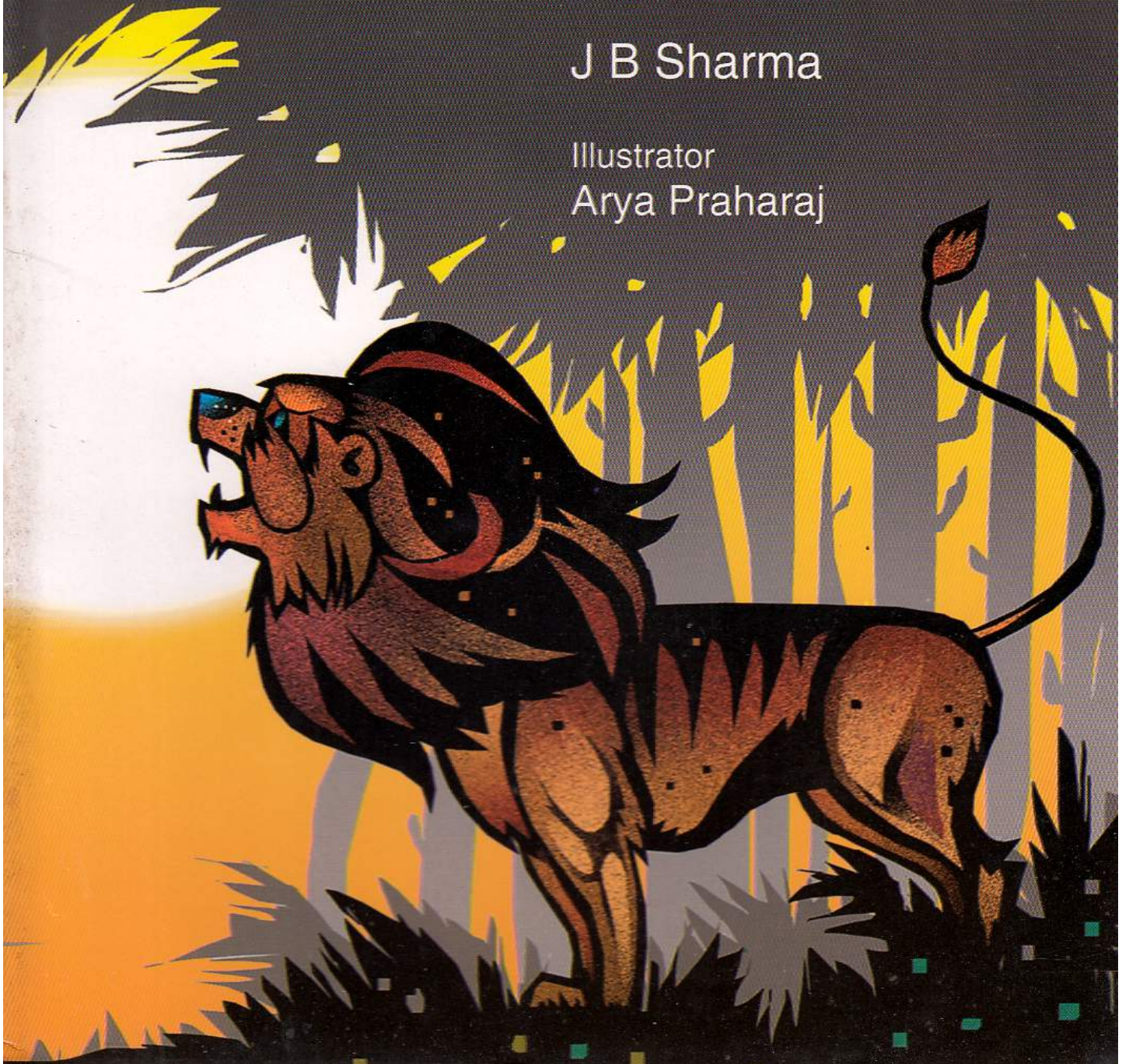




THE LION AND THE HEDGEHOG

J B Sharma

Illustrator
Arya Praharaj



Nehru Bal Pustakalaya

THE LION AND THE HEDGEHOG

