

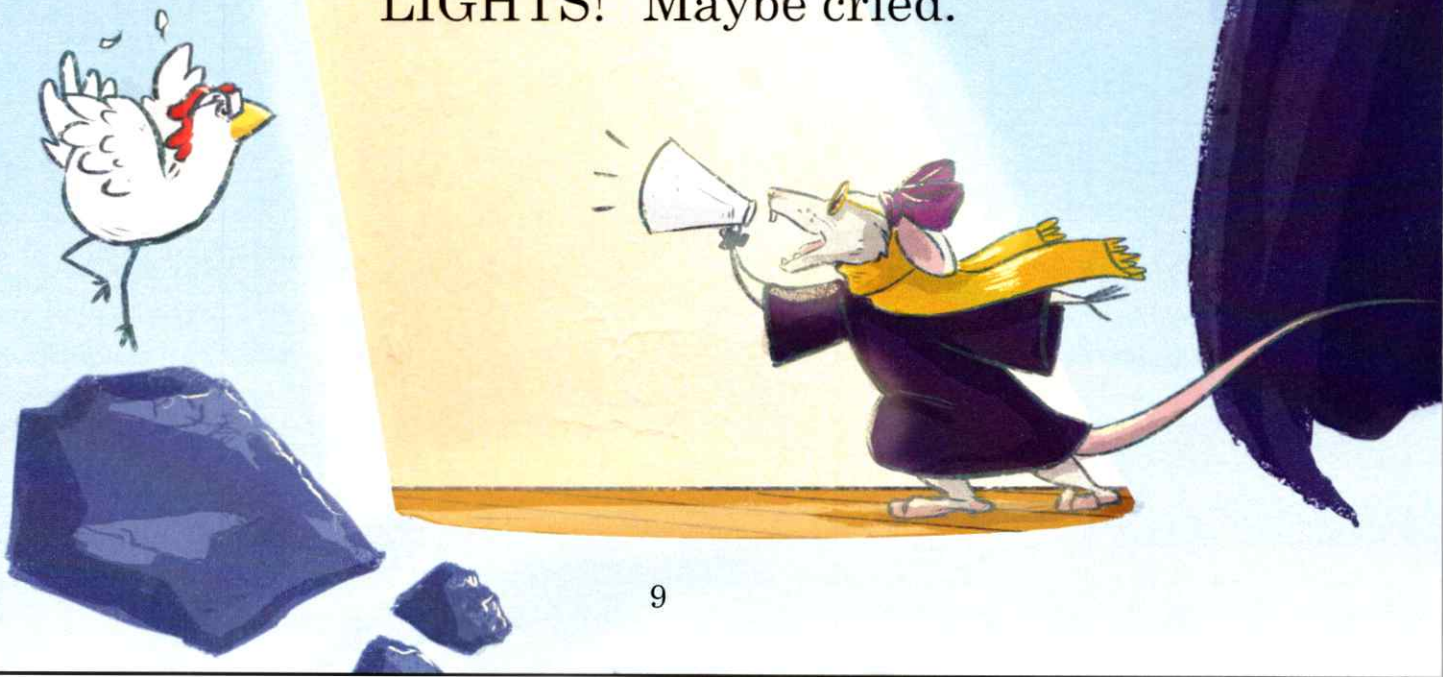
Poems? the author wondered.
Poems? Wait! You're no poet.
You don't write poems. Wait!

He wrote another rock
for Poodle to jump to.
It kept him busy,
writing those rocks ahead of Poodle.
He didn't want Poodle
jumping to a blank line.

Suddenly, "CUT!" yelled Maybe,
the director of this theater,
bursting from the curtain
at the side of the stage.

Director?
The author had forgotten
that this is a play!

"LIGHTS!" Maybe cried.





The lights snapped on—*zap, crackle, and pop*—
and the mountain page became a wooden stage.

They were in a theater?

Yes, and it was freezing in the theater.

The air conditioner was blasting.

“Poodle,” Maybe called, “I need more emotion
in your lines! More commotion like the ocean!

More emphasis on POEMS!”

Poodle froze and stared at Maybe.

He tried to clear his mind.

This is a play? It had all seemed so real.

Go away, Maybe, the author wrote.

