

“Aroint thee, strangers!”
the weak squeak cried. “Eek!
Aroint thee, anon!”

Aroint thee means begone, you.
Go away.

This was unexpected.

“What?” asked Poodle, but What?
thought Poodle meant him,
and he barked, “What-what-what-what?”

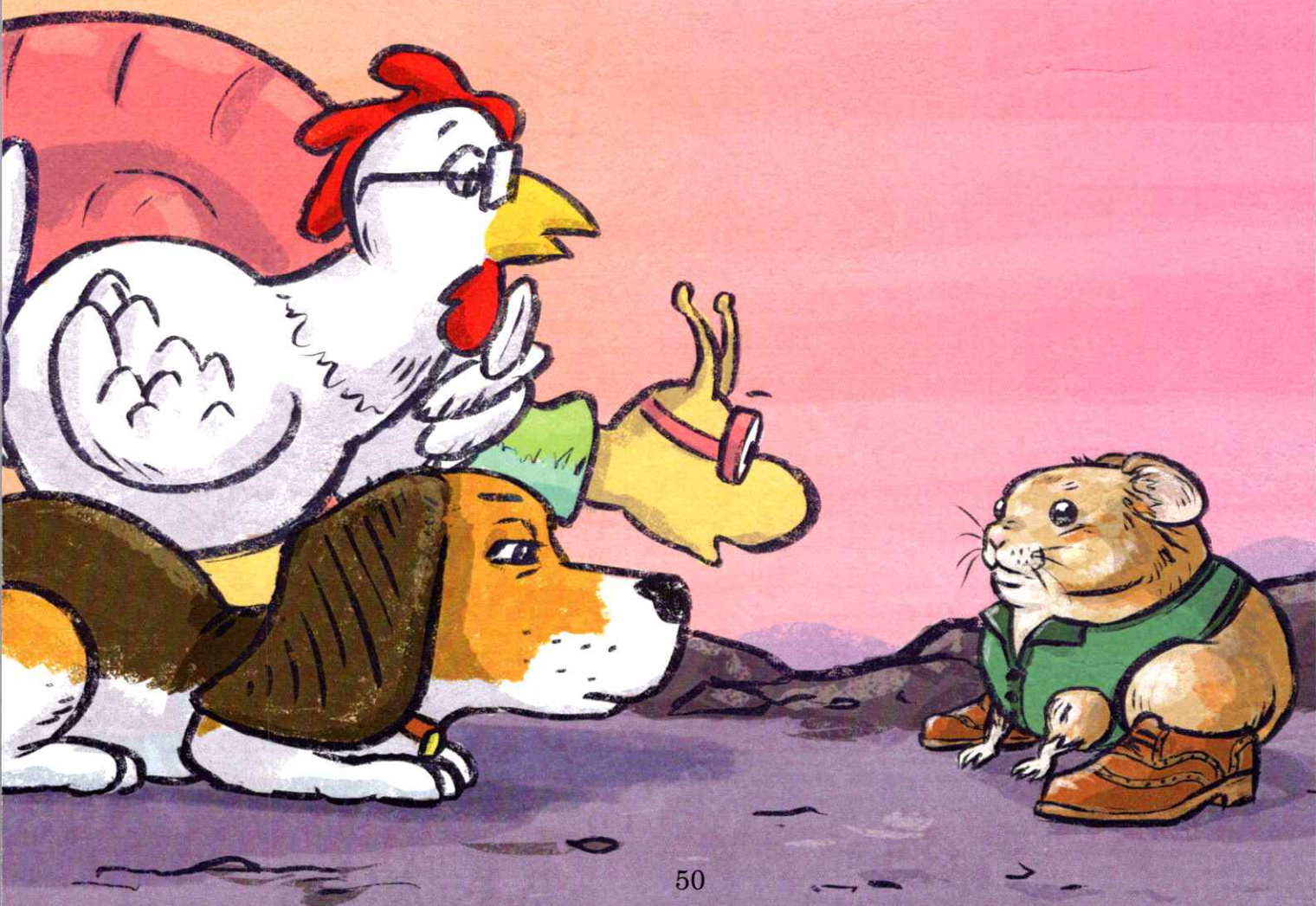
“Aroint thee?” cried Poodle.
“No one says *aroint* now!
Let me point it out.
No one’s said *aroint*
for hundreds of years!
And I know *anon* means now.
We all know that. We read.
Where are you?
Who are you?” cried Poodle.
“Show yourself!”



And out from the stone
popped a pika!

It was as big as a kitten.
As *little*, I should have written.
It looked like a rabbit,
with a courteous habit
and little round ears.
It wore a vest
and brogues on its feet.
It boinged to another rock.

The three stood, open-mouthed,
and stared at this little terror.



"I'm Gramlet!" squeaked the pika.
"To aroint thee or not to aroint thee,
that is the question! It's antique!"

"Thee?" cried Poodle.
"Now, look-ah here, kid.
Just say *you*. And we will
not *aroint ourselves*, see? We're
climbing this hill,
toward that blue peak. So there.
Aroint yourself anon!
Be gone now!"

This was not a good start.
It was not the civilized way
to meet someone.
They looked down, embarrassed
at their own rough words,
and then, according to the gentle rules
of courtesy, they introduced
themselves like gentle ones.

