



Lola AND
Larch

Fix a
Fairy Forest



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nosy
crow





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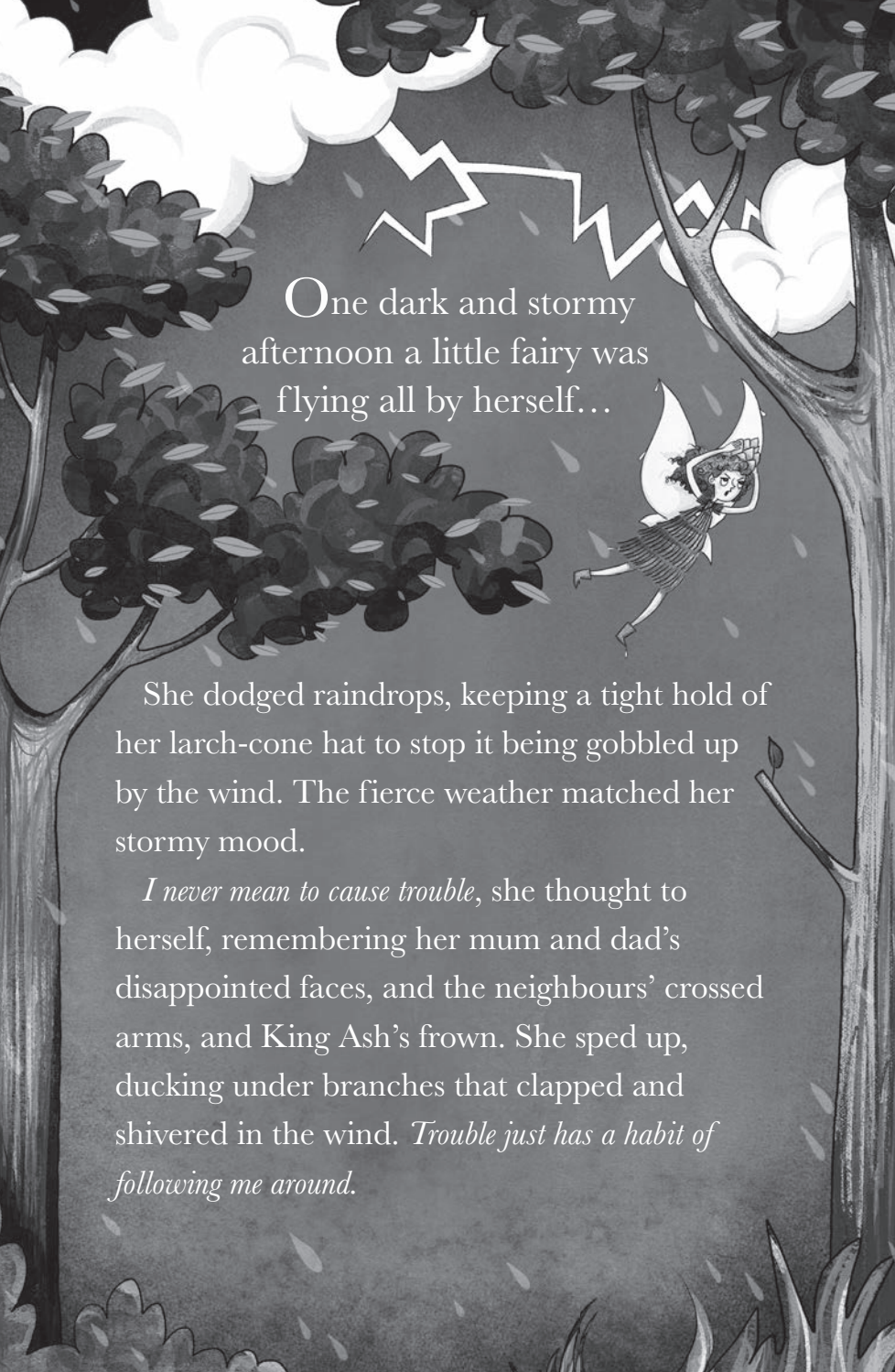
