WHO STOLE THE POTATOES?

A TALE ABOUT THE WORLD'S FIRST PETTING ZOO

Story & Pictures by **KASIA POCHLOPIEN**

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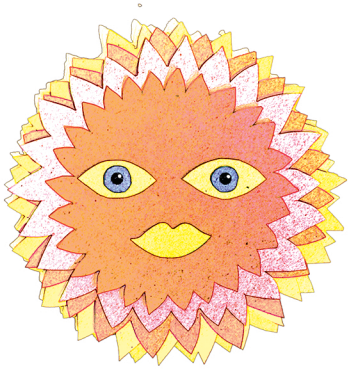

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ISBN 979-8-218-27451-1

Published by KisiKasi Press
www.kisikasipress.com

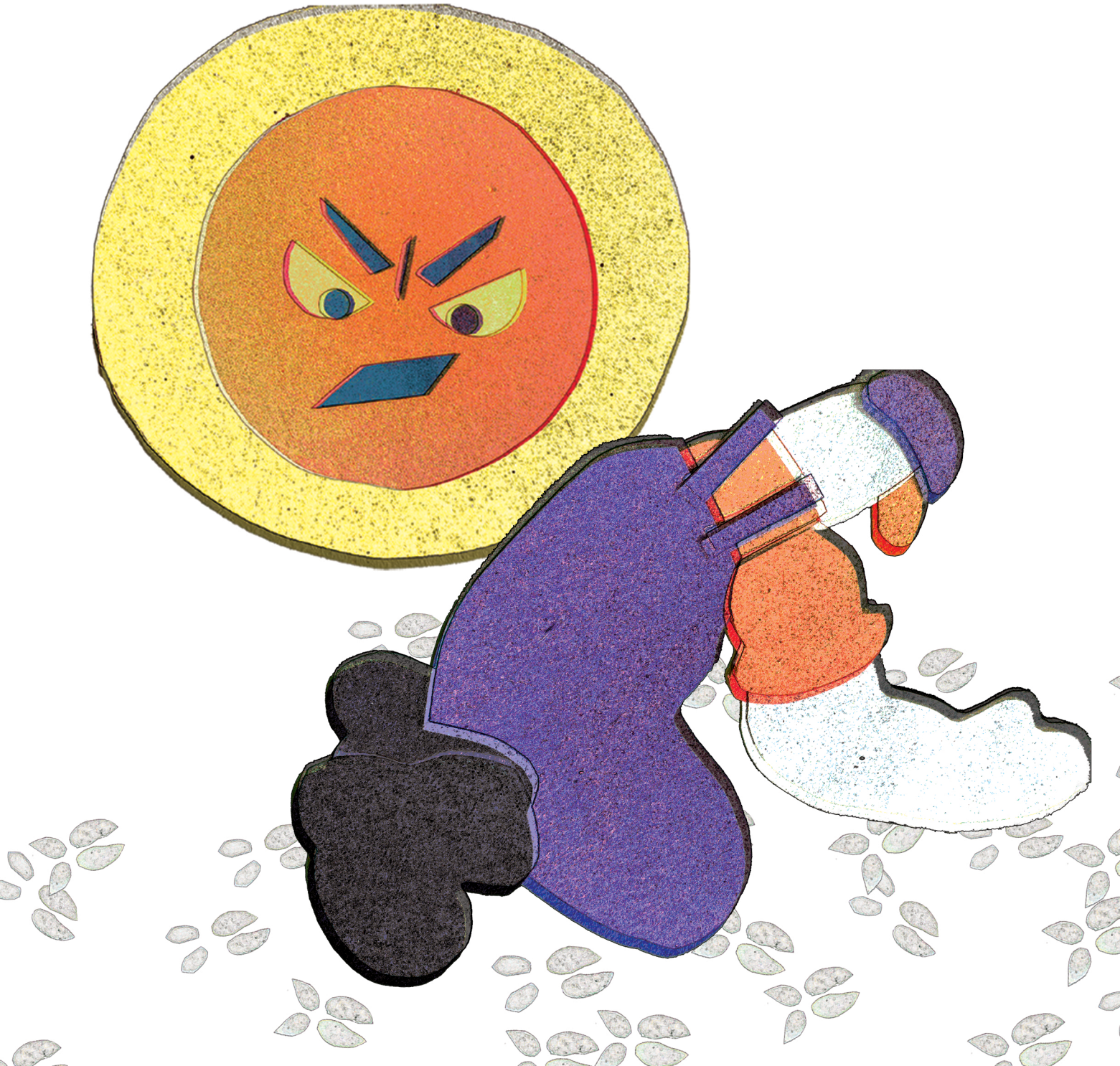
The artwork was made using paper cut-outs and then digitally altered.

