



But this was theater,
so stage night did not last long.
Mornings come, as you know,
and this one was no different.

Poodle opened one eye,
Burgull opened a *g* and a *d*,
Dickinson hummed a *whirrrr*,
and What? said, "What?"

Pink light shone through the interstices
of the yellow leaves and warmed
the purple shadows.

The friends rustled left, and bustled right,
and listened as the bird discussed tweedly-dee
from that long branch.

"I hear you," said Poodle to the bird.
"Let's get going."

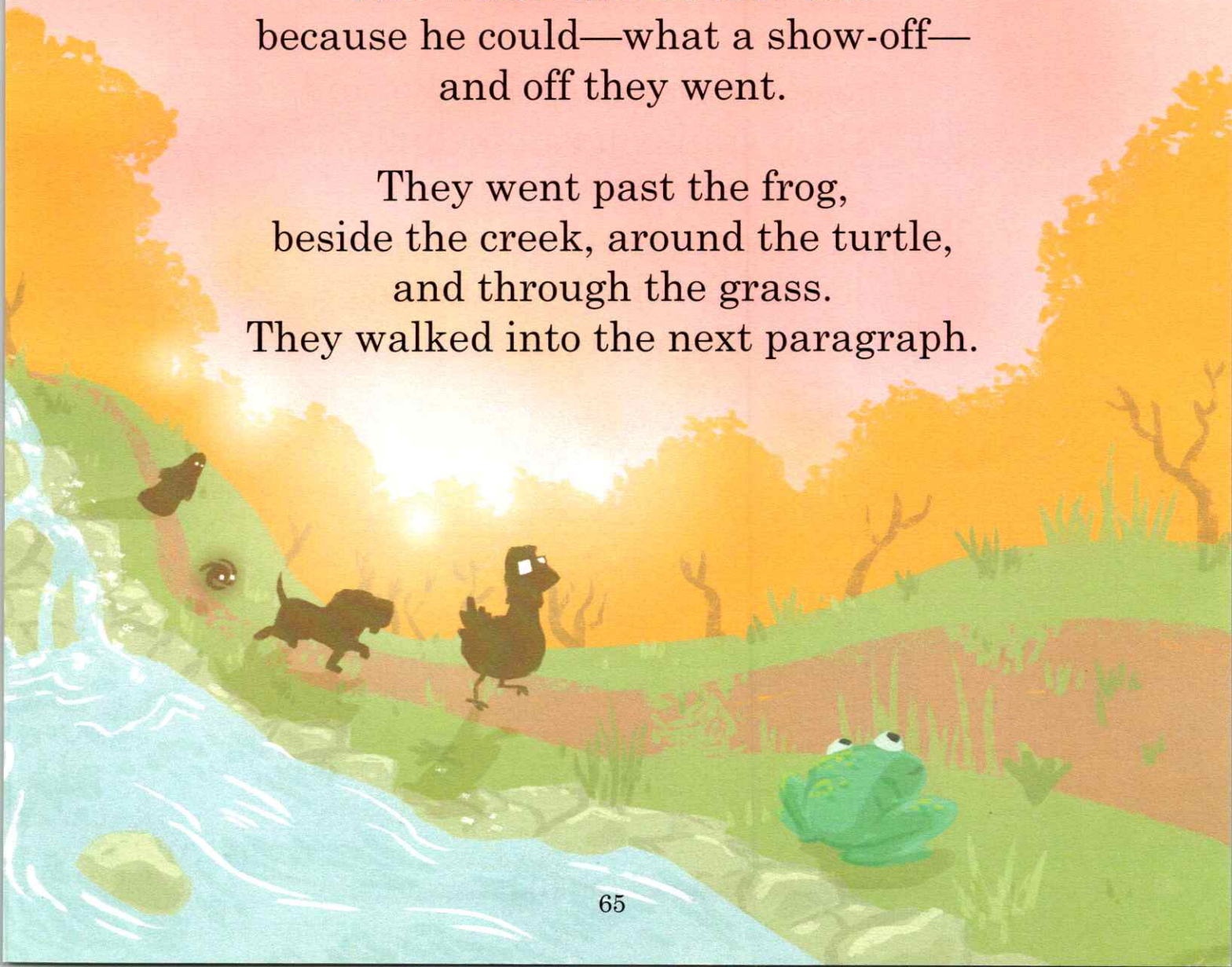


Everyone gathered for the first steps
of the new fall morning.

But first steps aren't easy for all monsters.

The idea of steps was to move their
left feet forward, except that Burgull
had no feet, and Dickinson had no feet,
so Burgull pushed some consonants,
some *m*'s and *n*'s like toes,
and Dickinson pushed out a zephyr, a *fff*,
and What? moved four feet
because he could—what a show-off—
and off they went.

They went past the frog,
beside the creek, around the turtle,
and through the grass.
They walked into the next paragraph.





Soon, the road less traveled by
began to brighten, and they saw
a glow of blue light far ahead,
like a blue circle in a yellow field,
and they came out of the yellow
to a green garden path.

It was the second portal.

Hovering and humming above them,
a blue poem of words appeared.
There were five groups of words.

“Those are stanzas,” Poodle said.
“Each stanza has four lines.”

They stood, their faces raised,
looking at the five stanzas.
The poem said:

