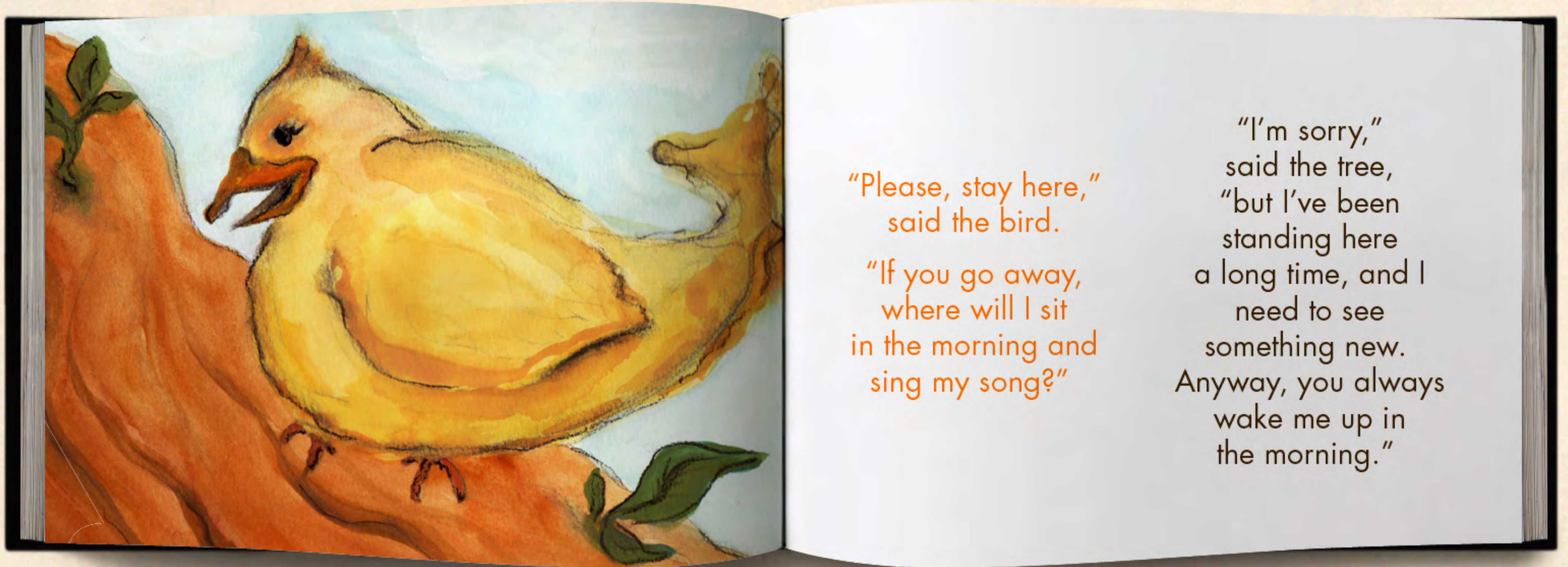
Trees are never lonely.



They learn and
listen all day long,
standing still or,
sometimes, dancing
in the evening wind.