For my father

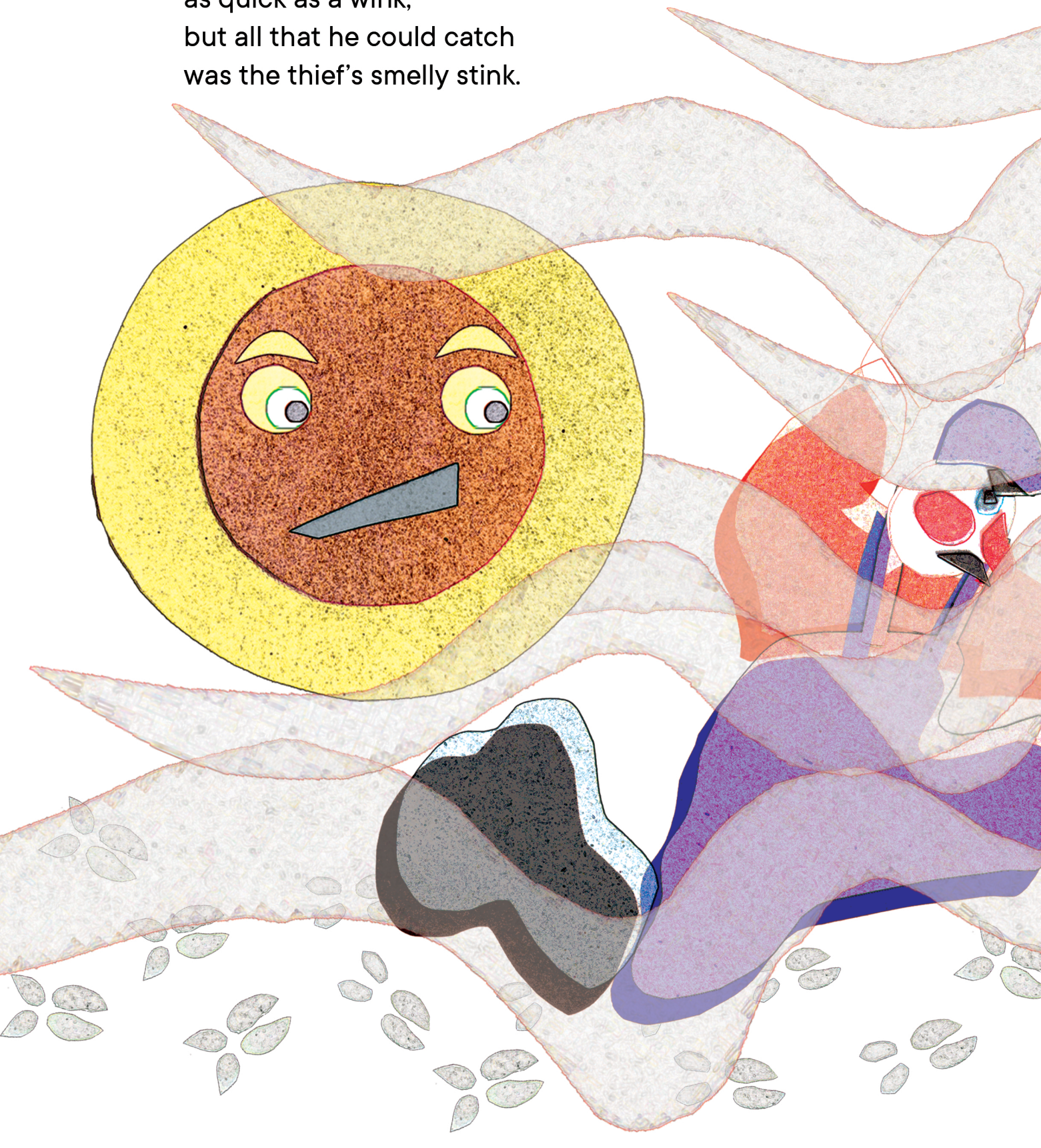
It was a long, long time ago,
in an old farmhouse on a hill,
that a grumpy, old farmer
grew potatoes with great skill.

Till one late summer day,
he wasn't very thrilled
when he found no potatoes
on his potato field.

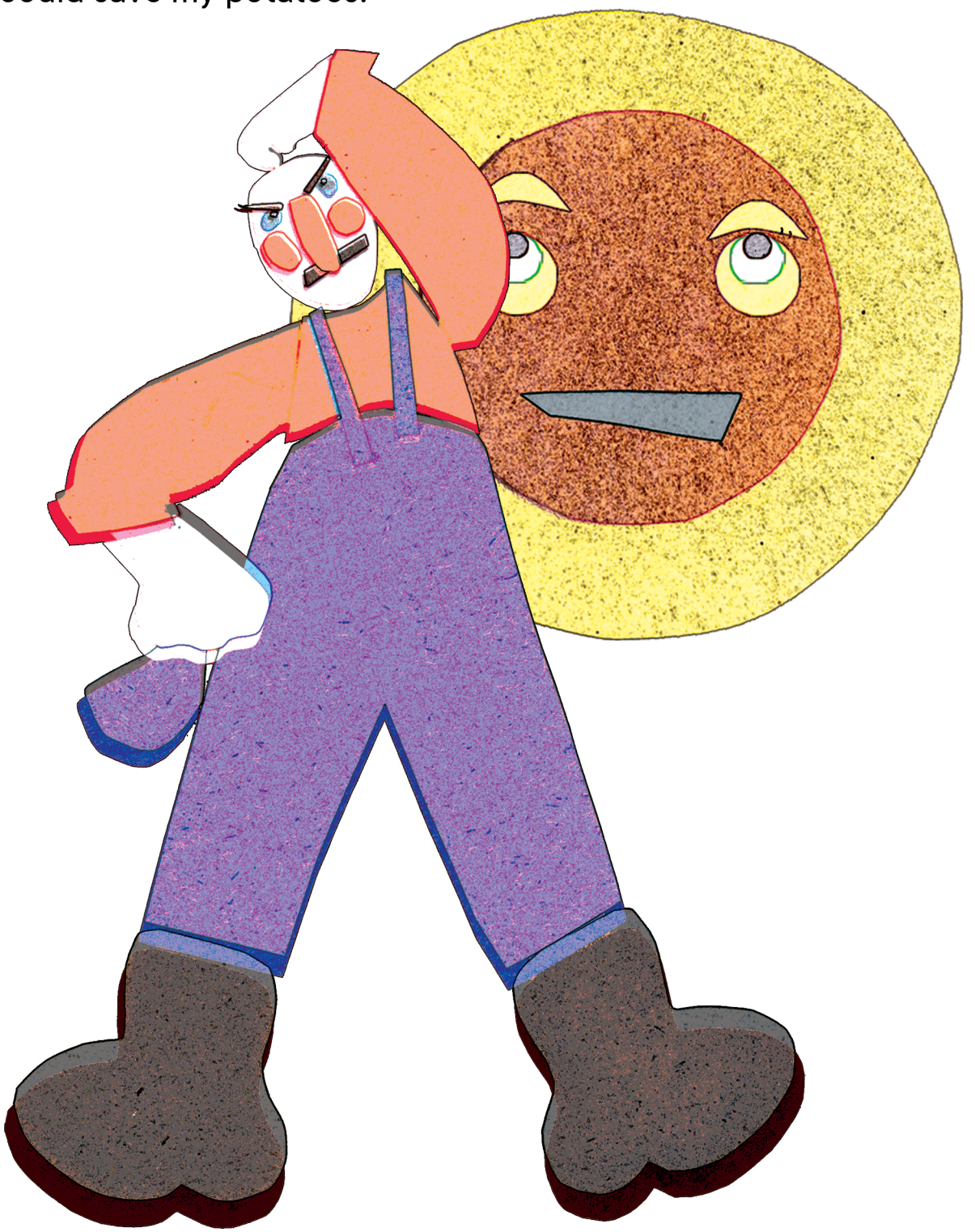
“**W**ho stole my potatoes?”
The farmer shrieked, ready for a hunt,
while spotting some footprints
and a sound of a distant grunt.



He hurried up and ran
as quick as a wink,
but all that he could catch
was the thief's smelly stink.



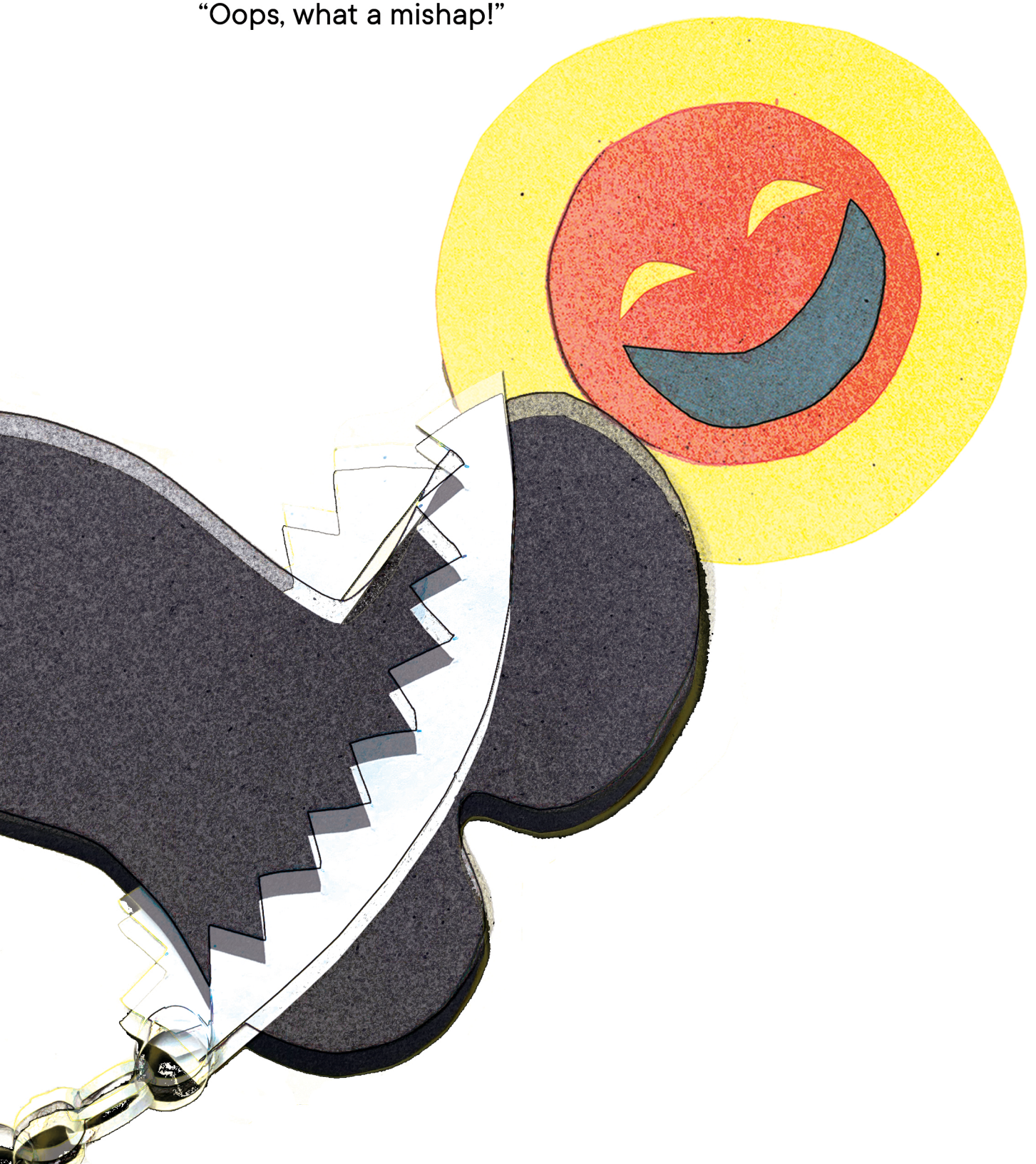
Then he thought for a moment,
“Maybe a few scarecrows,
really big and very loud,
could save my potatoes!”



“No scarecrows, but traps!
Poor thief!” The farmer laughed.
And hiding in nearby bushes
waited for the thief to go past.

He waited and waited,
then tired, he took a short nap,
when a close grunting noise
woke him suddenly up.

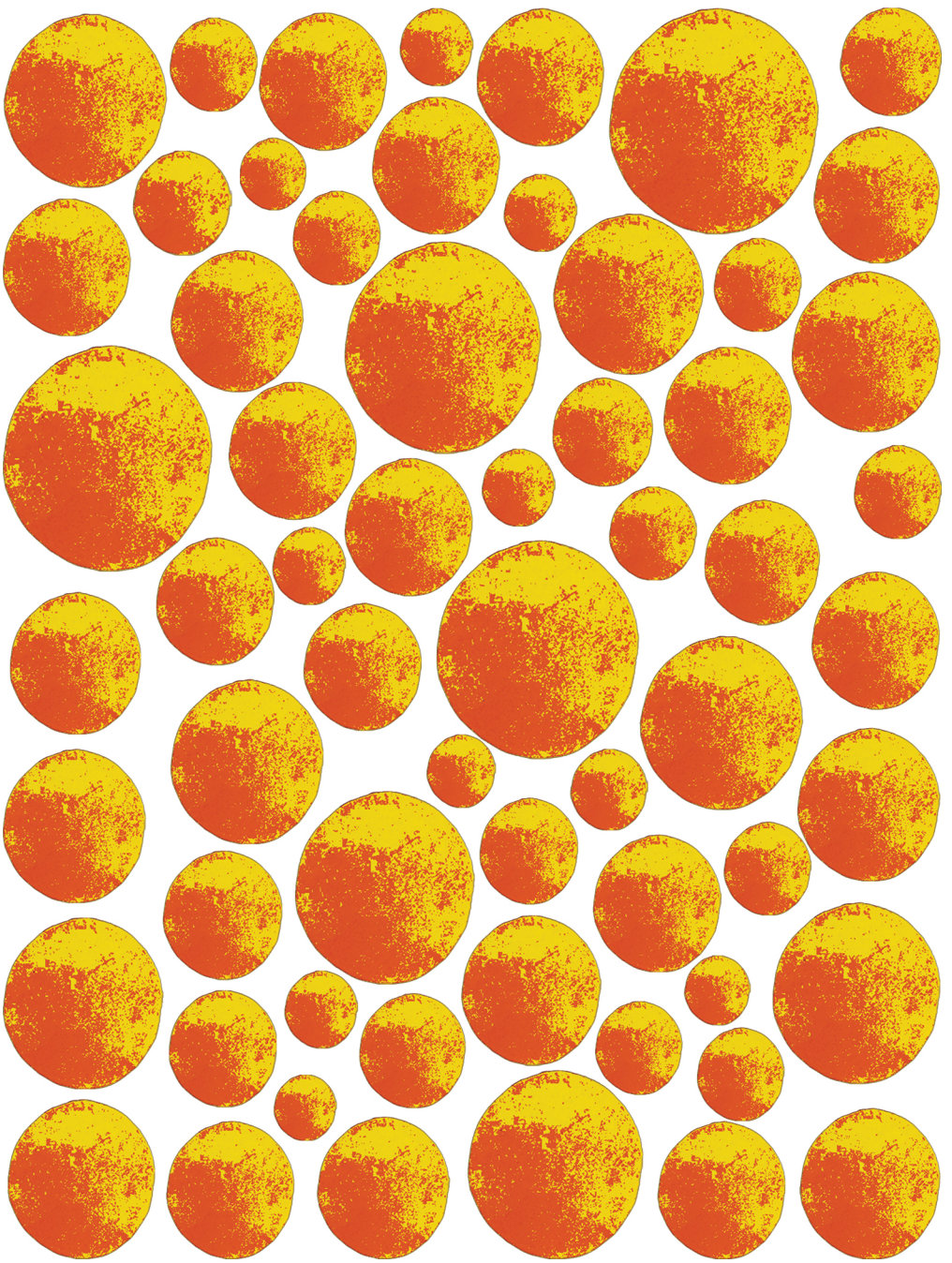
He jumped up and... *Snap!*
he stepped right in his own trap.
The thief burst out laughing.
“Oops, what a mishap!”



