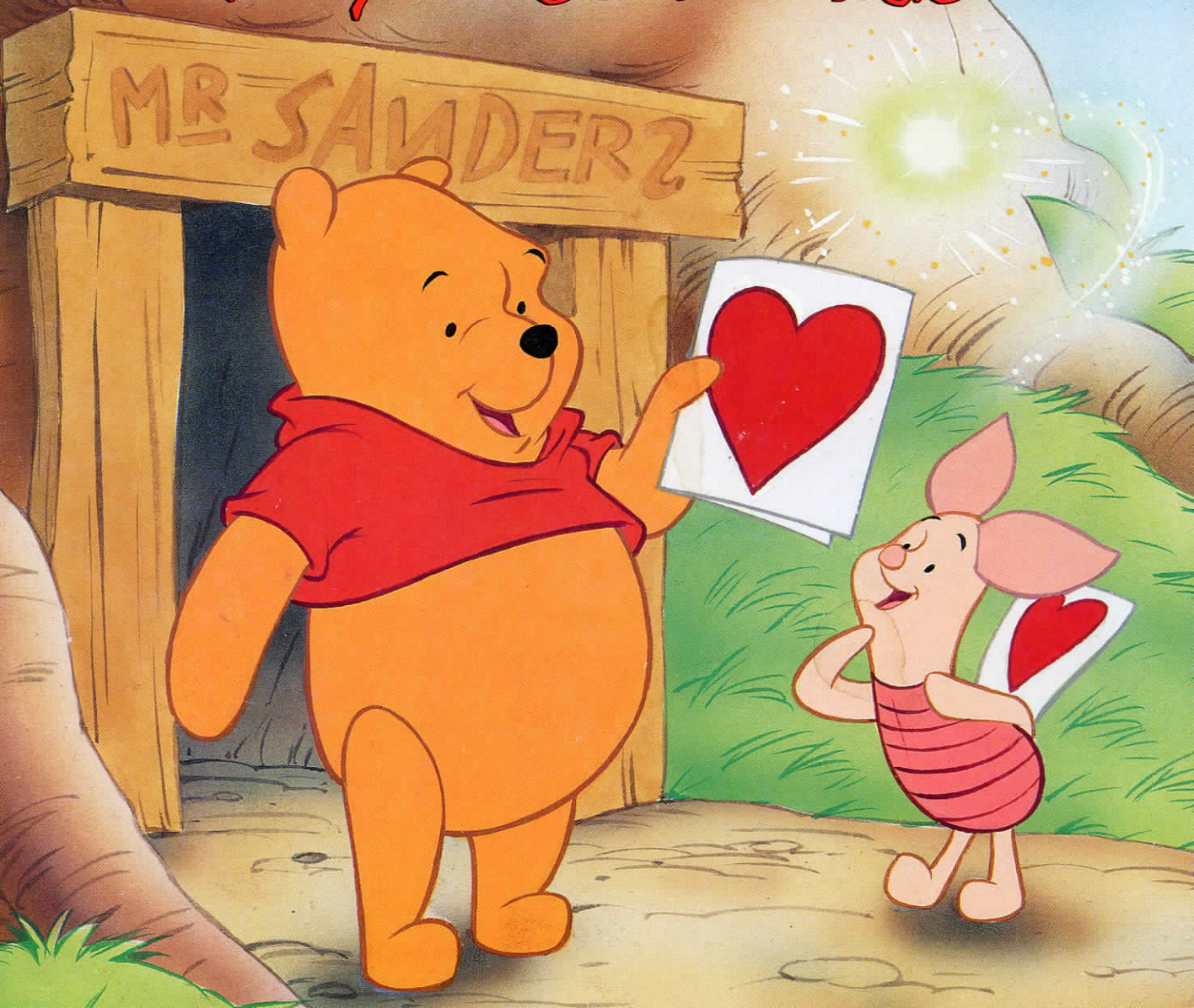


Pooh

Very Best Friends





Very Best Friends

Written by Ann Braybrooks

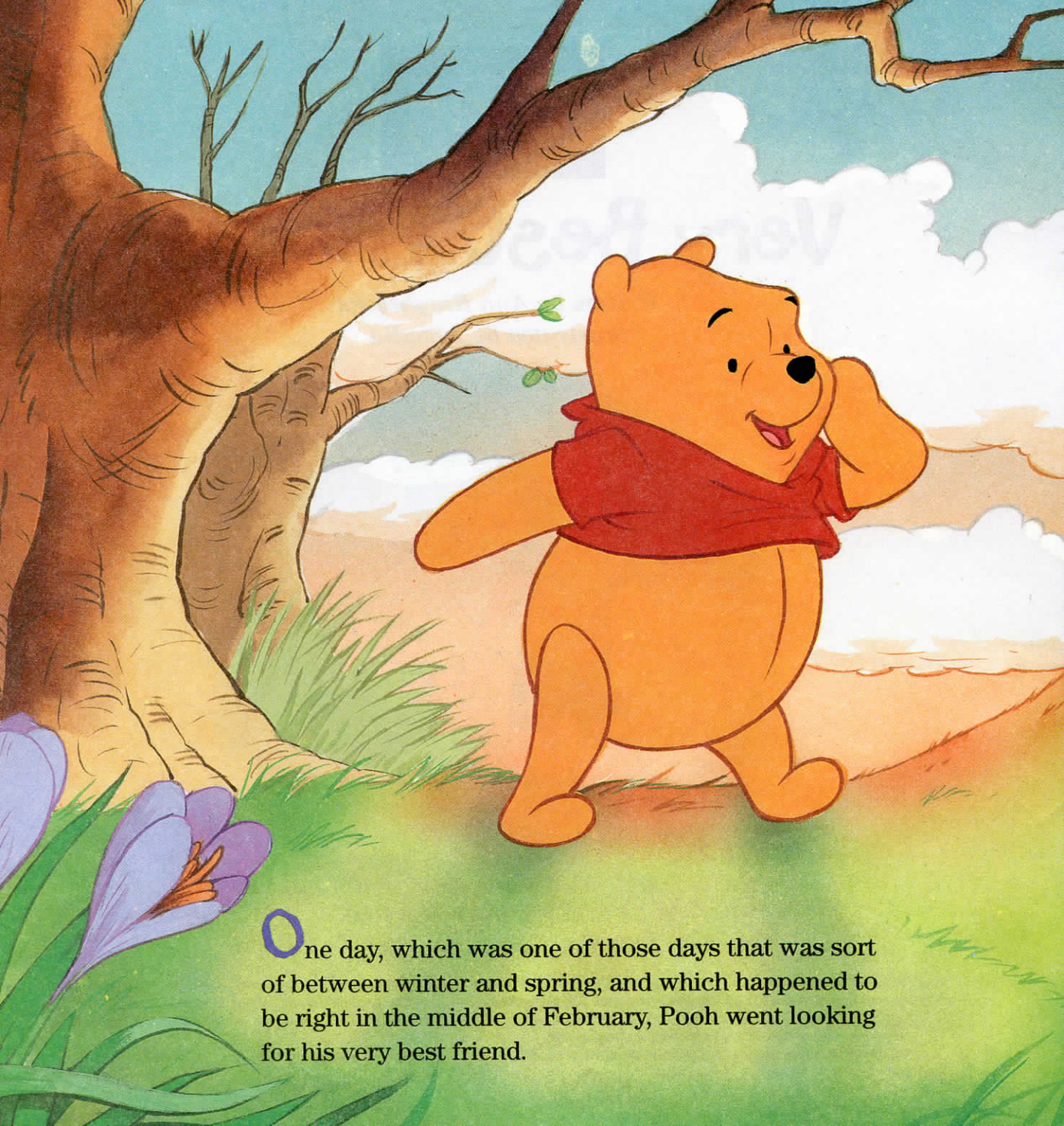
Illustrated by Arkadia



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One day, which was one of those days that was sort of between winter and spring, and which happened to be right in the middle of February, Pooh went looking for his very best friend.