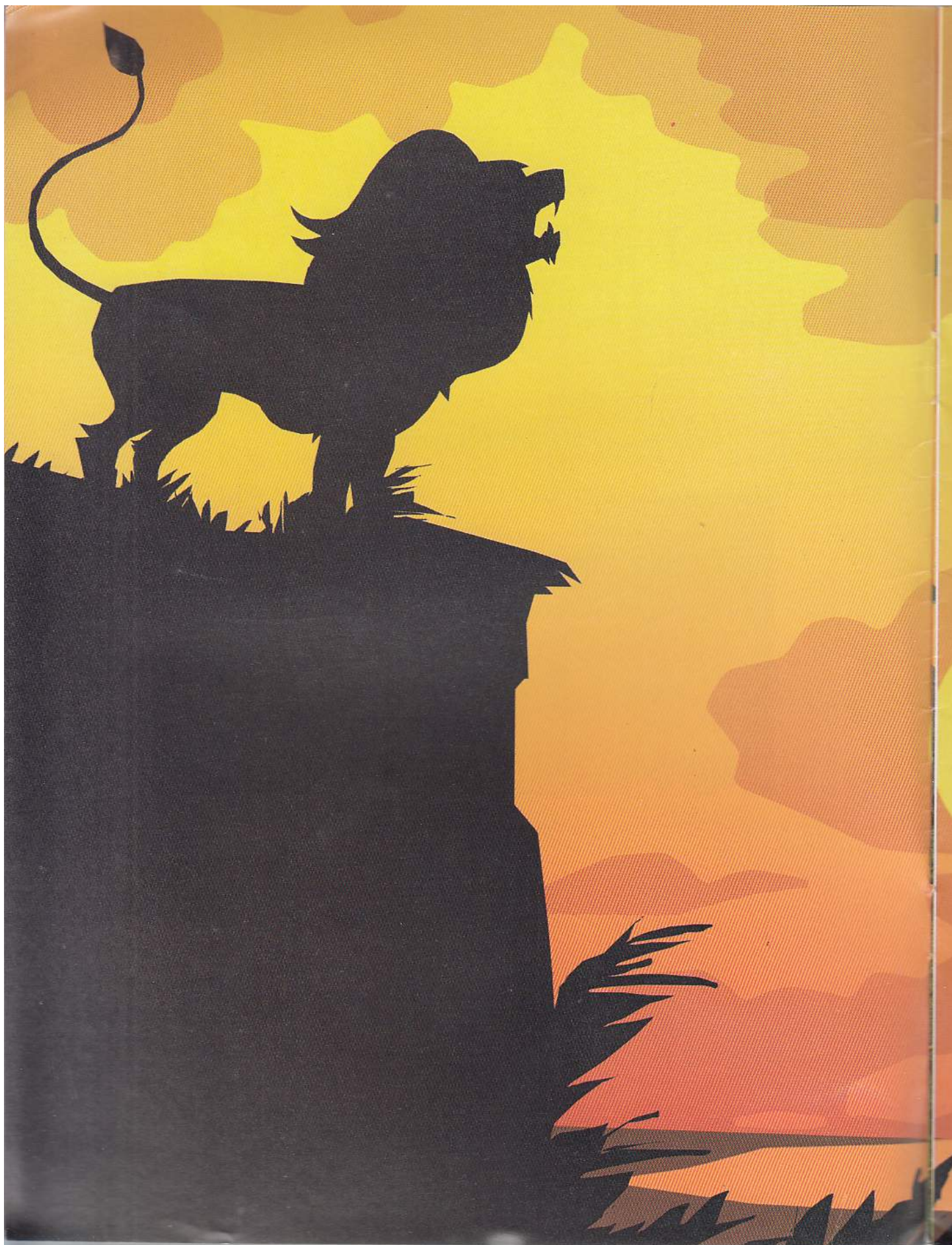
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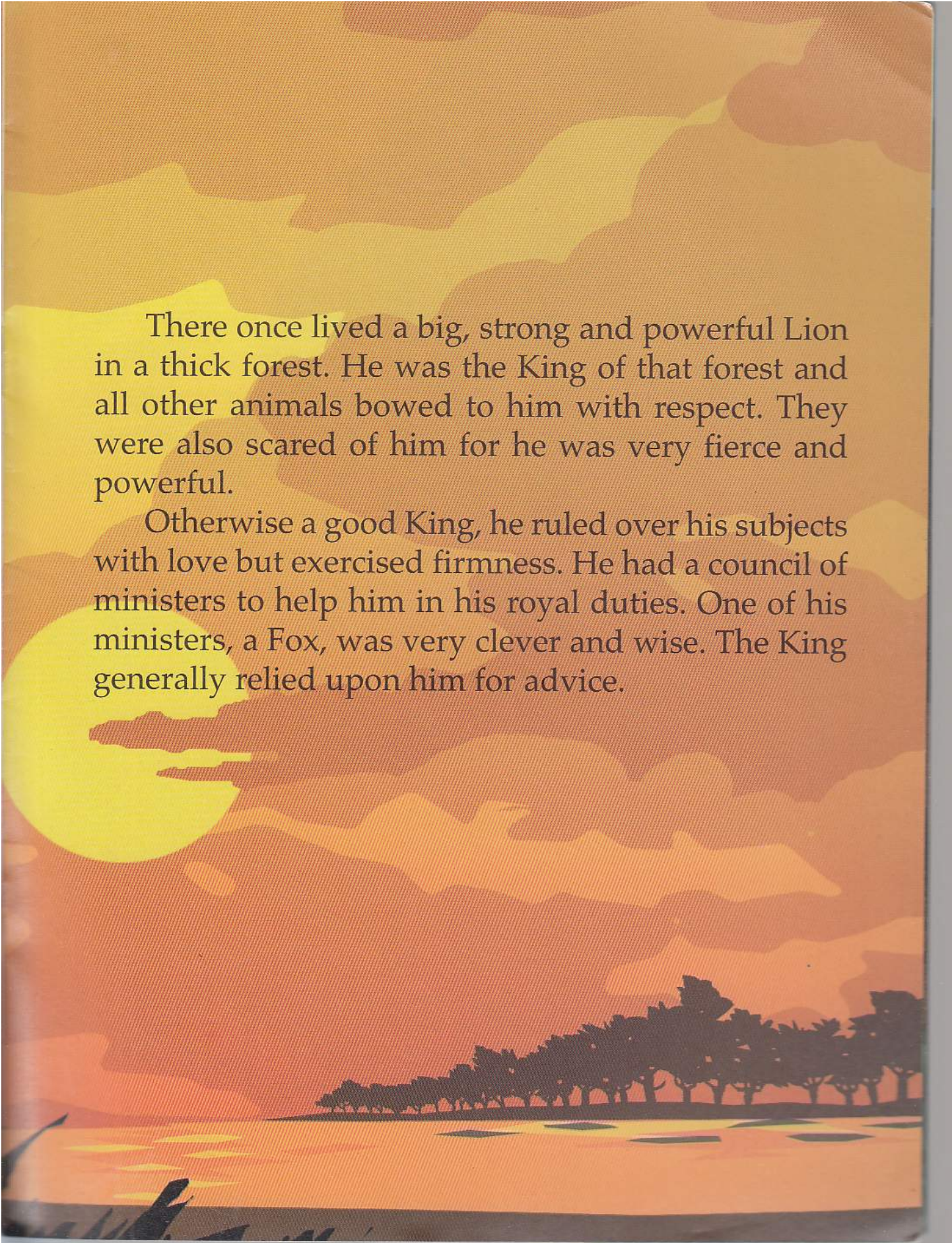


