

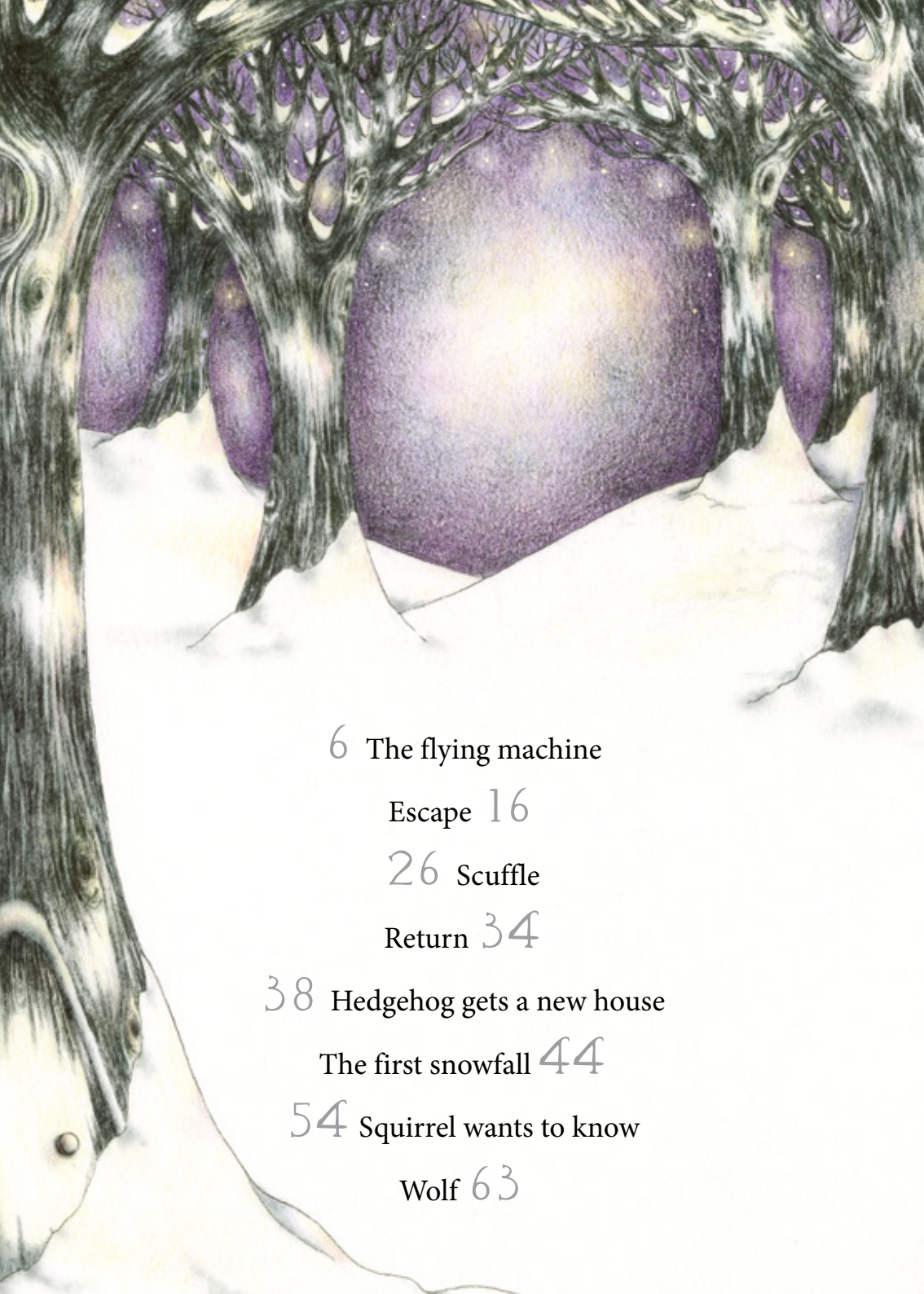




*For Martin,
who “invented” Scary Fairy*

Jana Bauer

Scary Fairy
and The Wild Winter



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The flying machine

"I came for a cup of tea," said Hedgehog one cold Saturday, when he knocked on Owl's door.

"Is that so?" said Owl with a nod, reaching for the camomile.

"I can't sleep."