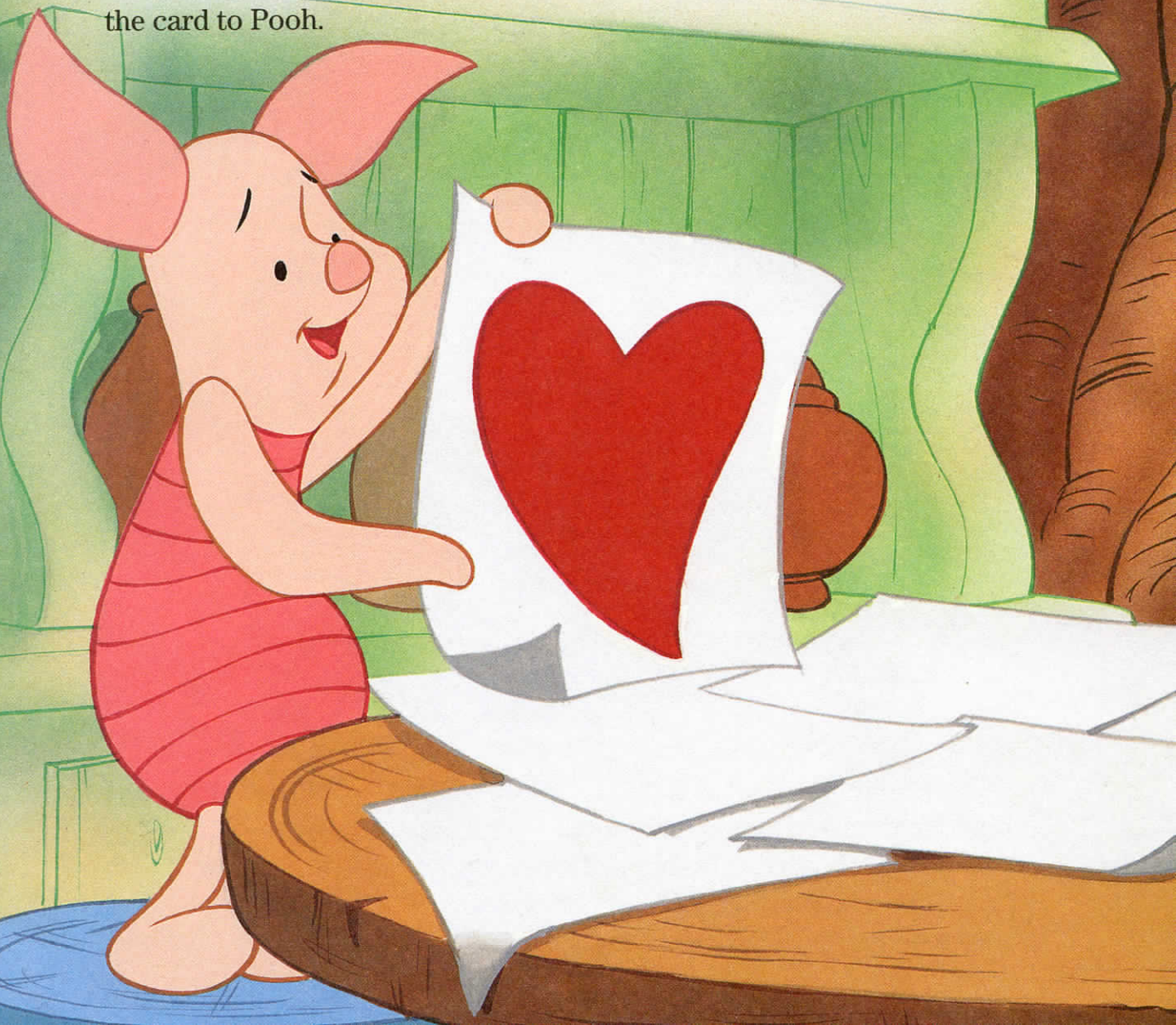
“Christopher Ro-o-o-bin-n-n . . . ,” Pooh called as he climbed the hill where the two friends often met.

“How odd!” Pooh said to himself when Christopher Robin didn’t answer. “He’s always here, except, of course, when he isn’t. Which must mean that he is elsewhere!”

And even though elsewhere could mean just about anywhere, Pooh tried Piglet's house first.

"Have you seen Christopher Robin?" Pooh asked Piglet.

"No, I haven't," said Piglet, trying very hard to hide a large red heart behind his back. But when that didn't work, he gave up and showed the card to Pooh.





"I've been busy making this valentine card for you," he said.
"Tomorrow is Valentine's Day."

"You mean Valentine's falls on tomorrow this year?" exclaimed Pooh. "Why, perhaps that's what Christopher Robin is up to! He must be off somewhere making valentines for all of us!"

Now Pooh wanted even more to find Christopher Robin, so he and Piglet went in search of him. They tramped through the Hundred-Acre Wood until they found their friends peeking through some bushes at the boy. Christopher Robin was so busy writing something that he didn't even notice his friends spying on him.