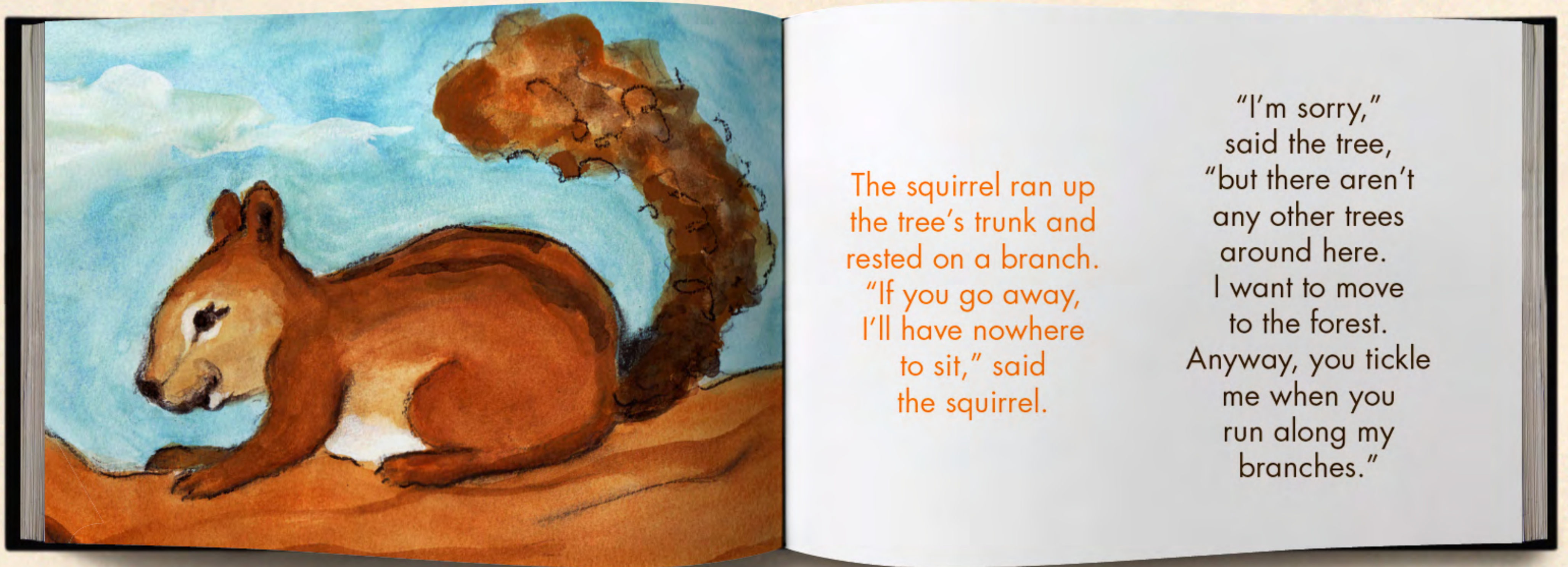




"Please, stay here,"
said the bird.

"If you go away,
where will I sit
in the morning and
sing my song?"

"I'm sorry,"
said the tree,
"but I've been
standing here
a long time, and I
need to see
something new.
Anyway, you always
wake me up in
the morning."



The squirrel ran up
the tree's trunk and
rested on a branch.

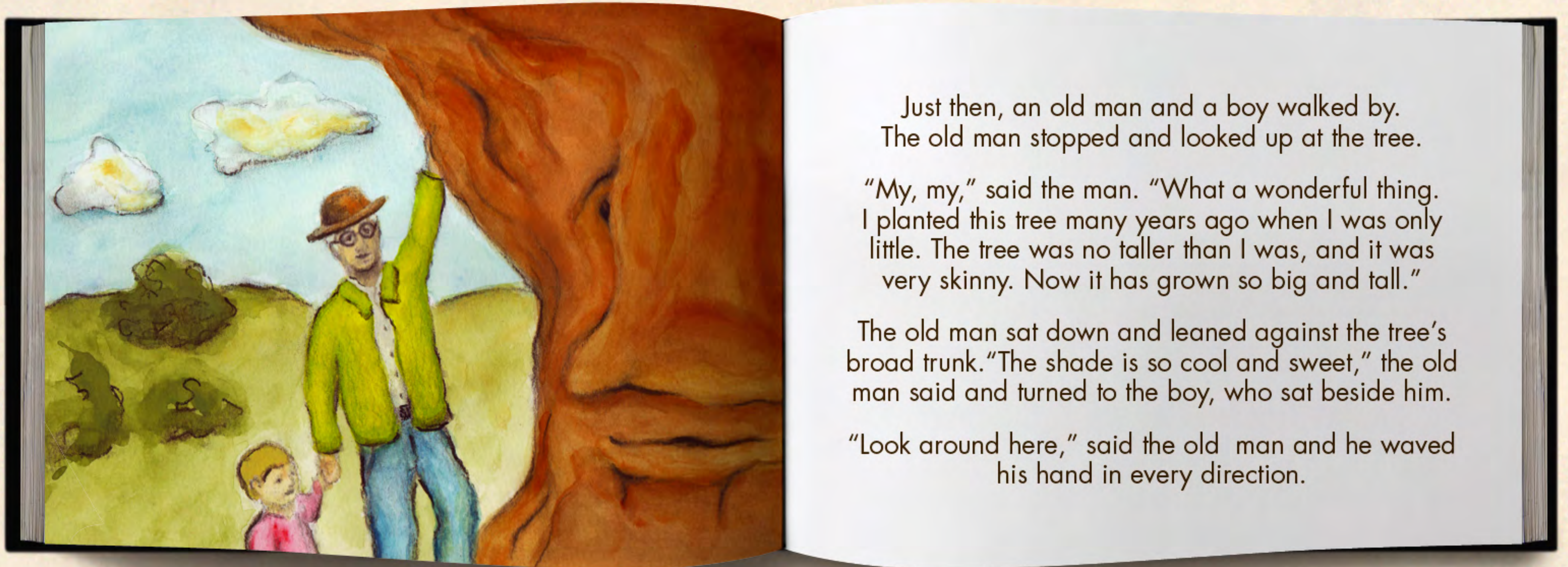
"If you go away,
I'll have nowhere
to sit," said
the squirrel.