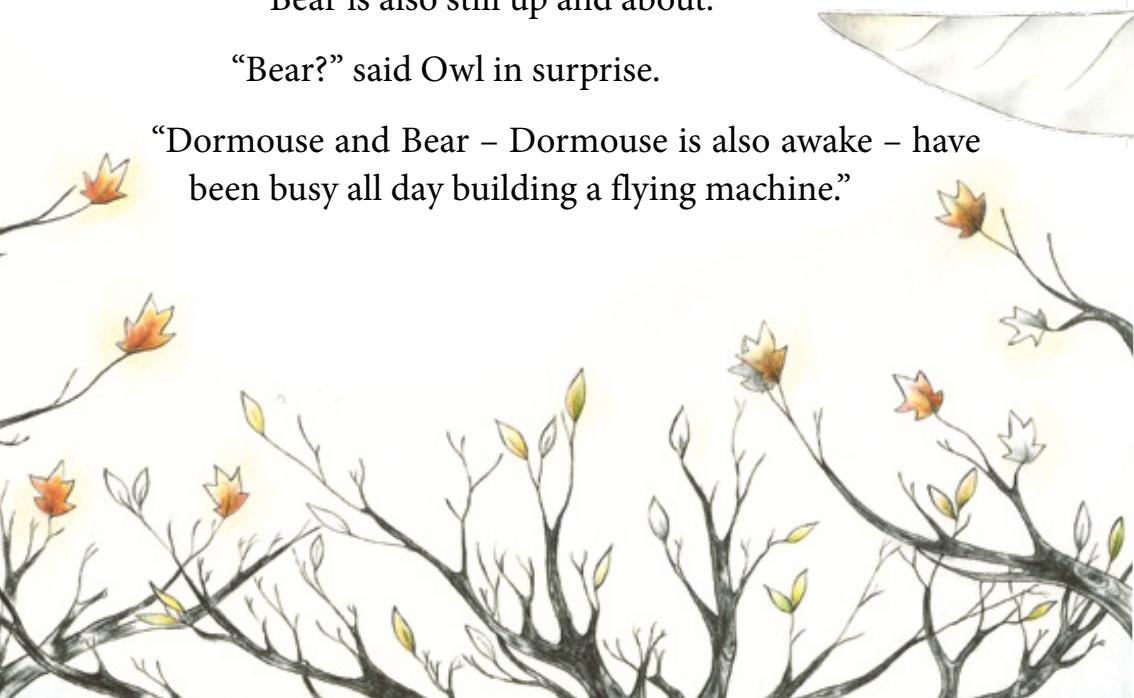
"I can see that," replied Owl.

6 "Salamander can't sleep either," added Hedgehog.

"Bear is also still up and about."

"Bear?" said Owl in surprise.

"Dormouse and Bear – Dormouse is also awake – have been busy all day building a flying machine."





“A flying machine?” Owl was increasingly confused. Hedgehog nodded, shifting on his seat and creasing the tablecloth. Owl suddenly lost patience.

“Hedgehog, stop creasing my tablecloth! And what are you dithering about?”

“Scary Fairy,” sighed Hedgehog. “We’re going for her!”

“Scary Fairy?” hooted Owl. “Why?”

“What if something unpleasant happened to her on the way? What if her teapot was struck by lightning? What if somebody kidnapped her? Or bewitched her? What if ...”

“Stop!” said Owl. “Scary Fairy went home because she missed her sisters and cousins and aunties. And probably even her great grandmother.”

“Great grandmother?” exclaimed Hedgehog. “You said yourself that she swears terribly and we both know she has no patience.”

“Yes, but...”

“You know where scary fairies live,” Hedgehog gave her a pleading look.

“No, no and no,” replied Owl.

They were interrupted by a racket coming from outside.

A rumbling and rattling. Closer and closer. Louder and louder. Owl stuck her head out of her hollow. A strange thing was flying towards her. It looked like a ship with a tree instead of a mast, but it wasn't a ship. It resembled a hut with wings, but it wasn't a hut either, even though at least half the residents of Wicked Wood were packed into it. Dormouse, Salamander, Squirrel, the Frog family, the young Rabbits, even Bear and Mrs. Wild Boar with her youngsters, they were all in there.

“Dormouse designed a flying machine,” said Hedgehog. “I decorated it with pumpkins, in case you hadn't noticed.”

“Some animals should have started hibernating by now,” shrieked Owl towards the buzzing object, “it has started to snow.”

“We can count on you, can't we?” asked Hedgehog. He drank up his camomile tea and climbed up the rope that Dormouse had lowered from the flying machine.