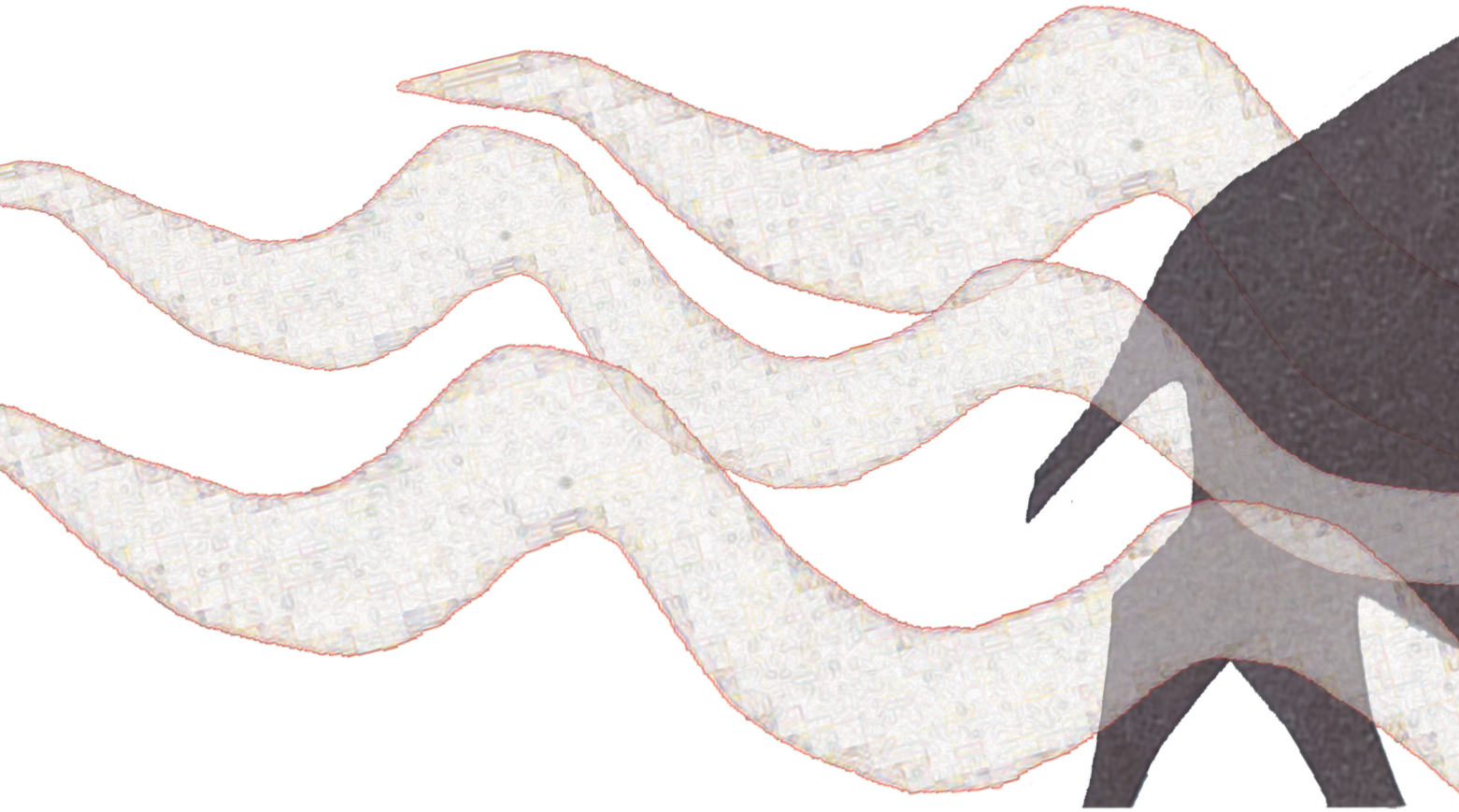
Empty traps, ruined field—
the farmer lost his temper.
He shook his fist and swore,
“NO MORE POTATOES, EVER!”

If there were no potatoes, then no potato thieves.
The farmer quit.
But he did miss something,
just a little tiny bit.

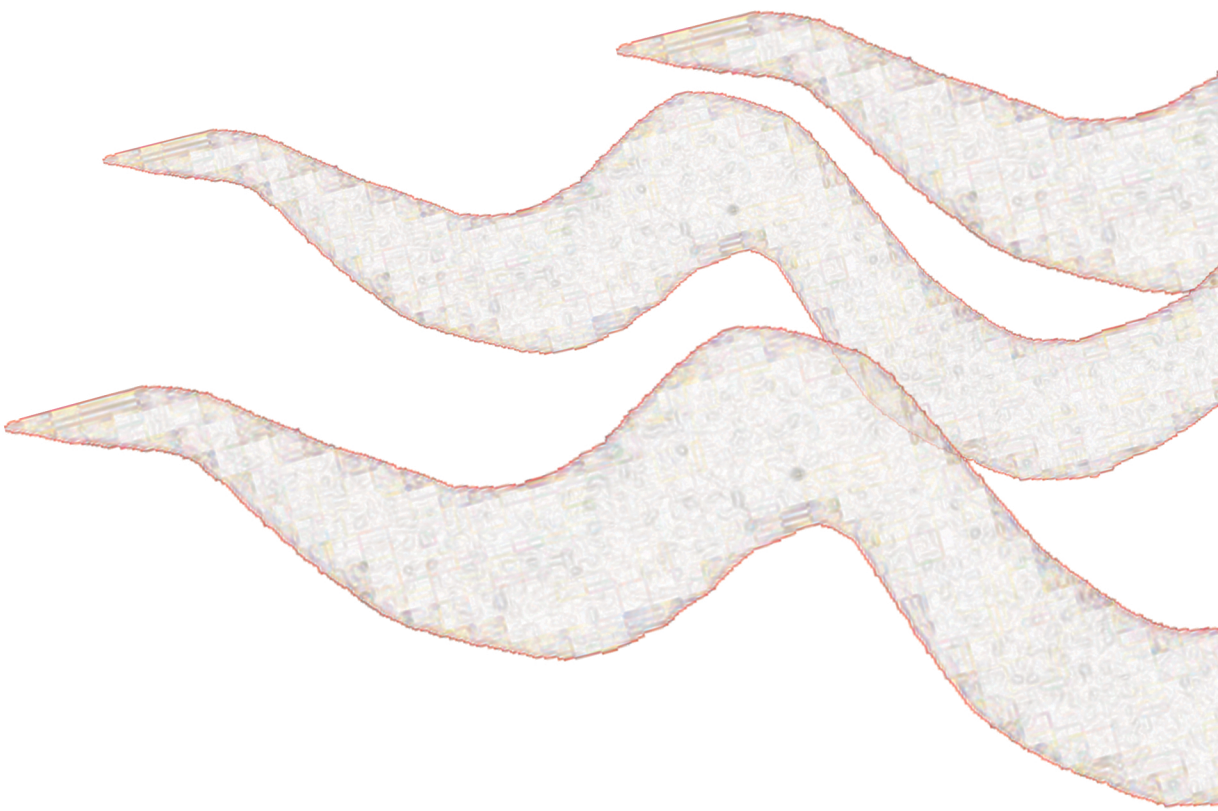
So when a year went by,
the farmer grew potatoes again.
“Here, you stinky robber,” he said.
“Have as many as you can carry, then!”



But the robber didn't have fun.
No, it was not fun at all.
Stealing potatoes like that,
with the farmer's approval.