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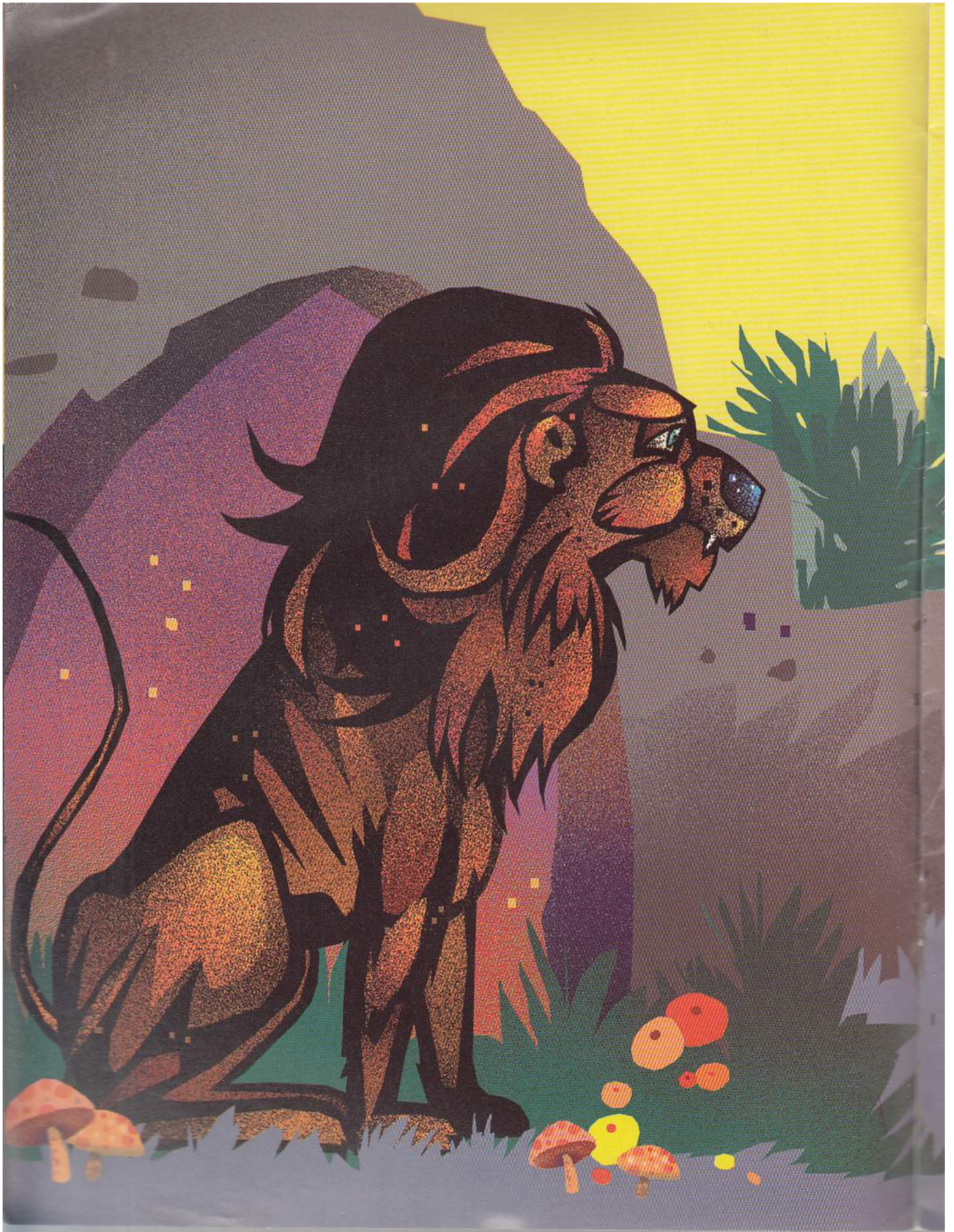
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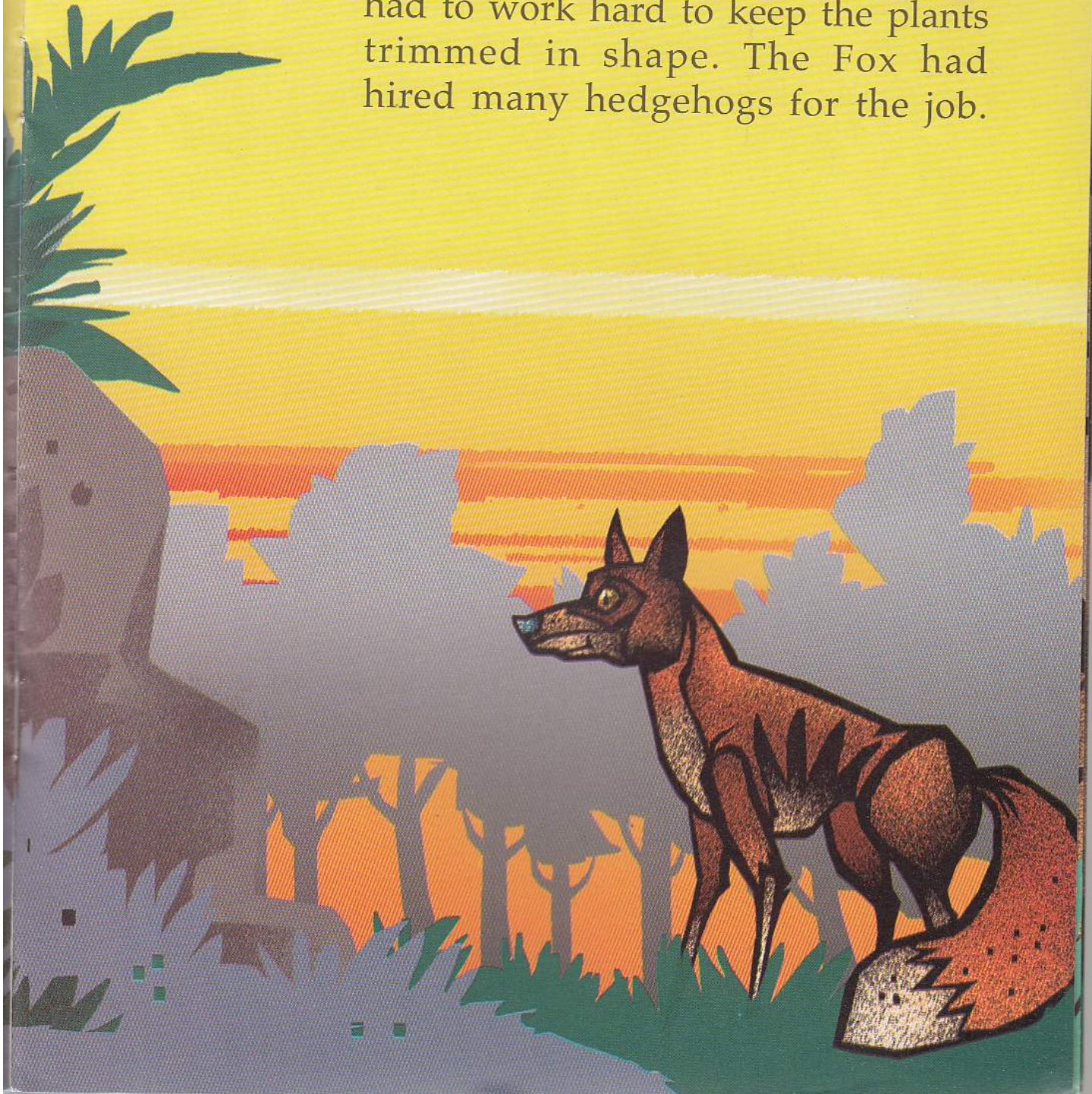
There once lived a big, strong and powerful Lion in a thick forest. He was the King of that forest and all other animals bowed to him with respect. They were also scared of him for he was very fierce and powerful.