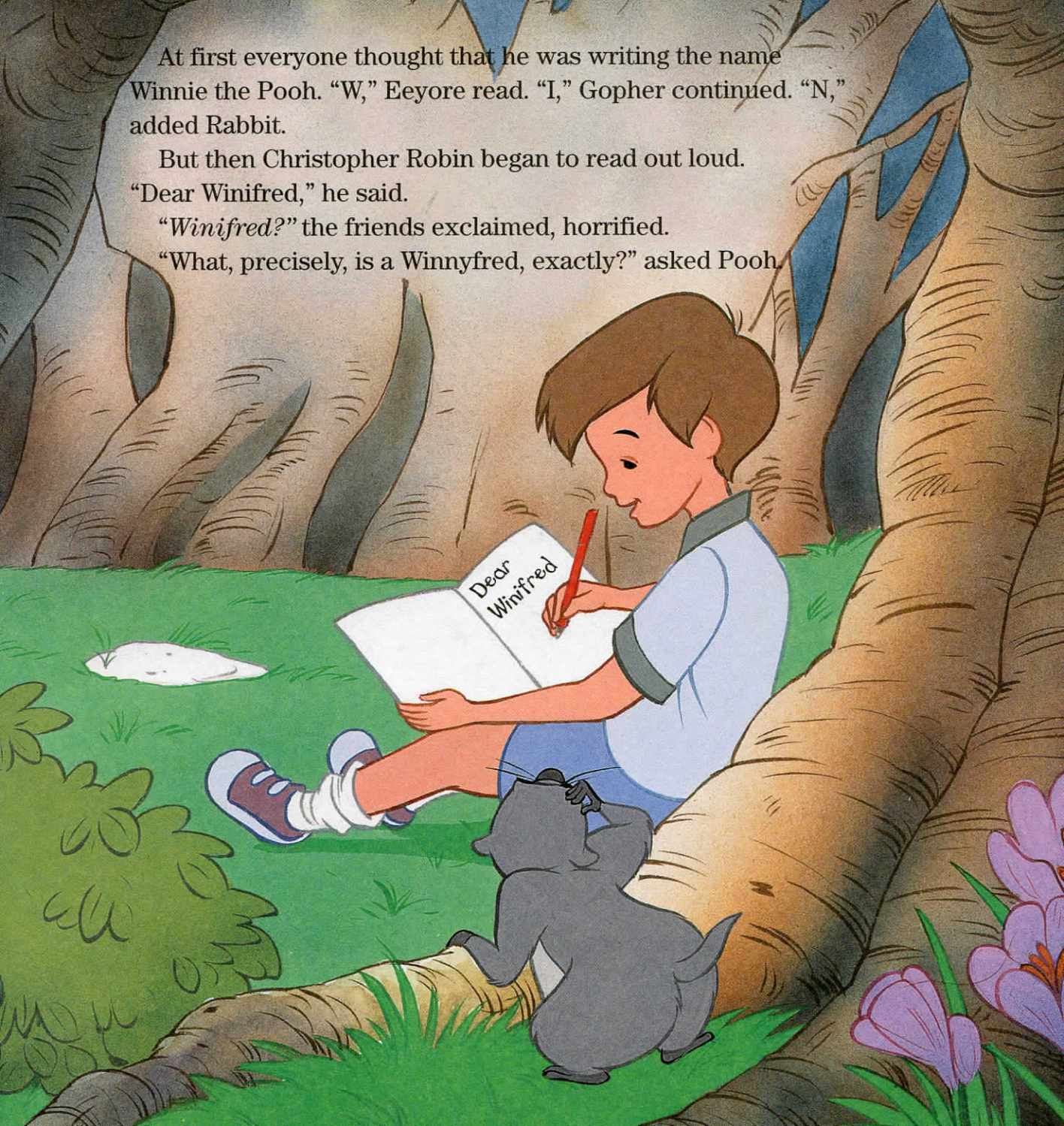


At first everyone thought that he was writing the name Winnie the Pooh. "W," Eeyore read. "I," Gopher continued. "N," added Rabbit.

But then Christopher Robin began to read out loud. "Dear Winifred," he said.

"Winifred?" the friends exclaimed, horrified.

"What, precisely, is a Winifred, exactly?" asked Pooh.





Nobody knew the answer to this, so they decided to go ask Owl.
“A Winifred, my dear friends, is a girl,” Owl explained. “Christopher Robin has become interested in a girl.”
“Does that mean he is no longer interested in us?” Pooh asked sadly.



“Oh, I think he’s just suffering from a bout of lovesickness,” Owl assured Pooh. “The fellow’s been bitten by a love bug.”