"I'm sorry,"
said the tree,
"but there aren't
any other trees
around here.
I want to move
to the forest.
Anyway, you tickle
me when you
run along my
branches."

The leaves
whispered
in the wind.
“If you go
away, we will
fall down in
strange places
when autumn
comes, none of
us will know
where we are.”



“I’m sorry,”
said the tree,
“but you always leave
me alone in winter and
only come back
when the weather gets
warm again in spring.
Anyway, you keep me up
all night talking.”



Just then, an old man and a boy walked by.
The old man stopped and looked up at the tree.

"My, my," said the man. "What a wonderful thing.
I planted this tree many years ago when I was only
little. The tree was no taller than I was, and it was
very skinny. Now it has grown so big and tall."

The old man sat down and leaned against the tree's
broad trunk. "The shade is so cool and sweet," the old
man said and turned to the boy, who sat beside him.

"Look around here," said the old man and he waved
his hand in every direction.

"It is all different from when I grew up. All around here was all fields. There wasn't a road over there, like there is now. There were no houses, like that row of houses over yonder. Everything is different, everything but this tree."

"It will be here another hundred years. When you walk by with your grandson, everything may look different, the world will have changed, but there will still be this tree, green and welcoming."

The bird sang a few notes. The squirrel chattered.
The leaves danced in the breeze.





The next day, the weather turned cold and everyone knew summer was over and autumn had begun.

The squirrel began to gather nuts.

The bird fluffed her feathers and looked at the southern sky.



The leaves began dropping off the tree,
first only a few, then more and more.

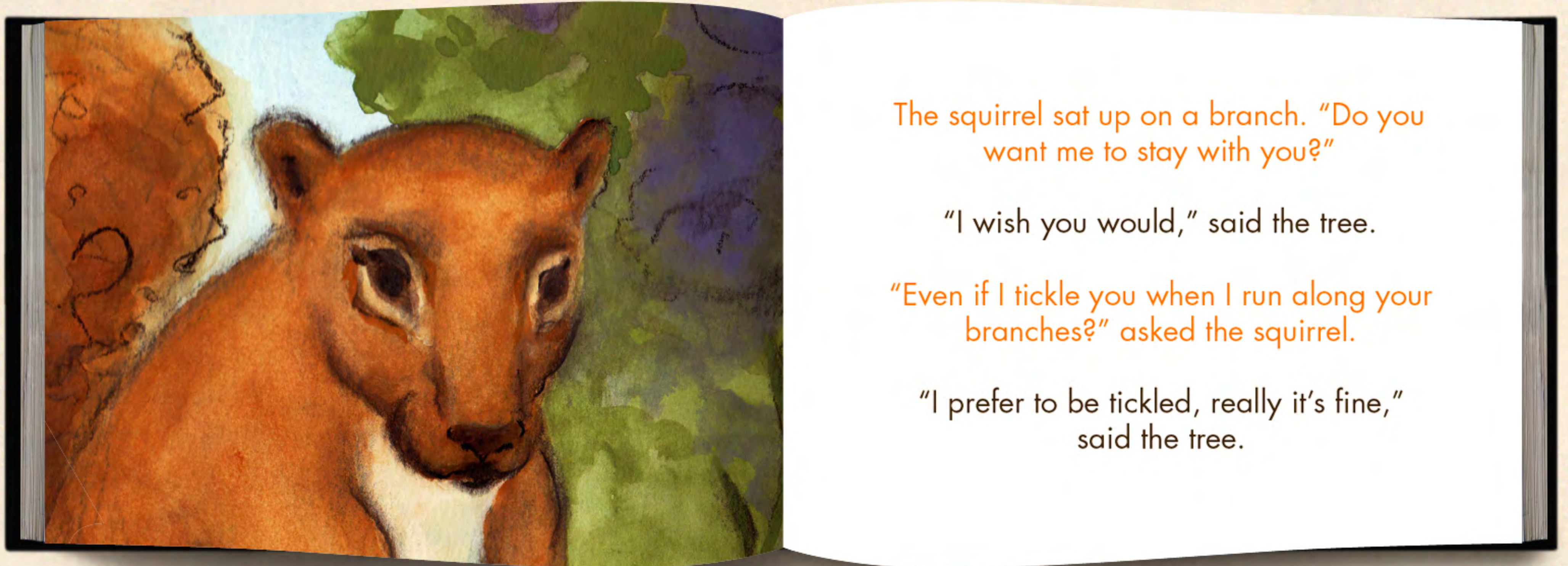


"Goodbye, my friends,"
said the tree sadly. "Will I
ever see you again?"