Otherwise a good King, he ruled over his subjects with love but exercised firmness. He had a council of ministers to help him in his royal duties. One of his ministers, a Fox, was very clever and wise. The King generally relied upon him for advice.



The King's house was a big den. Located behind a big rock, camouflaged by vegetation to distract hunters. The duties of the ministers included keeping the King's den neat and sprightly.

As lots of weeds grew in the den, the animals had to work hard to keep the plants trimmed in shape. The Fox had hired many hedgehogs for the job.





Hedgehogs are known as cleaners of the garden. They kept the den prim and proper.

One day, when the Lion came back from work he was very tired. In a hurry to lie down and rest, he put his paw on a hedgehog by mistake!

Now, the hedgehogs have lots of prickles on their bodies. Some of the thorny ones pricked and hurt the Lion's paw. There was shooting pain in his paw.

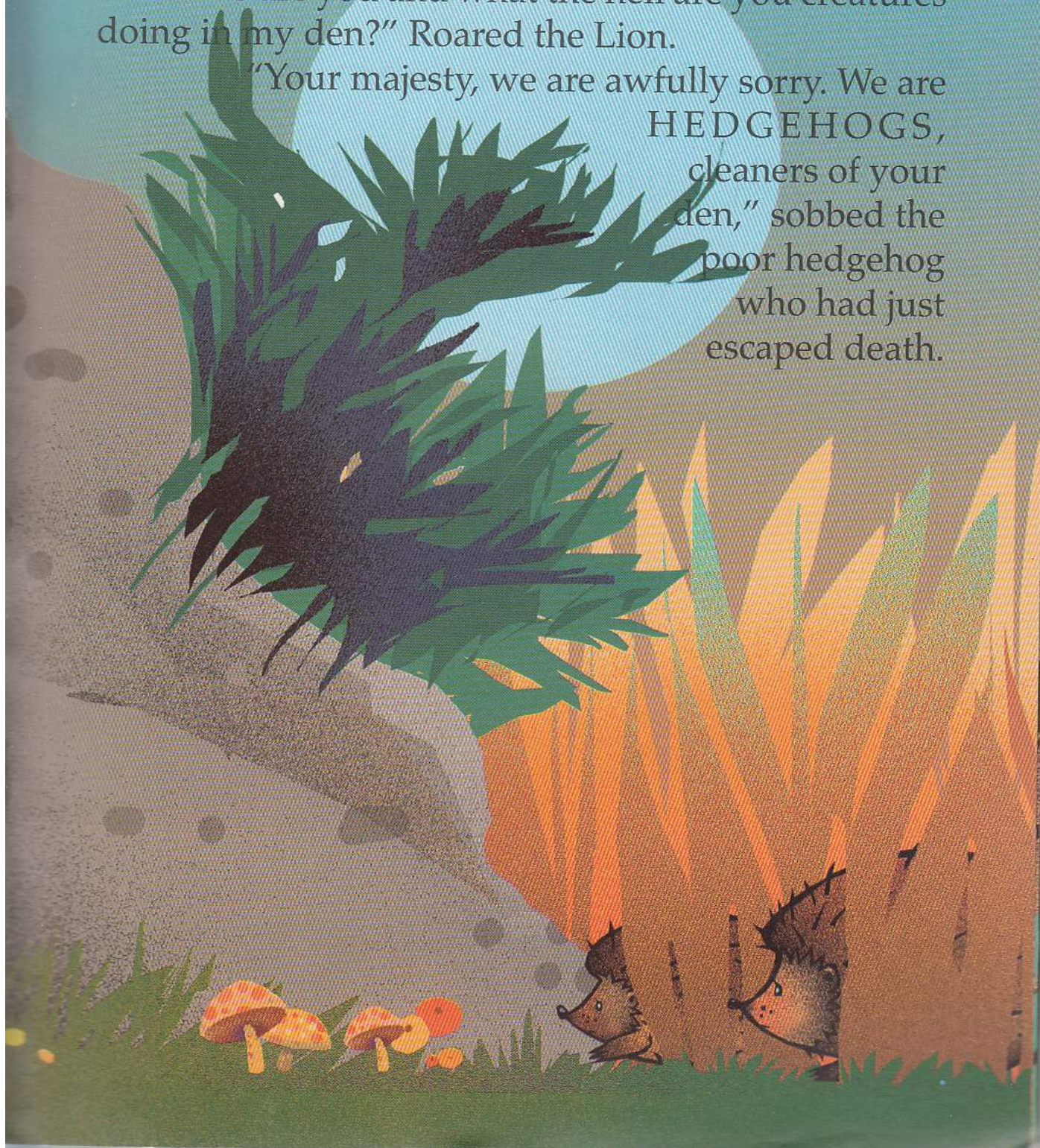




The Lion became very angry. He looked down to see some ugly creatures crawling with body full of thorns. He lost his temper!

"Who are you and what the hell are you creatures doing in my den?" Roared the Lion.

"Your majesty, we are awfully sorry. We are **HEDGEHOGS**, cleaners of your den," sobbed the poor hedgehog who had just escaped death.