Owl gave a deep sigh, plonked a warm hat on her head and took off. Truth be known, even she had not slept a wink since Scary Fairy left Wicked Wood.

“Over the hills!” She waved her wing towards the south and swooped to the head of the expedition.

“It’s said that scary fairies are wild things,” she muttered in concern, “terribly wild.”

✧

They flew for a long time. Over a large field, over meadows and woods. They suddenly turned left and buzzed through the mist over snowy mountain peaks. The wind was sharp and the light was slowly fading. They flew through the night into a new morning; it was cold and damp. It smelt of the unknown, of something salty. The sea sparkled in the distance.

Owl turned away from it. They glided into a land covered with thorn bushes. A massive old tree with mighty limbs stood alone in the middle of the thorns. There were bird houses connected by staircases and bridges. They landed.

“Hey ho,” called Bear, who was the first to emerge from the flying machine.

No window opened. No door.

“Hedgimiiiillaa!” cried Dormouse.

Nothing.

“Perhaps there’s no one home,” he said.

“Then why are all those tiny faces staring at us through the openings?” asked Squirrel.

“They’re putting some sort of sticks into their mouths,” said Bear.

“Probably we interrupted their lunch,” said Squirrel with a sigh. “Squirrel is always grumpy if you disturb me when I’m eating.”

“I don’t think so,” called Owl.

“Flee!” shouted Hedgehog. “They’ve got blowpipes!”

Hundreds of dried pine needles filled the sky, hurtling towards them.

“Ow,” yelped Squirrel when one of them stuck into her nose.

“Take shelter,” yelled Dormouse and they all hid behind the flying machine.

“I know,” said Hedgehog, pulling out a white handkerchief and fastening it to a stick. “Hello there!” He waved the stick as he made his way through the thorns towards the tree. “We’re friends, we know Hedgimilla!”

The pine needles stopped flying. The blowpipes vanished. The eyes and twiglets disappeared from the openings.

For a while, all was quiet. Hedgehog stopped. He waved triumphantly to the animals behind the flying machine. Proud of himself, he moved forward.

The main door at the roots of the tree opened. Four small scary fairies emerged. They grabbed Hedgehog's paws, picked him up and carried him off. They were shouting at each other, arguing.

"I'll be the first to brush my hair with him."

"I saw him first."

12 "Let's give him to great grandmother, exchange him for new shoes."

"Great grandmother already has seventeen of them. Let's hide him instead and use him ourselves."

"Abduction!" squeaked Hedgehog when he got his breath back. "They want to use me as a hairbrush! The little devils!"

"We know!" said Squirrel, trying to reassure him. "But there's nothing we can do!"

Hedgehog shouted and screamed until he disappeared together with the scary fairies inside the tree.

"Now we've lost Hedgehog as well," sighed Wild Boar.

“We haven’t lost anyone,” hooted Owl.

“Maybe we could buy him back with hazelnuts?” Squirrel suggested.

But they didn’t have any hazelnuts. They all sat there despondently.

“Let’s attack them,” cried Squirrel eagerly. “Beat them up, show them what we’re capable of.”

“But we can’t,” said Dormouse quietly. “There are probably a hundred of them or more.”

“We should distract them,” said Owl, thoughtfully.
“Lure them out. Trick them.”

“A poetry reading!” said Salamander.

The others rolled their eyes.

“Don’t be such a clown!” grumbled Wild Boar.

“Of course,” said Owl. “A circus!”

“But,” said Salamander. “I...”

“You’ll be the clown,” said Owl. “Mrs. Wild Boar and her youngsters will be acrobats. The Frogs can ride on the Rabbits and Bear will ride a bike.”

They made a poster. On it they drew Salamander with a red nose and in big letters they wrote C I R C U S. When it was dark, Dormouse sneaked up to the tree and nailed the poster to the main entrance. In the morning, they brought benches from the flying machine and blew up old blankets into a circus tent.

“A circus,” said Salamander with a sneer. “Nobody will come, I expect.”

At that moment, about three hundred and fifty wild girls with bruised knees and scabbed elbows burst into the



tent. They scuffled around the benches, gnashing their teeth. Those at the back were trying to push those at the front from their seats. They were spitting and screaming, throwing insults and pulling each other's hair.

"Out of my way," screamed an old-sounding voice as great grandmother shuffled to the front row. The twig-lets on her head were old, broken and overgrown with lichen. She looked around, grabbed one of the small scary fairies by the ears and dragged her from her seat.

