

Lola AND Larch

Make a
Winter Wish



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crow



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For this, my tenth book in as many years,
there's only one person who deserves the
dedication. Polly, this book is for you.

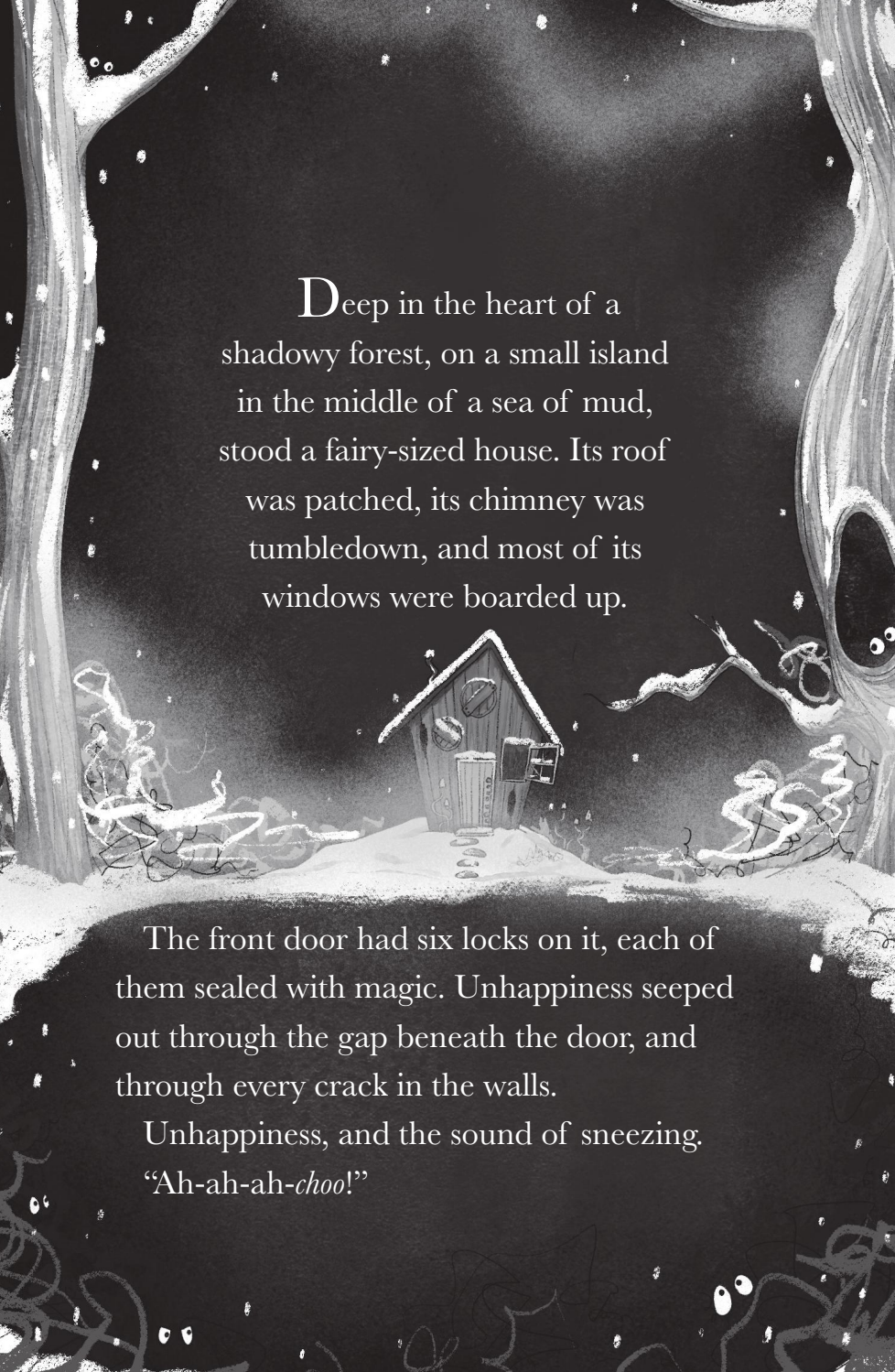
S.O.

For Ellen and Anna, I feel very lucky to have
sisters that double up as best friends.