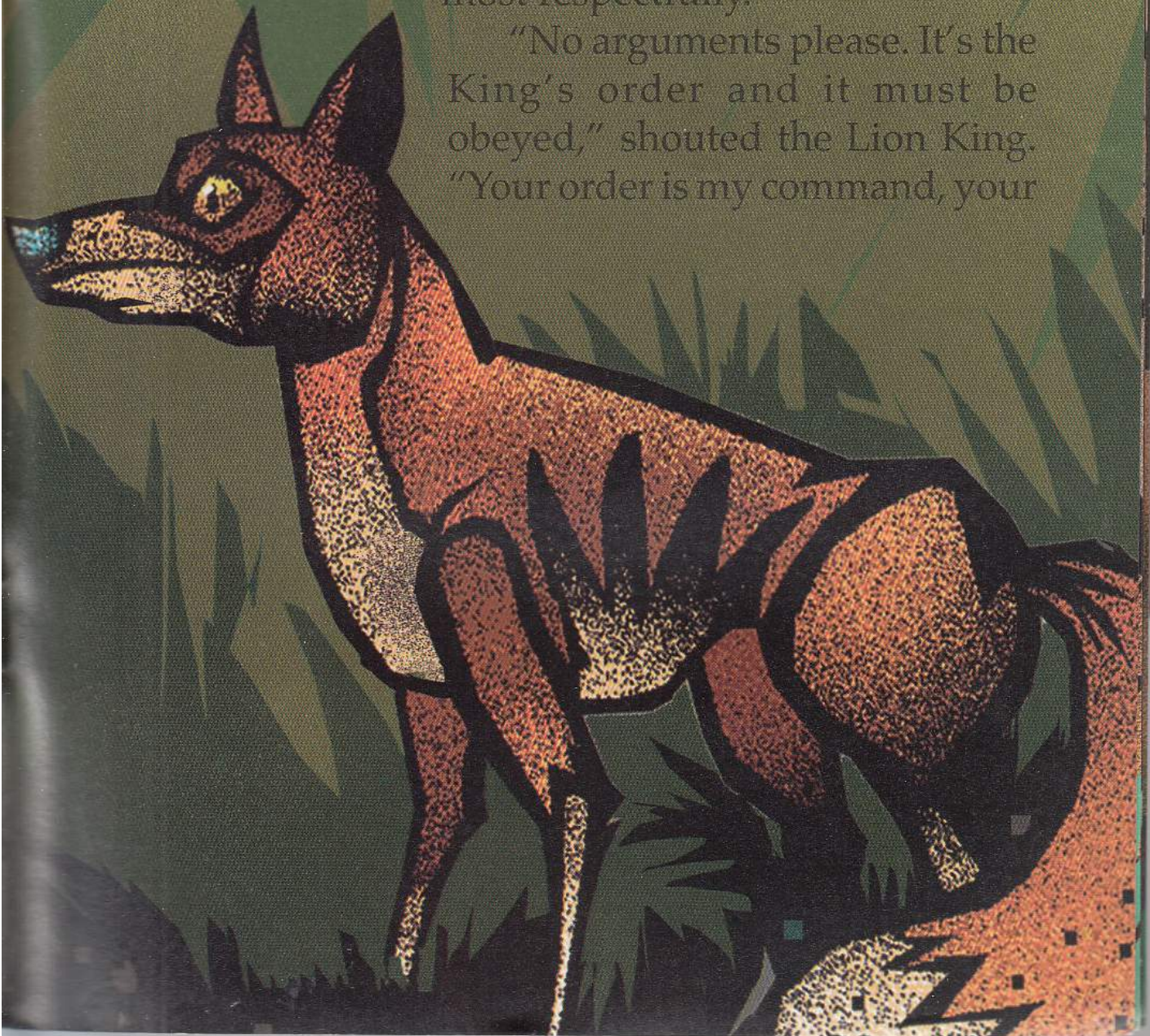


"Who brought you here? Get out of my forest at once if you love your life! I don't want to waste my energy in killing awful creatures like you," roared the Lion.

"Minister.. minister come here? I want this pest to leave my forest at once!" Demanded the Lion.

"But your majesty, he has been hired to clean your den and he is quite good at his job," replied the Fox most respectfully.

"No arguments please. It's the King's order and it must be obeyed," shouted the Lion King.
"Your order is my command, your