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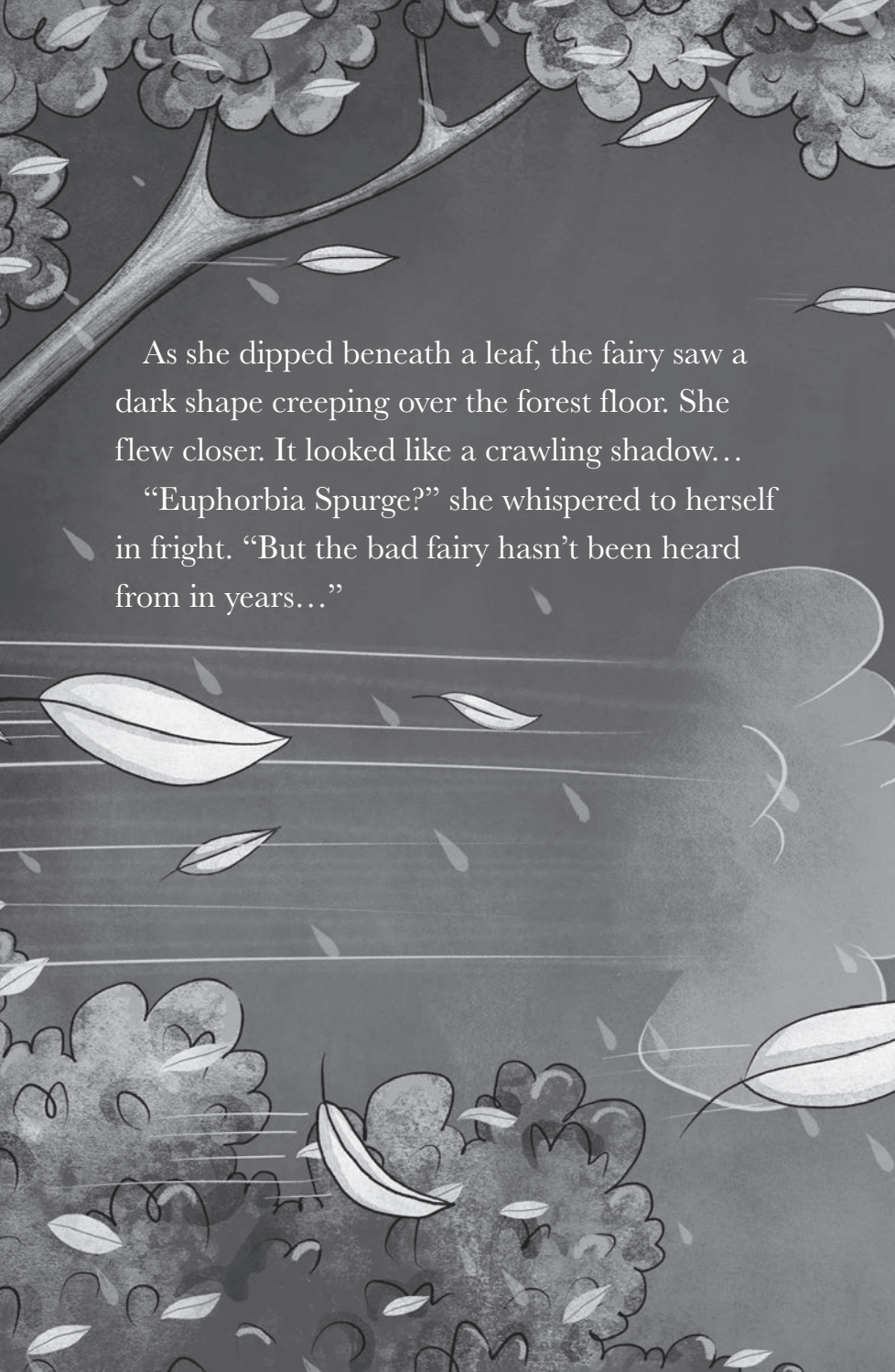




One dark and stormy
afternoon a little fairy was
flying all by herself...