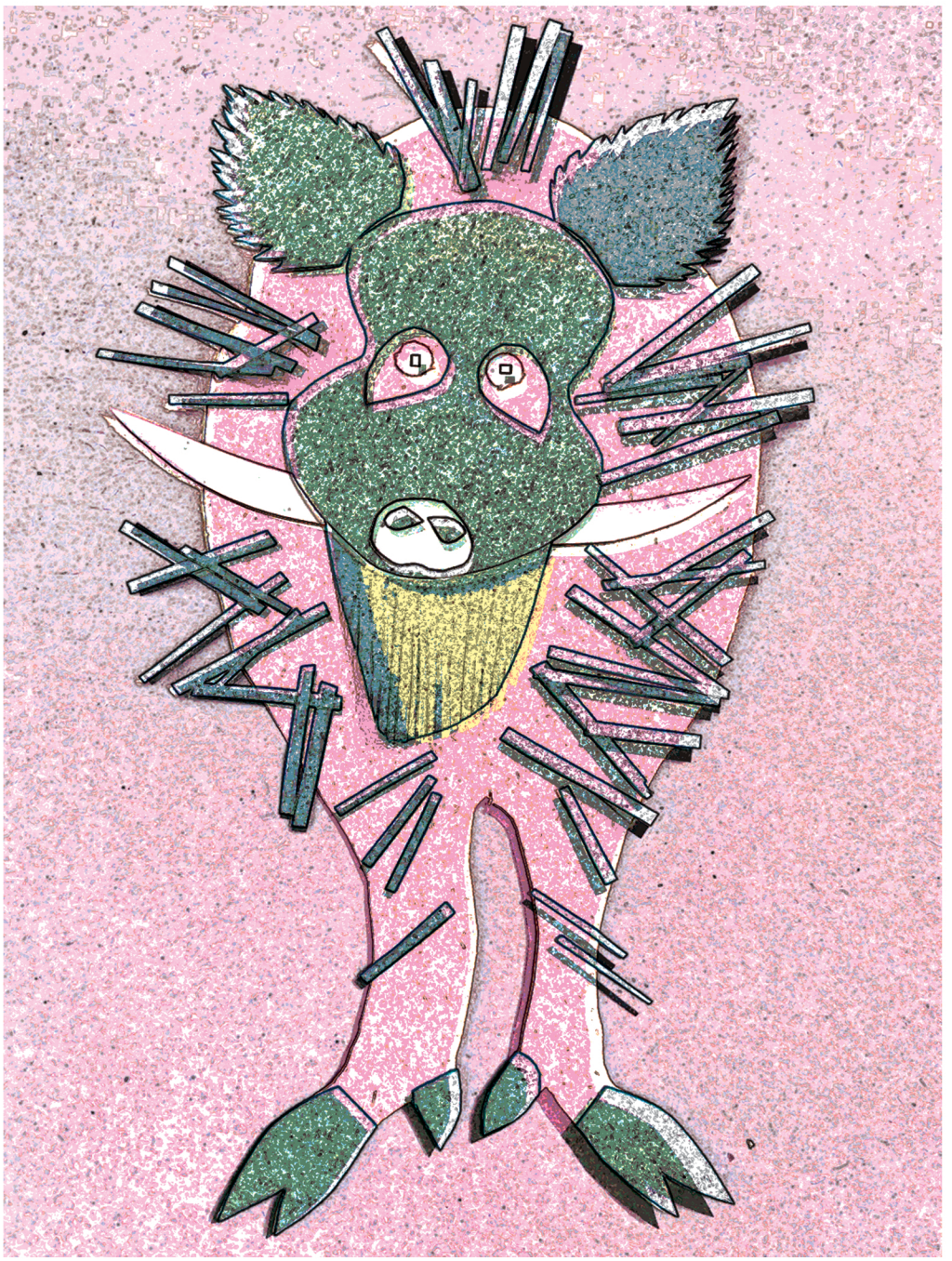


So one late summer day,
the thief without a name
came to the farmer's house
and said, grunting nobly (but a bit ashamed),



“Hello, sir. I have come from your field.
Could you do me a favor, please?
Let me earn my potatoes,
not take them with such ease.”

The farmer took a look
at the sharp tasks in a big jaw,
the black fur and the cloven hooves,
and said, “Aha! Here you are!”



The farmer said, “Well, I do need help.”
The hog grunted, “I can dig!”
“Take a bath first,” ordered the farmer.
“From now on you are a Pig!”

They worked side by side
hard and calm and quiet,
until one day the pig remarked shy,
“I think it’s time to change our diet.”

“Potatoes with corn, yummy!
That’s something we could try.”
And, with that, they grew corn
as high as the sky.

But one late summer day,
they weren't very thrilled
when they found no corn — no corn at all! —
on their new cornfield.