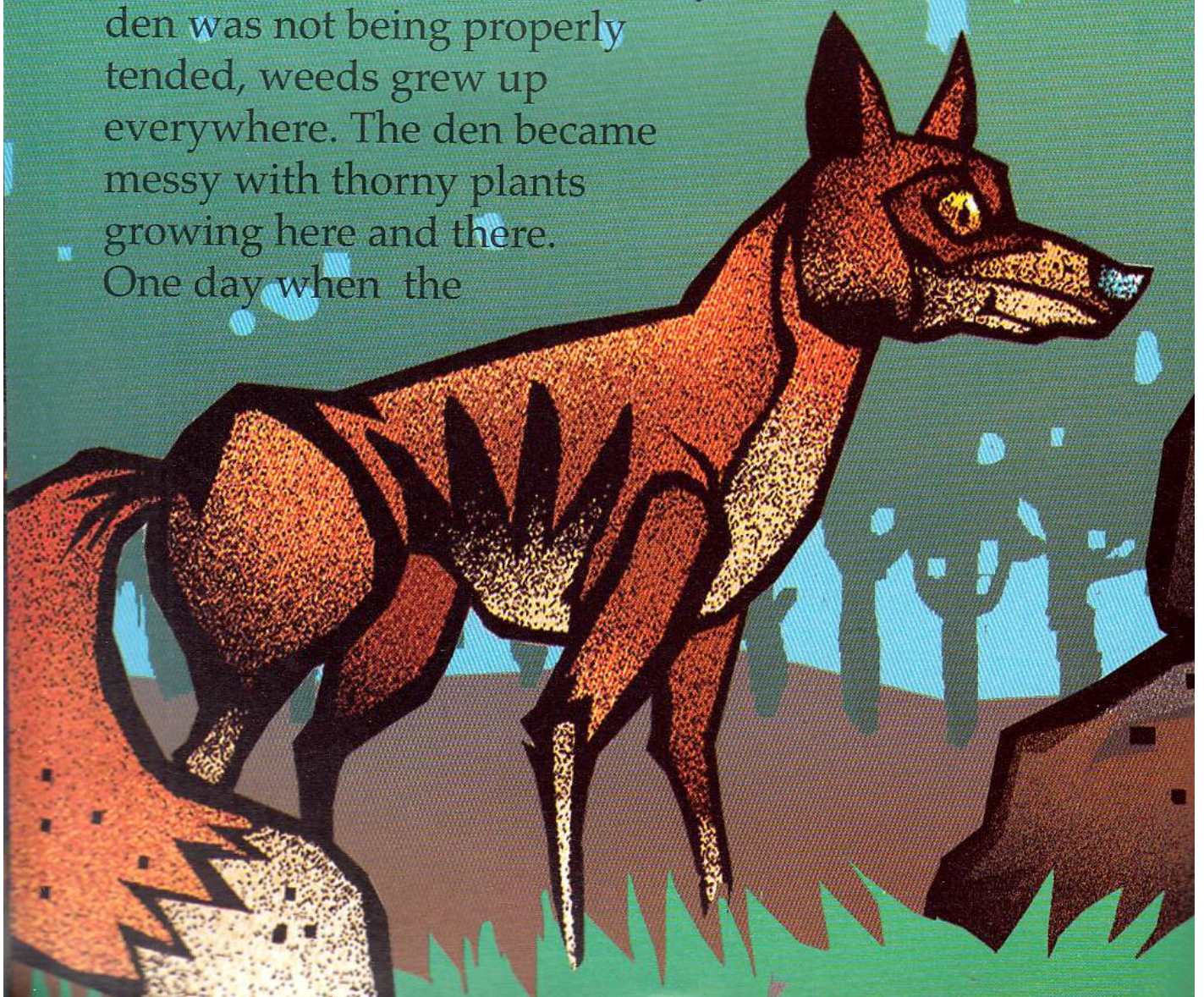


majesty. It'll be definitely honoured," said the Fox meekly.

The poor hedgehogs were a bundle of fear. They had been living in that forest for ages and cherished it as their home. The Fox made the hedgehogs understand the gravity of the situation. He made arrangements for the hedgehogs to live in a secluded part of the forest and promised justice at an appropriate time.

Time passed by.

The Lion was busy in his royal duties. As the den was not being properly tended, weeds grew up everywhere. The den became messy with thorny plants growing here and there. One day when the