She dodged raindrops, keeping a tight hold of her larch-cone hat to stop it being gobbled up by the wind. The fierce weather matched her stormy mood.

I never mean to cause trouble, she thought to herself, remembering her mum and dad's disappointed faces, and the neighbours' crossed arms, and King Ash's frown. She sped up, ducking under branches that clapped and shivered in the wind. Trouble just has a habit of following me around.



As she dipped beneath a leaf, the fairy saw a dark shape creeping over the forest floor. She flew closer. It looked like a crawling shadow...

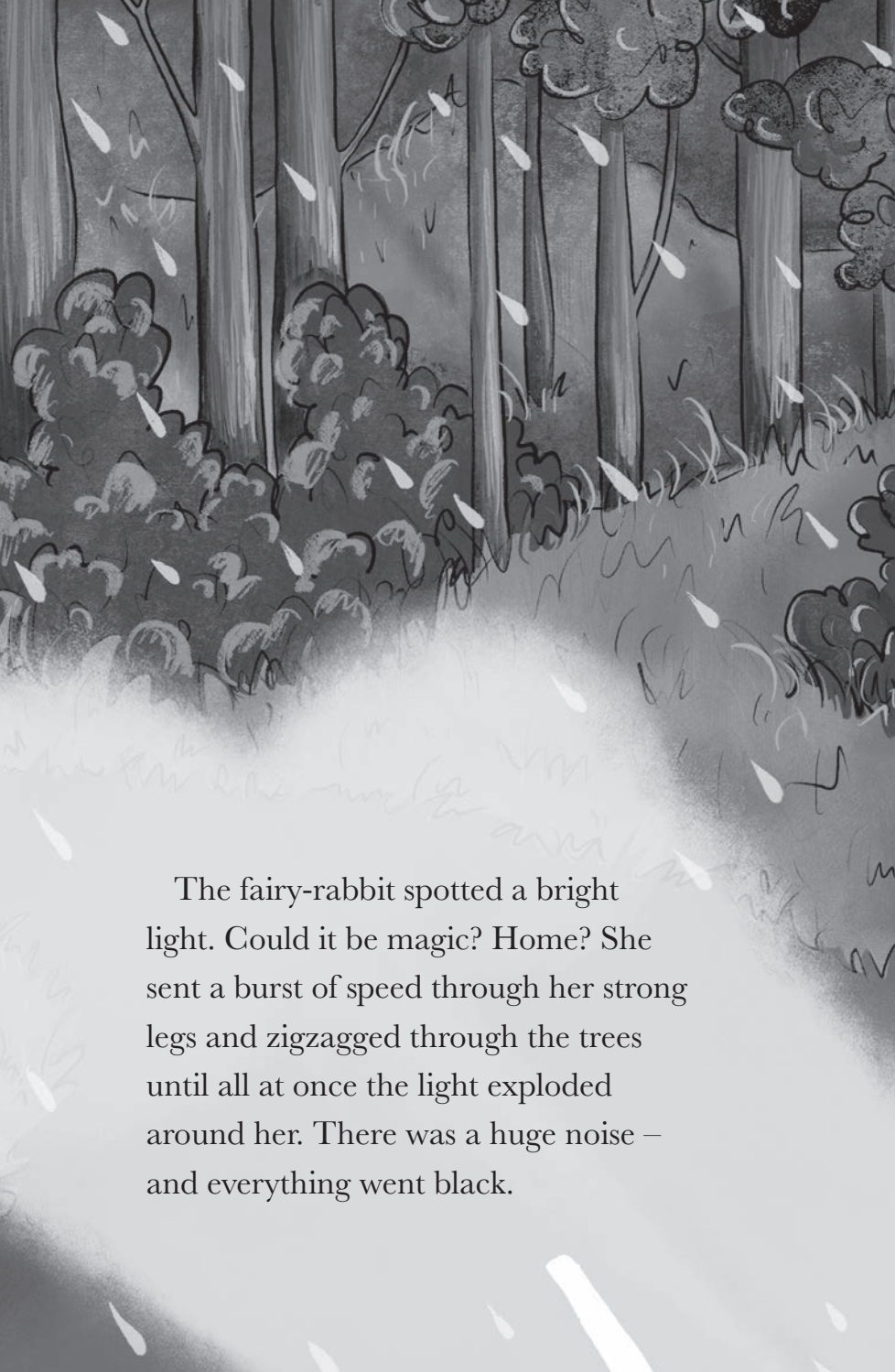
“Euphorbia Spurge?” she whispered to herself in fright. “But the bad fairy hasn’t been heard from in years...”