"Scoot, vermin," she croaked. She sat down and stuffed some tobacco in her pipe.

"Silly old fart," responded the little one, as she headed for the back row.

Owl bowed. She opened the curtain. The performance began.

Meanwhile, Squirrel and Dormouse sneaked off to begin the rescue operation.

Escape

Dormouse swung an axe and struck directly at the door of the mighty tree in which scary fairies lived.

“Terrible!” cried Squirrel and began to weep. “You’re breaking into someone’s home!”

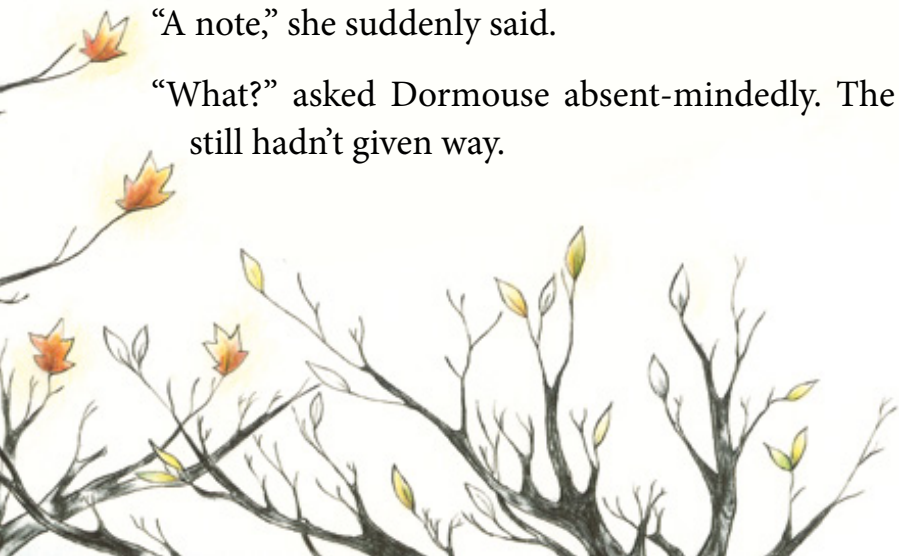
“We’re rescuing Hedgehog,” replied Dormouse, hammering on.

16 “What if scary fairies were demolishing your door?” objected Squirrel stubbornly. “What if they were breaking into your home?”

Squirrel stared gloomily into space.

“A note,” she suddenly said.

“What?” asked Dormouse absent-mindedly. The door still hadn’t given way.



“Leave them a note,” repeated Squirrel. “Apologising.”

“Squirrel, please, pull yourself together!”

Dormouse was huffing and puffing and banging. The door finally gave way. Dormouse broke through. But Squirrel firmly planted herself in front of the door and would not let him enter.

“An apology!” she demanded stubbornly.

Dormouse sighed and scribbled an apology on a scrap of paper. Squirrel stepped out of the way, visibly relieved. They entered some kind of vestibule.

“Oh, dear!” exclaimed Squirrel, “what a mess! It’s full of shabby shoes and dirty socks. Watch your step, Dormouse. If my mother saw this...”

“Heedgehog,” called out Dormouse.

“I’m heeere!” Rattling and a muffled voice came from somewhere up above.



Squirrel and Dormouse rushed across the masses of shoes and socks towards the staircase.

“Look how many beds they have,” said Squirrel with a shake of her head as they hurried up the stairs past the small rooms, “and not one of them is made. If that isn’t laziness, I don’t know what is.”

At the top, there was a room with antique furniture, a comfy armchair and nicely framed pictures. These showed great grandmother on different occasions. A young great grandmother waving a red cloth at an enraged bull. A slightly older great grandmother at a boot throwing competition with a medal around her neck. An old great grandmother in the middle of a tobacco field.

Once more, rattling.

“Hedgehog, is that you?” asked Squirrel cautiously.

“No, it’s a pan of baked beans,” came Hedgehog’s gruff voice.

“What a pity,” sighed Squirrel. “I don’t like beans!”

Dormouse ran to the chest-of-drawers and opened the drawer. Thirty-six unfriendly eyes stared at him from among a heap of prickles.

“Hedgehog?” asked Dormouse cautiously. “Are you here?”

“Move out of the way, it’s for me,” said a voice inside the drawer. “Let me past. I’m going home.”