Lion returned to his den, the thorny plants hurt his legs and body. He got angry.

“Why is the den so dishevelled and dirty? Why is it not being properly maintained?” Thundered the Lion to the Fox.

“Your majesty, I’m really sorry, but what can I do! You see the hedgehogs who were supposed to clean the den have been sent to exile. Other animals can’t replace the hedgehogs to maintain the den.”

“Ooooooh!” Cooled down the King, “Is that the reason why the den is so untidy? Are the hedgehogs so useful? I never realised this before. I thought they were useless and ugly creatures,” commented the Lion thoughtfully.

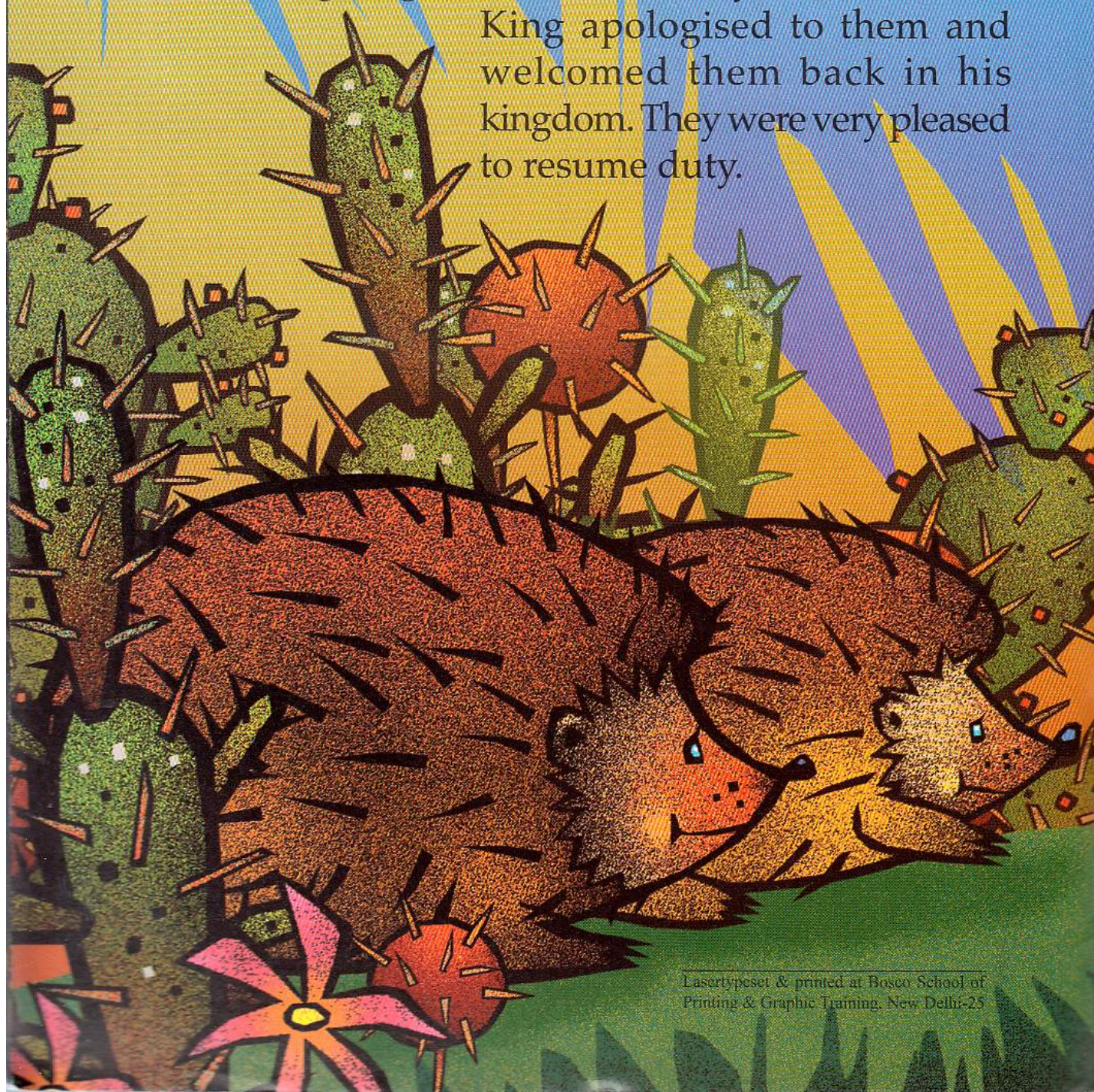
“Yes, your majesty. God has made every creature