A sudden gust of wind caught the fairy and flung her far across the forest. She landed hard and tried to fly again, but her rain-soaked wings wouldn't work.



Panicking and afraid, the fairy closed her eyes, wiggled her nose and with a *POP* transformed into a beautiful white rabbit. A crystal charm, shaped like a raindrop and shining with rainbow colours, hung from a pink ribbon round her neck. The rabbit began to run, fast, but all the trees looked the same, and the rain was in her eyes.





The fairy-rabbit spotted a bright light. Could it be magic? Home? She sent a burst of speed through her strong legs and zigzagged through the trees until all at once the light exploded around her. There was a huge noise – and everything went black.





» CHAPTER ONE «

Runaway Rabbit

“Brr! This is a wicked one!” said Lola’s mum as they drove through the storm. The road home from Grandma’s house took them deep into the forest. Thunder rattled the dark sky overhead.

“You guys all right back there?”

Lola glanced at her little brother, Noah, in his car seat. “Yup!” she called back, even though she was a *tiny* bit scared. She knew it was silly. Mum had explained all about thunder before and how it was just air moving high in the sky. But it was difficult to remember all the science-y



bits when she was feeling wobbly inside.

Mum's wipers flicked left-right, left-right, left-right. It was hard to see out, but Mum knew this road really well. She drove on it every day. She had a big powerful car too – as a forest ranger she had to be able to reach any lost people or injured animals that needed her help – so Lola knew they'd be home soon. She tried to relax, imagining being tucked up in bed.

Then something caught Lola's eye. She looked out of her window, searching the shadowy forest. There it was again – a bright white light in the trees! For a minute she thought it might be lightning, maybe even ball lightning, which she'd read about in her *Big Book of Facts*. She looked more closely. The light was weaving quickly between the tree trunks, and as it went it shone with lots of different colours like a rainbow.

That's not lightning, Lola thought, just as the mysterious light dashed out into the road in



front of them.

“Mum!” Lola shouted.

Mum braked hard and Lola jerked forward against the straps of her seat belt. Noah began to wail.

“Sorry, you two!” Mum called, turning to check on them. “Is everyone OK?”

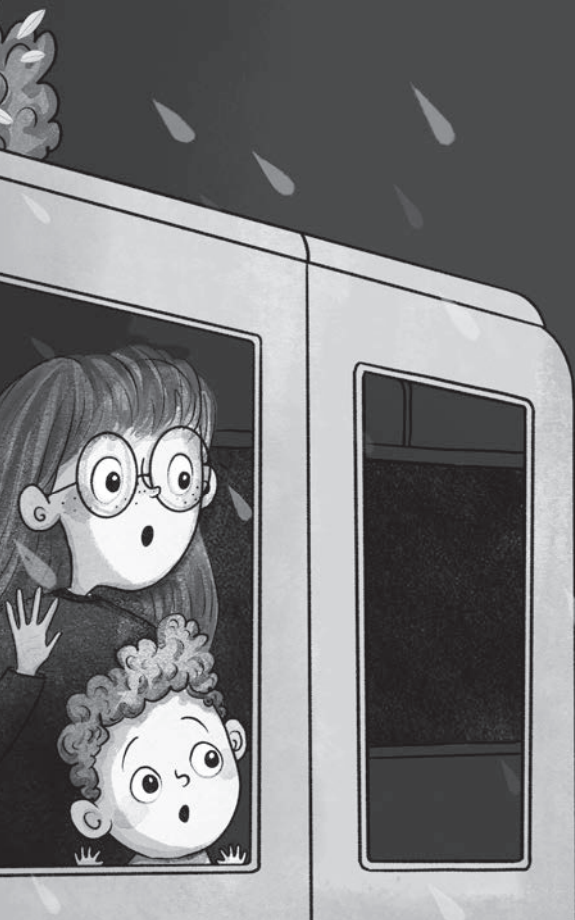
Lola nodded, and Noah quietened as Mum reached back to hand him his favourite squeaky toy.