"Oh, yes," said the leaves,
"we always come back.
Always."

"Oh, yes," said the bird,
as she flew into the sky
and circled the tree two
times. "I'll come back, I
always do."





The squirrel sat up on a branch. "Do you want me to stay with you?"

"I wish you would," said the tree.

"Even if I tickle you when I run along your branches?" asked the squirrel.

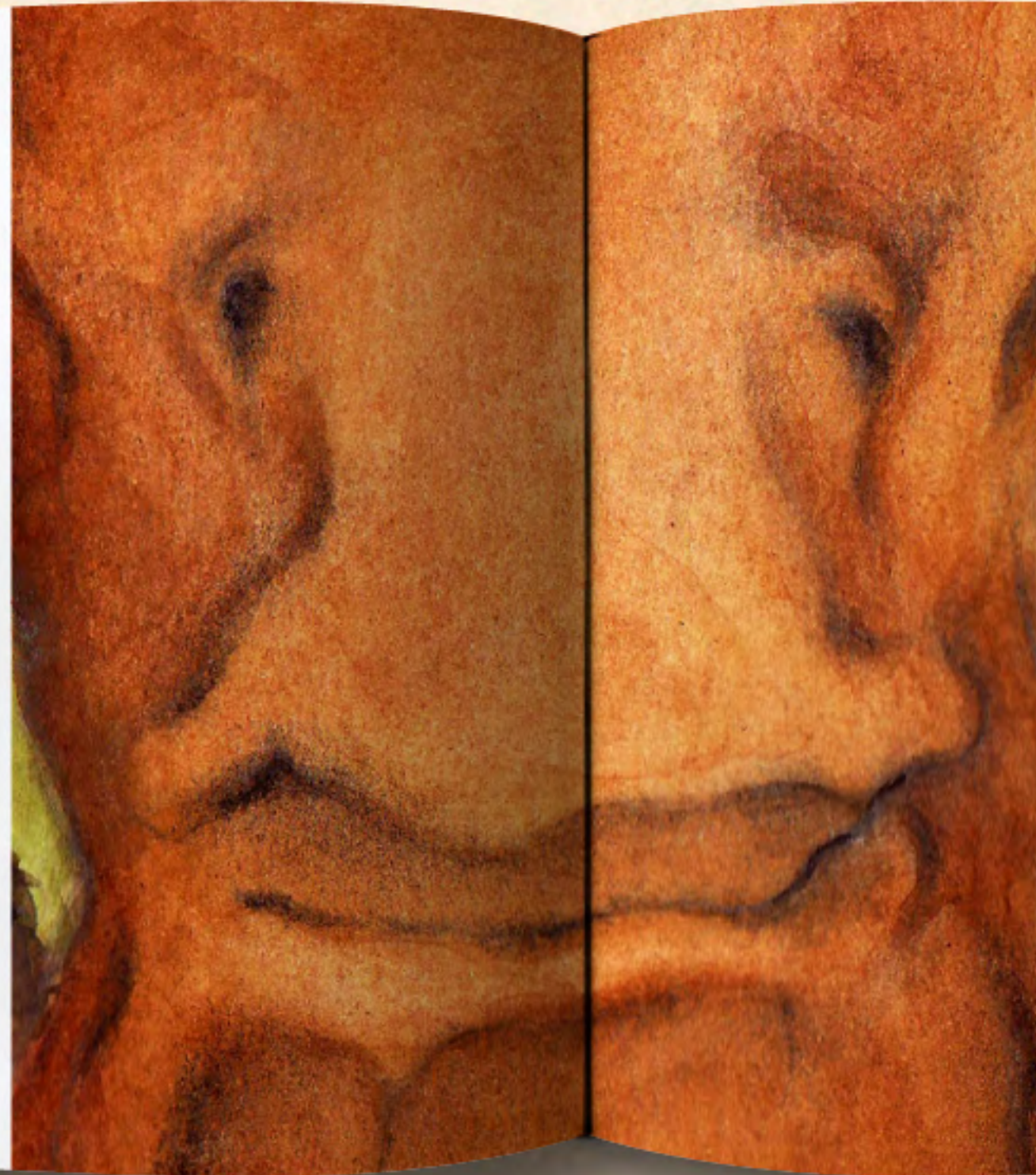
"I prefer to be tickled, really it's fine," said the tree.

The bird waved goodbye,
and the leaves floated on the wind.

"See you in the spring,"
they said,
"You'll still be here?"



"Of course,"
said the tree.



"Why would I want
to go anywhere else?"

The End.