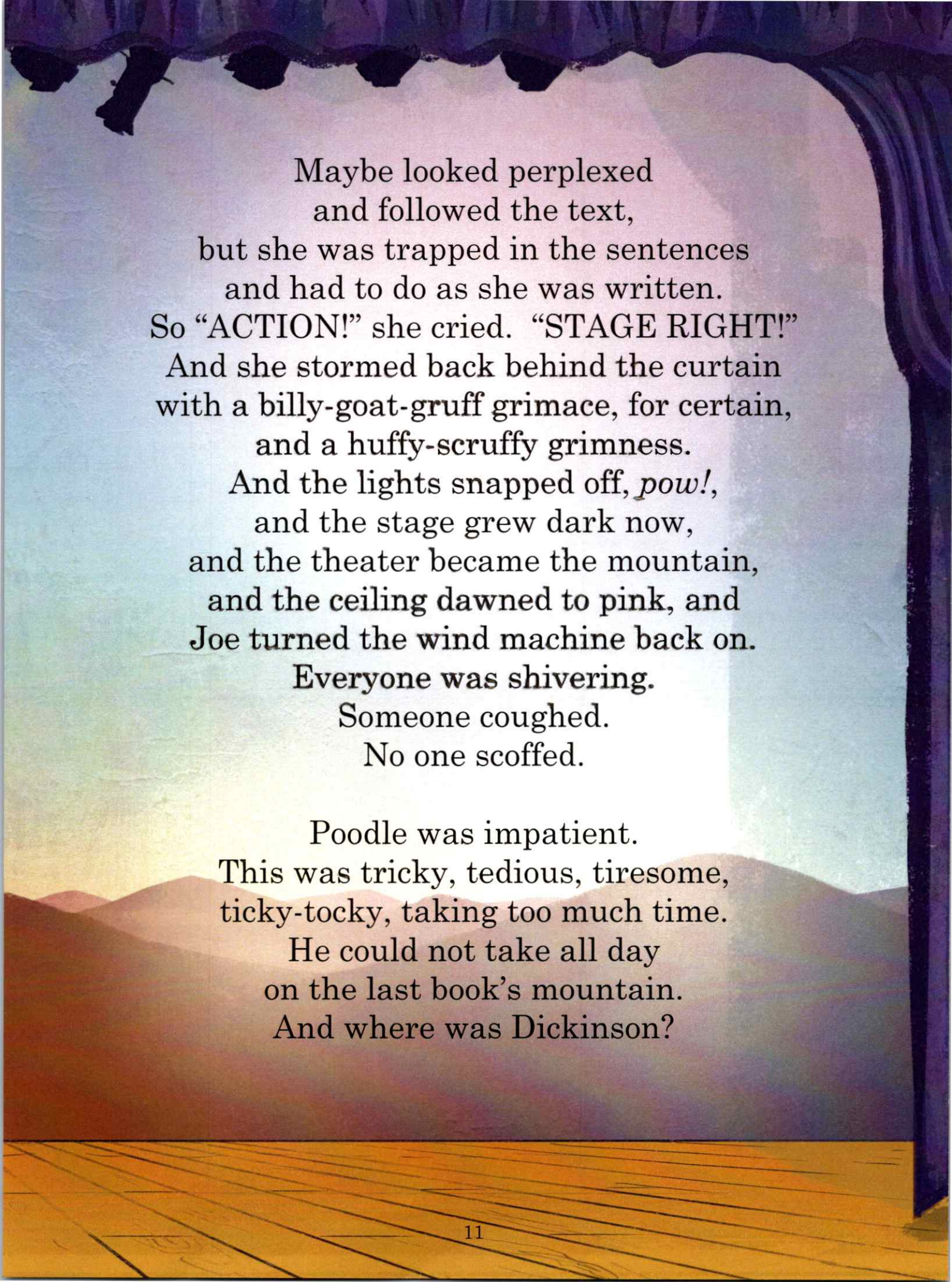
This is not the time.

I know this is a play, but

we’re busy on this mountain.

Go away. You can direct later.





Maybe looked perplexed
and followed the text,
but she was trapped in the sentences
and had to do as she was written.
So “ACTION!” she cried. “STAGE RIGHT!”
And she stormed back behind the curtain
with a billy-goat-gruff grimace, for certain,
and a huffy-scruffy grimness.
And the lights snapped off, *pow!*,
and the stage grew dark now,
and the theater became the mountain,
and the ceiling dawned to pink, and
Joe turned the wind machine back on.
Everyone was shivering.
Someone coughed.
No one scoffed.

Poodle was impatient.
This was tricky, tedious, tiresome,
ticky-tocky, taking too much time.
He could not take all day
on the last book’s mountain.
And where was Dickinson?