“Was that an animal? I need to check,” Mum said, looking at Lola. “Can you take care of your brother for a few minutes?” Mum flipped up the hood of her raincoat and opened her door.

Lola watched her mum hurry through the lashing rain and shivered. She peered into the forest but everything was dark. She looked back at Mum. In the glare of the car headlights, Mum bent down and picked something up. Something with long white ears and a tuft of tail.

Lola could see the rabbit was wearing a collar. The rabbit's fur was so bright white that it almost glowed in the car's lights. *A rabbit!* Lola loved all animals, but she especially loved rabbits.

“Bunny, bunny!” Noah shouted, pointing out of the window.



Mum squelched to the back of the car and opened the boot. “There we are,” she said, popping the rabbit into an empty animal carrier. “Soon have you good as new.”

Lola wriggled round in her seat, trying to catch a glimpse of it, but all she could see was her mum’s hood, shiny with rain.





The boot clanged shut, then Mum flung open her door and jumped back into the driving seat, shrugging off her soaking raincoat. “Phew!” she said. “The rabbit’s just dazed, I think. We’ll check her over at home.”

Lightning crackled through the sky as they drove on but Lola didn’t feel afraid any more. A fizz of excitement bubbled through her tummy. This beautiful rabbit was coming home with them. And maybe it would stay!



Mum’s animal sanctuary was right beside their house. Here she could look after animals in an emergency while they waited for Amy, the local vet, to examine them.

As soon as they arrived home, Mum carried Noah and the rabbit to the sanctuary while Lola ran behind them, huddled against the rain.

“Will she be OK?” Lola asked as Mum placed the rabbit on the examination table.

“She’s been very lucky,” Mum replied, carefully



checking the rabbit through its silky white fur.
“She’s just shocked. I’ll ask Amy to pop round in the morning to give her a look-over.”

“What’s that on her collar?” Lola asked.

Attached to it on a silver loop was a raindrop pendant. It caught the light from the examination lamp and turned it into hundreds of tiny rainbows.

“Wow,” Lola whispered, thinking of the light she’d seen among the trees. The white light of the rabbit’s fur and the rainbow light of this crystal...

“What a pretty collar,” Mum said. She pulled her phone from her pocket and took a photo of the rabbit, who stayed still with her eyes closed. “And that means whoever this girl is, she has an owner. We’ll have to find out where she came from and get her back home. I’ll put this photo up around town tomorrow.”

“But she came from the forest,” Lola said.
“I saw her, Mum.”

Mum frowned. “That can’t be right. How



could you have seen her?”

“She was shining like lightning,” Lola said.

“Like rainbow lightning, moving really fast.”

“OK...” Mum frowned, a small smile on her lips. “I think it’s time for bed. For our new rabbit friend, and for all of us.”

“But, Mum—” Lola began.

“Let’s talk about it in the morning,” Mum said.

“Now, we’ve got to make our guest comfortable.”

Mum let Lola pick the hutch. There were plenty spare. Mum’s sanctuary only had two





animals recovering in it – a squirrel and an owl. The hutch Lola chose had a shaded part for sleeping in and loads of room. They tucked the rabbit into the fresh hay. She kept her eyes closed most of the time, just twitching her little nose as she breathed. Lola stroked her just before Mum closed the hutch. She wasn't glowing now – she was just ordinary white.

I hope you'll be shining again tomorrow, Lola thought. Then Mum will have to believe me.