Hedgehog extracted himself from the prickly mass of hedgehogs.

Dormouse helped him out of the drawer and gestured towards the other prickles: “What are we going to do with the rest of them?”

Hedgehog shrugged. “They’re weird.”

“You can go now!” said Dormouse to the hedgehogs in the drawer.

Not one of them moved.

“You are free!”

“Where are we supposed to go?” asked the biggest one, suspiciously.

“To the woods. Home.”

The hedgehogs burst out laughing.

“And who’s going to feed us prunes? Who’ll serve us?”

“I told you they were weird,” sighed Hedgehog.

“After all those years in a drawer ... They are confused! They need rescuing,” said Dormouse, starting to pull the drawer out. “Let’s take them out.”

Hedgehog helped.

“Squirrel isn’t sure ...” Squirrel began. “Oh, what the heck!” And a moment later she grabbed hold of the drawer.

20 “Let’s clobber the pests!” shouted one of the hedgehogs. The others produced some prune stones from somewhere and started to hurl them at Squirrel, Dormouse and Hedgehog, who barely managed to drag them to the bushes. There, they dropped them on the ground. The hedgehogs protested, ugly words were spoken. They demanded to be taken back immediately. In the end, they gave in and scattered among the bushes.

✱

They had barely caught their breath, when Hedgehog froze.

“Shhhh! What’s that?”

From the bushes right in front of them a strange, white shape had begun to rise. It fluttered in the air.

“W-who are you?” asked Dormouse.

“I am the ghost of great grandmother’s great grandmother.”

Hedgehog began to retreat in fear.

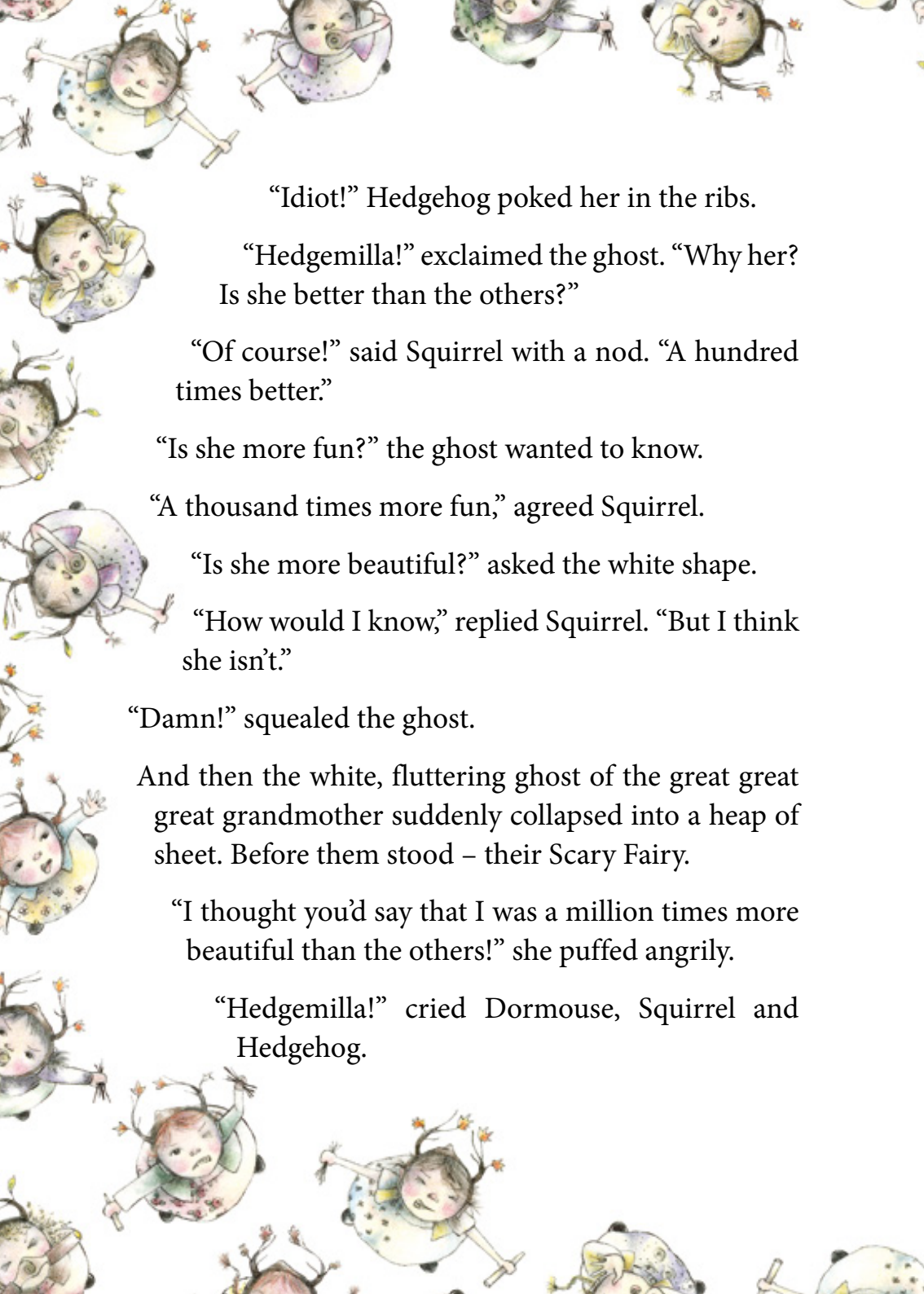
“Dear great great great grandmother,” he stammered. “It was n-n-nice to meet you, but now we’ve got to g-g-go, you see, our aircraft, I mean flying machine, is waiting for us, and the young Boars are staring, I mean starving, and we must get h-h-home.”