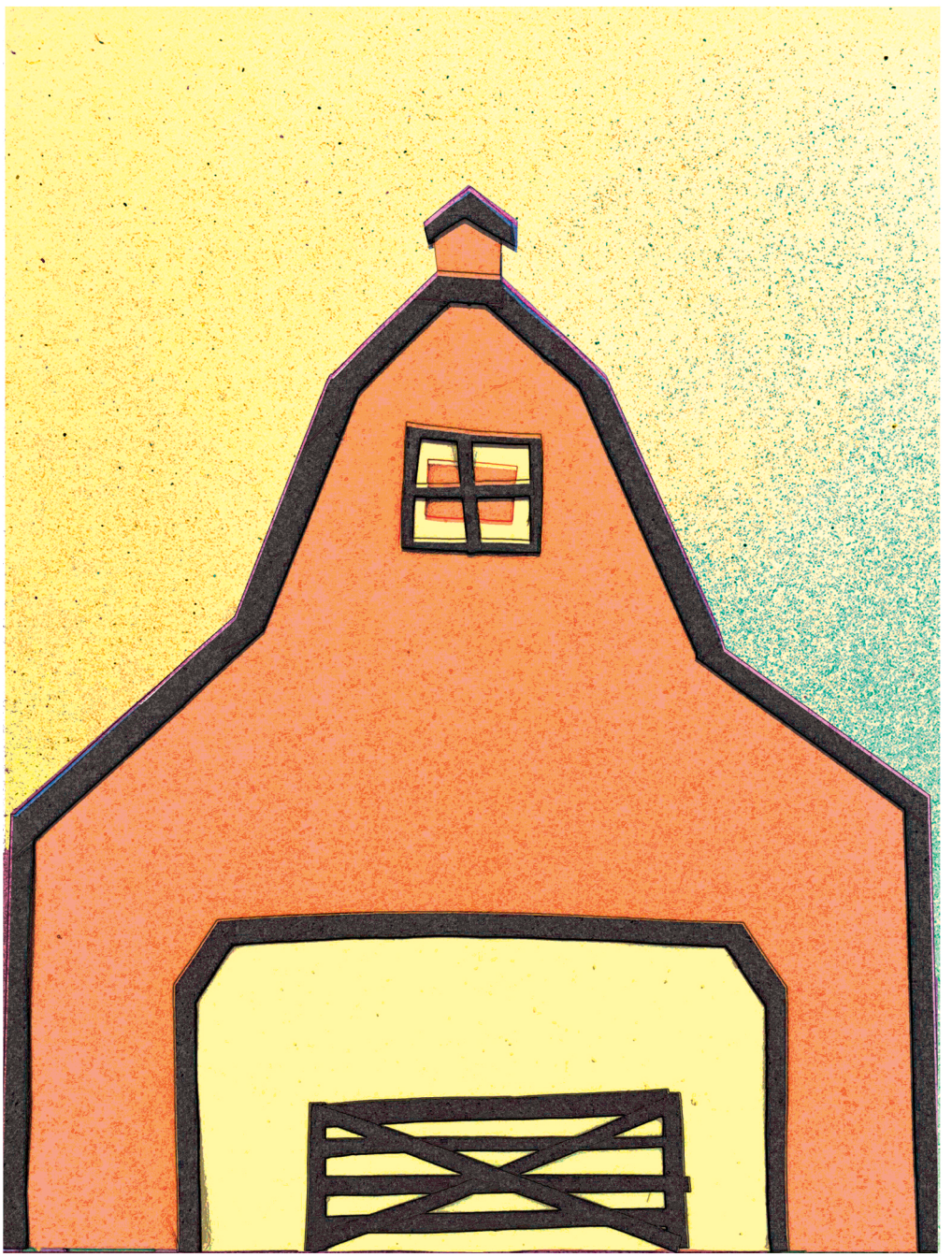
“Catch the thief!” yelled the pig.
“Or put a trap, or two or three!”
The farmer grumbled a little and said,
“Let’s talk with the thief first, then we shall see.”

“Free potatoes and corn!
No need to be shy!
Everybody is welcome!”
said the farmer’s and pig’s sign.

No one, not two, but many
came to eat and have fun.
Baa, Moo, Cock-A-Doodle-Doo
greeted each other one by one.

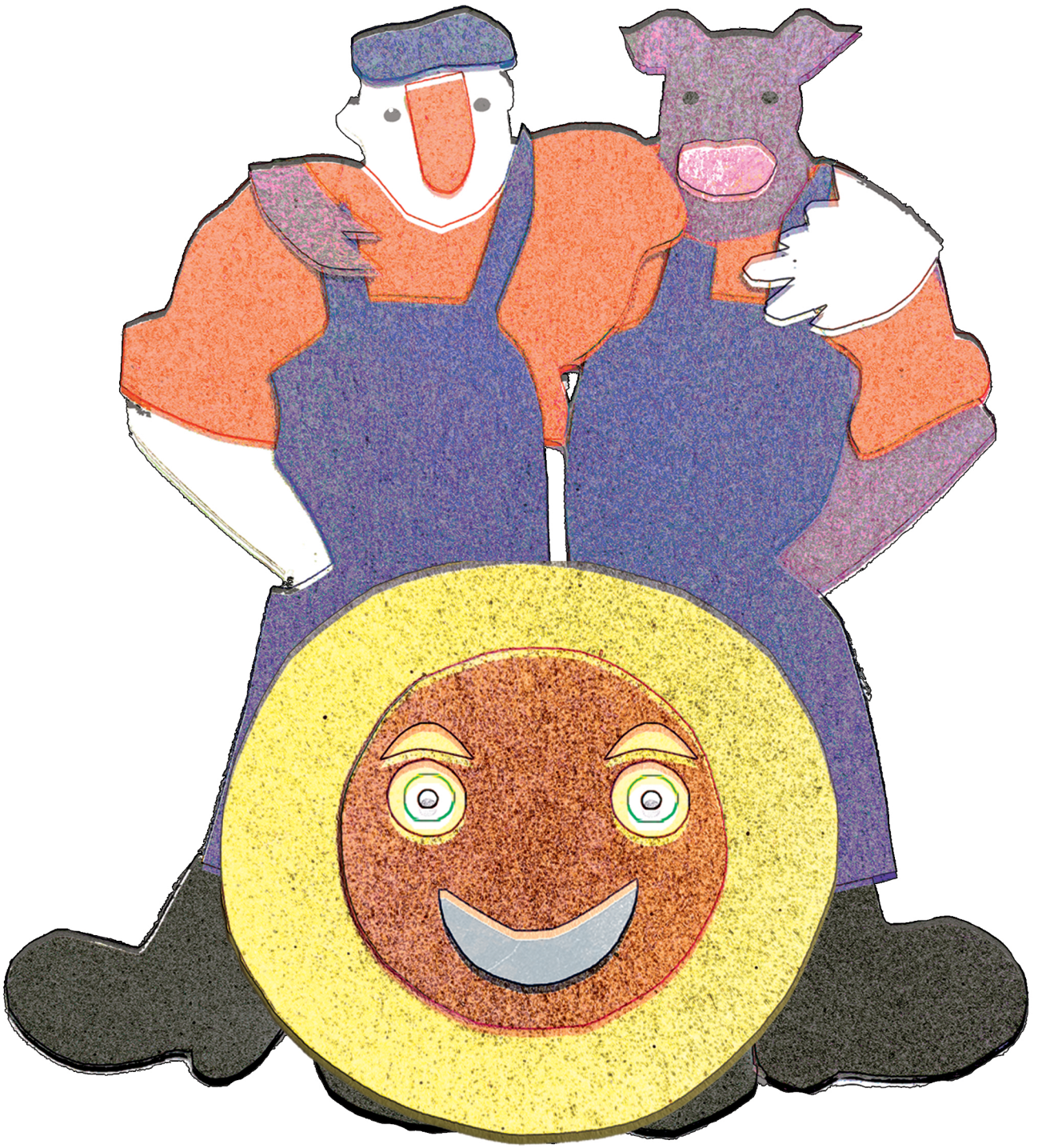
All celebrated a new friendship
for three weeks and one day.
Then the pig had an idea,
“Let’s build a barn where we all can stay.”