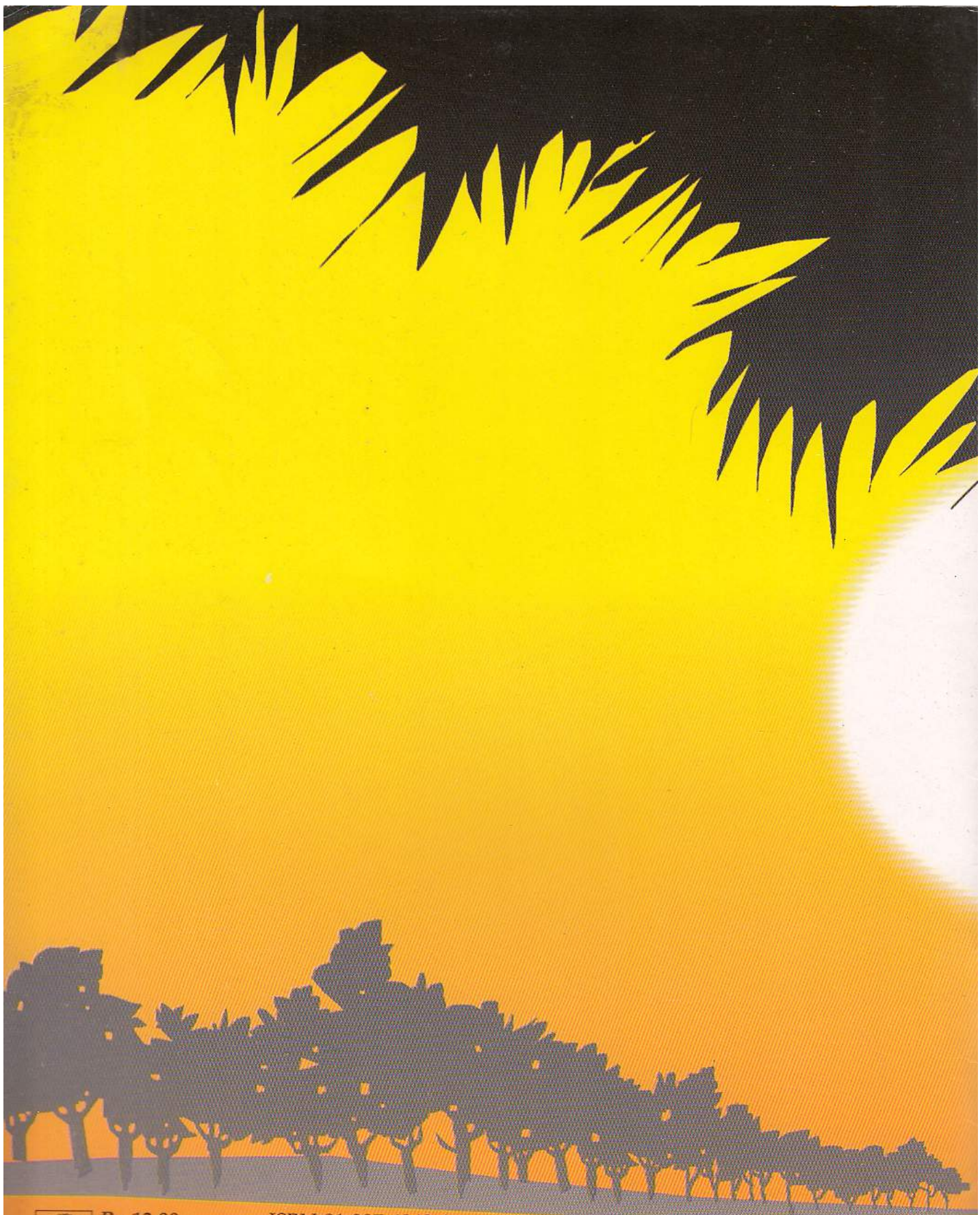
in the universe with some purpose. Everybody has a very useful role to play in the world. We should respect each one," advised the Fox.

"Oh! I realise now. I'm sorry for the misbehaviour. Call the hedgehogs at once," instructed the King wisely.

The hedgehogs were immediately called for. The King apologised to them and welcomed them back in his kingdom. They were very pleased to resume duty.







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