“You’re going nowhere!” thundered the great white figure. “The more I smell you, the more you stink. And do you know what of?”

Dormouse, Squirrel and Hedgehog shook their heads fearfully.

“Of trickery! I think that you came to kidnap scary fairies!”

“That’s not true!” muttered Squirrel. “We only came for one. For Hedgemilla.”

The page is decorated with numerous small, whimsical illustrations of children. These children are depicted with flower crowns, holding sticks, and wearing various colorful dresses. They are scattered across the page, with some appearing at the top, some on the left margin, and some at the bottom. The style is a soft, watercolor-like illustration.

“Idiot!” Hedgehog poked her in the ribs.

“Hedgemilla!” exclaimed the ghost. “Why her? Is she better than the others?”

“Of course!” said Squirrel with a nod. “A hundred times better.”

“Is she more fun?” the ghost wanted to know.

“A thousand times more fun,” agreed Squirrel.

“Is she more beautiful?” asked the white shape.

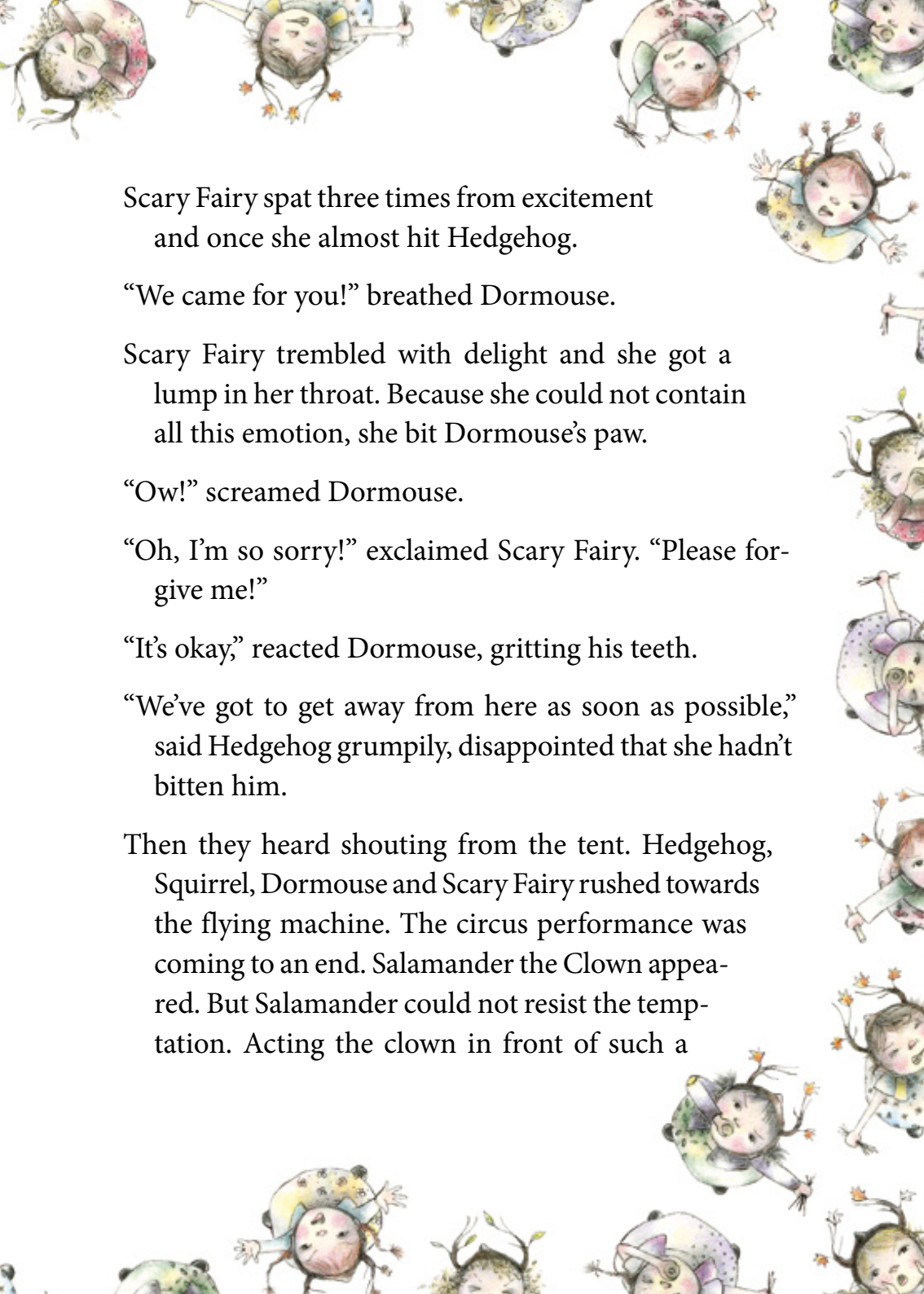
“How would I know,” replied Squirrel. “But I think she isn’t.”

“Damn!” squealed the ghost.

And then the white, fluttering ghost of the great great grandmother suddenly collapsed into a heap of sheet. Before them stood – their Scary Fairy.

“I thought you’d say that I was a million times more beautiful than the others!” she puffed angrily.

“Hedgemilla!” cried Dormouse, Squirrel and Hedgehog.

The page is decorated with numerous small, whimsical illustrations of 'Scary Fairies'. These creatures have large, round heads with wide, staring eyes, small bodies, and long, thin limbs. Some have antennae or hair that looks like leaves and twigs. They are scattered around the text, appearing to be flying or crawling. The illustrations are in a soft, painterly style with muted colors like greens, yellows, and purples.

Scary Fairy spat three times from excitement
and once she almost hit Hedgehog.

“We came for you!” breathed Dormouse.

Scary Fairy trembled with delight and she got a
lump in her throat. Because she could not contain
all this emotion, she bit Dormouse’s paw.

“Ow!” screamed Dormouse.

“Oh, I’m so sorry!” exclaimed Scary Fairy. “Please for-
give me!”

“It’s okay,” reacted Dormouse, gritting his teeth.

“We’ve got to get away from here as soon as possible,”
said Hedgehog grumpily, disappointed that she hadn’t
bitten him.

Then they heard shouting from the tent. Hedgehog,
Squirrel, Dormouse and Scary Fairy rushed towards
the flying machine. The circus performance was
coming to an end. Salamander the Clown appea-
red. But Salamander could not resist the temp-
tation. Acting the clown in front of such a

large audience? Out of the question. He began to recite some of his poems. Which were not funny at all. Even worse. They spoke of unpleasant feelings.

The scary fairies became angry. They got ready their blowpipes and pine needles. Great grandmother pulled a bean pole from somewhere. She began to take swipes at Salamander and almost flattened him.

“Let’s run for it!” yelled Owl when she saw Hedgehog and Scary Fairy.

24 They all hurried into the flying machine. Dormouse got behind the controls. The engine roared and the flying machine began to rise.

“We only just made it,” said Mrs. Wild Boar in relief as she looked at the angry faces and blowpipes down below. The whole crew, including Scary Fairy, was on the deck.

Only Salamander stayed below deck. He was furious because the bean pole had hit his tail just as he was reciting his best poem.

“So much effort,” he protested to Squirrel, who came to get some juice. “I even looked for the right words in old poetry books! I squeezed them all into those lines:

pain, joy, loneliness ... I hoped it would touch many hearts.”

“Terrible,” agreed Squirrel.

She grabbed the juice and rushed back on deck.