The event went into history
as the Baa-Moo-Cock-A-Doodle-Doo,
First ever and one of its kind,
Farm Animal Petting Zoo.



Ever since, kids all around the world
love to play with their friends:
the goats, cows, sheep, ducks,
pigs, roosters, horses, and hens.

And the old farmer?
He still plants, grows, and digs
on his old farm on the hill
with his old friend, the pig.

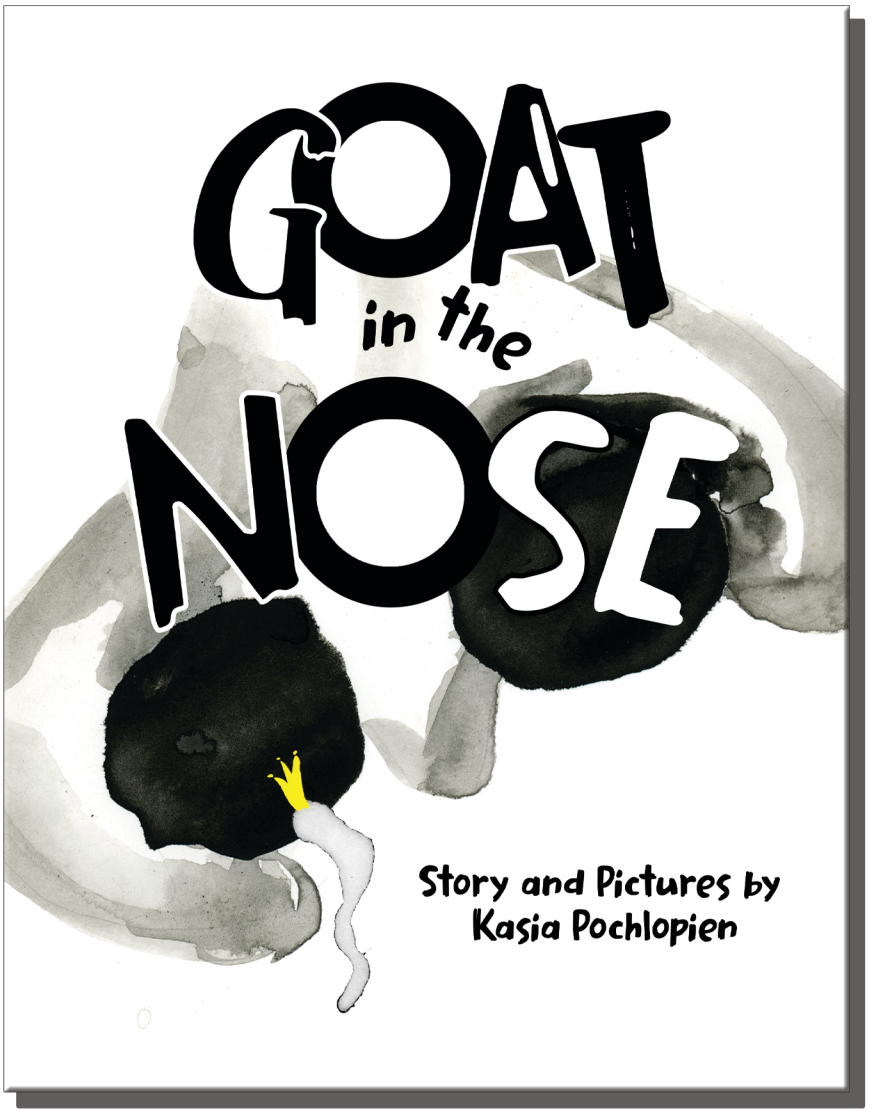


Till one late summer day,
they both were very thrilled
when two new, fluffy friends
came to their house on the hill.

My parents had a small farm in a charming mountain village in Southern Poland. They raised cows for their milk, pigs for their meat, and chickens for their eggs. They planted wheat for the bread, potatoes, and various vegetables. One of my father's duties was to protect the crops from hungry wild animals. Every year he would set up multiple traps and scarecrows. Every year the crows, wild pigs, deer, and rabbits managed to sneak in and grab a tasty snack without getting caught.

Today, over 90 years old, he is still busy digging in the little vegetable patch beside his house, making friends with all the animals that stop by, even those who may not have the best intentions.

Kasia lives in St. Louis with her husband, two daughters, Jimmy the dog, Billy the cat, and three chickens.
She was born and grew up in Poland. One day Kasia decided to go on an adventure and explore the world. And so she did.
Today, she writes and illustrates children's books, all while constantly brainstorming new ideas for the next great escapade.

Also by

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