R.S.







Deep in the heart of a shadowy forest, on a small island in the middle of a sea of mud, stood a fairy-sized house. Its roof was patched, its chimney was tumbledown, and most of its windows were boarded up.

The front door had six locks on it, each of them sealed with magic. Unhappiness seeped out through the gap beneath the door, and through every crack in the walls.

Unhappiness, and the sound of sneezing.
“Ah-ah-ah-*choo!*”

Then there came the deep, gurgling rattle of someone blowing their nose, and out of the one window that hadn't been boarded up, a used cobweb handkerchief soared, landing with a *splat* in the mud.

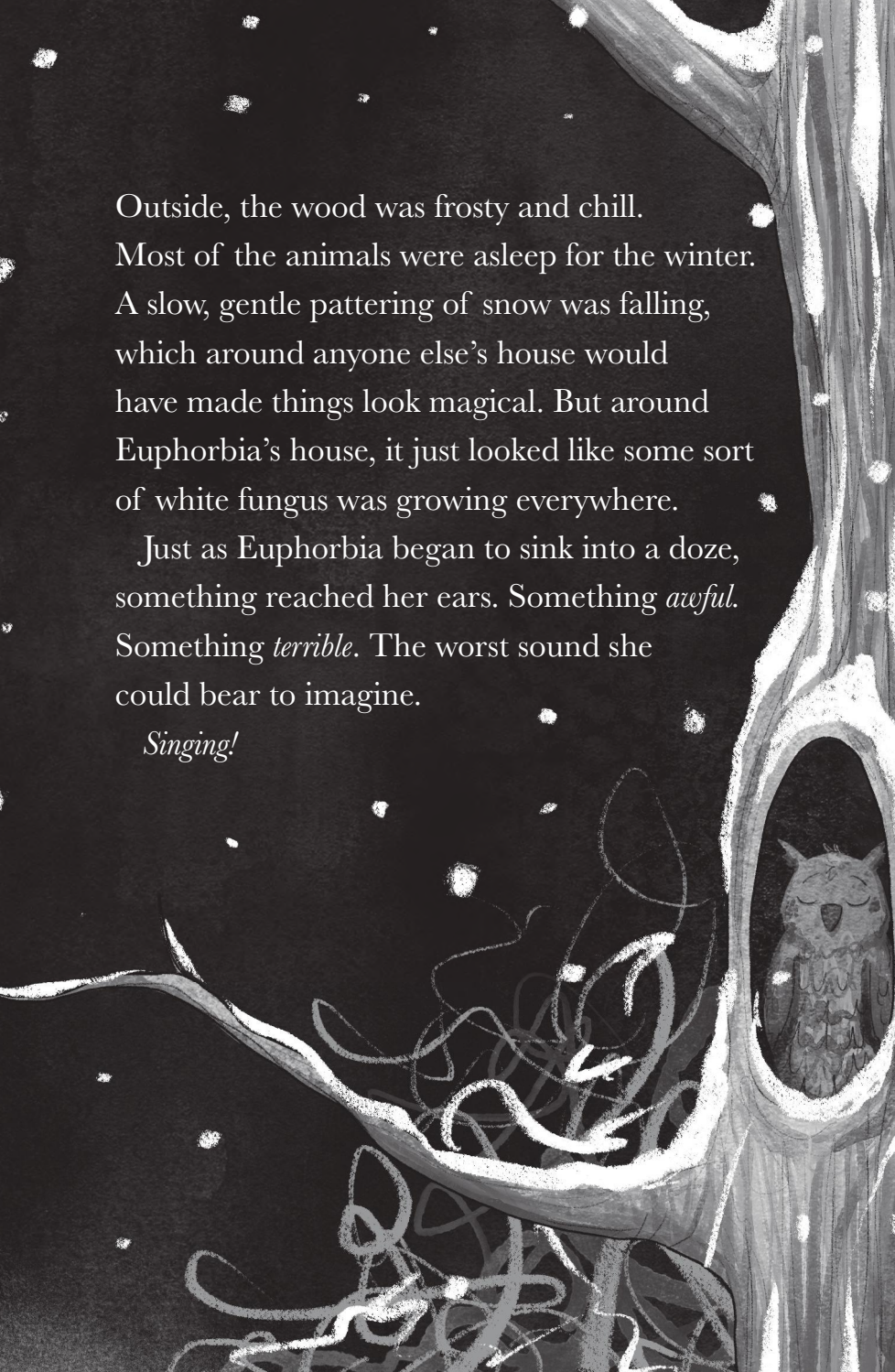
Euphorbia Spurge, wrapped in a large rhubarb leaf, sat in her armchair, a stack of cobweb handkerchiefs within reach.



Outside, the wood was frosty and chill. Most of the animals were asleep for the winter. A slow, gentle pattering of snow was falling, which around anyone else's house would have made things look magical. But around Euphorbia's house, it just looked like some sort of white fungus was growing everywhere.

Just as Euphorbia began to sink into a doze, something reached her ears. Something *awful*. Something *terrible*. The worst sound she could bear to imagine.

Singing!

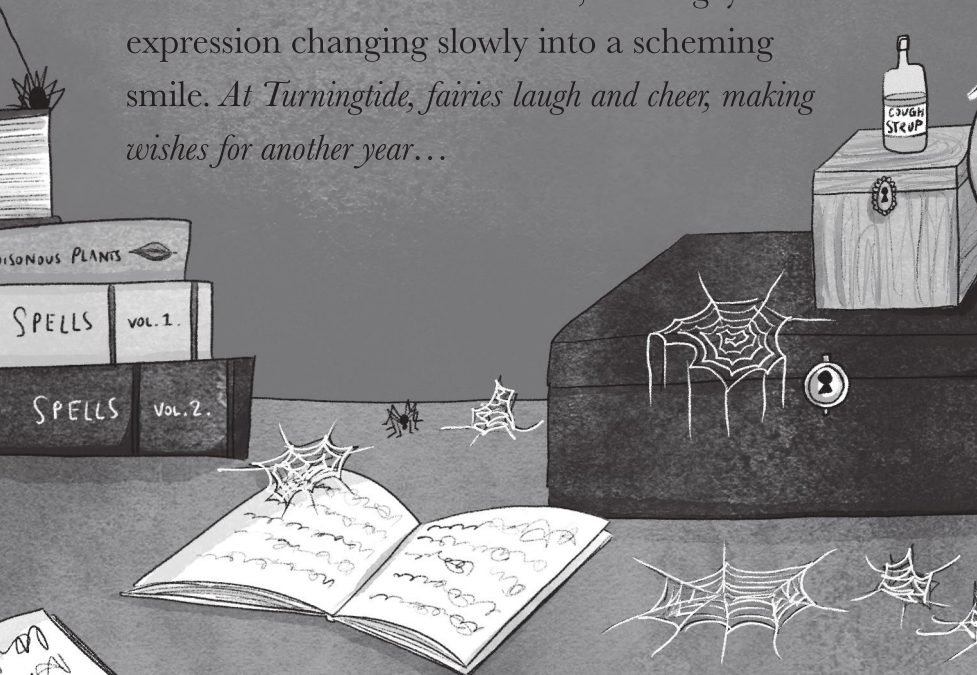




Her eyes popped open and she set her teeth in a growl. “*Fairies!*” she muttered. She’d moved into the middle of the forest to get *away* from the fairy village and their silly songs – and now their noise was following her! But then Euphorbia realised something. *It’s almost Turningtide.*

That was probably why the fairies were – she swallowed hard, looking like she was about to throw up – *singing* their happy songs. They were getting ready for the turning of the year, and Euphorbia knew what that meant.

She sank back into her chair, her angry expression changing slowly into a scheming smile. *At Turningtide, fairies laugh and cheer, making wishes for another year...*





Euphorbia pulled her rhubarb leaf tight and settled into her chair. She screwed up first one cobweb handkerchief and then another, stuffing them into her ears, and got comfortable. *And they'll be giddy, and silly, and not paying attention... The perfect time for me to have a little fun! We'll see if they're still singing when I'm finished with them.*

Outside, the snow fell more thickly, and the sea of mud around the house bubbled and burped, and the sounds of sneezing were replaced by a low, menacing cackle...