“Oh, d-d-dear, whatever shall we do?” asked Piglet.

“I got it, I got it!” Tigger cried. “We gotta go an’ get another love buggie to *unbite* him! That will cure him!”

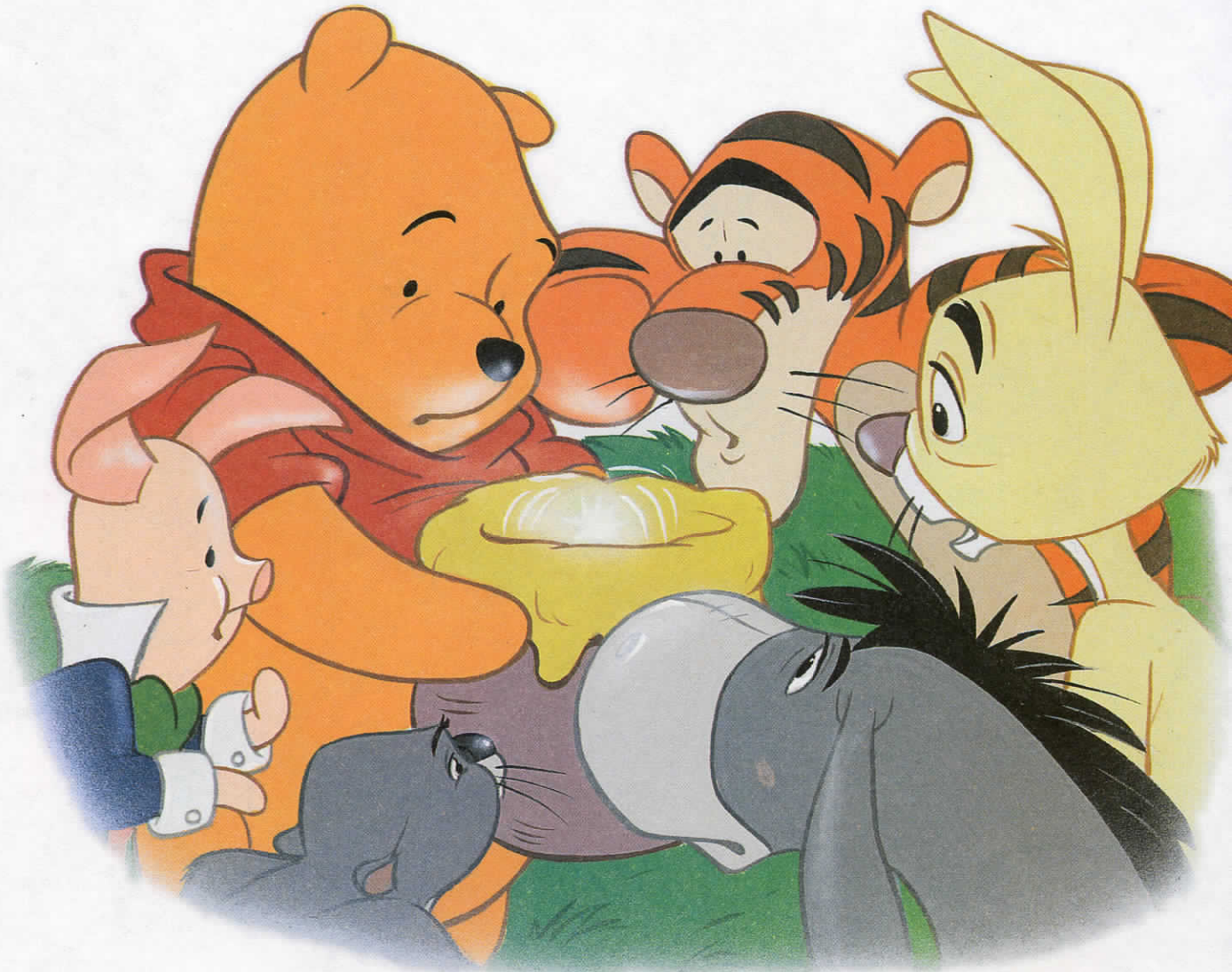
Tigger explained that to catch a love bug, they needed bait. For this, he chose Piglet. He dressed Piglet up, gave him some flowers, and stood him on top of a small hill.

“Isn’t that hill actually an *anthill*?” Pooh asked.

“Mmm,” Tigger replied, “and the flowers are actually poison ivy.”

“Oh, d-d-dear!” cried Piglet, tossing his new hat and the flowers aside.





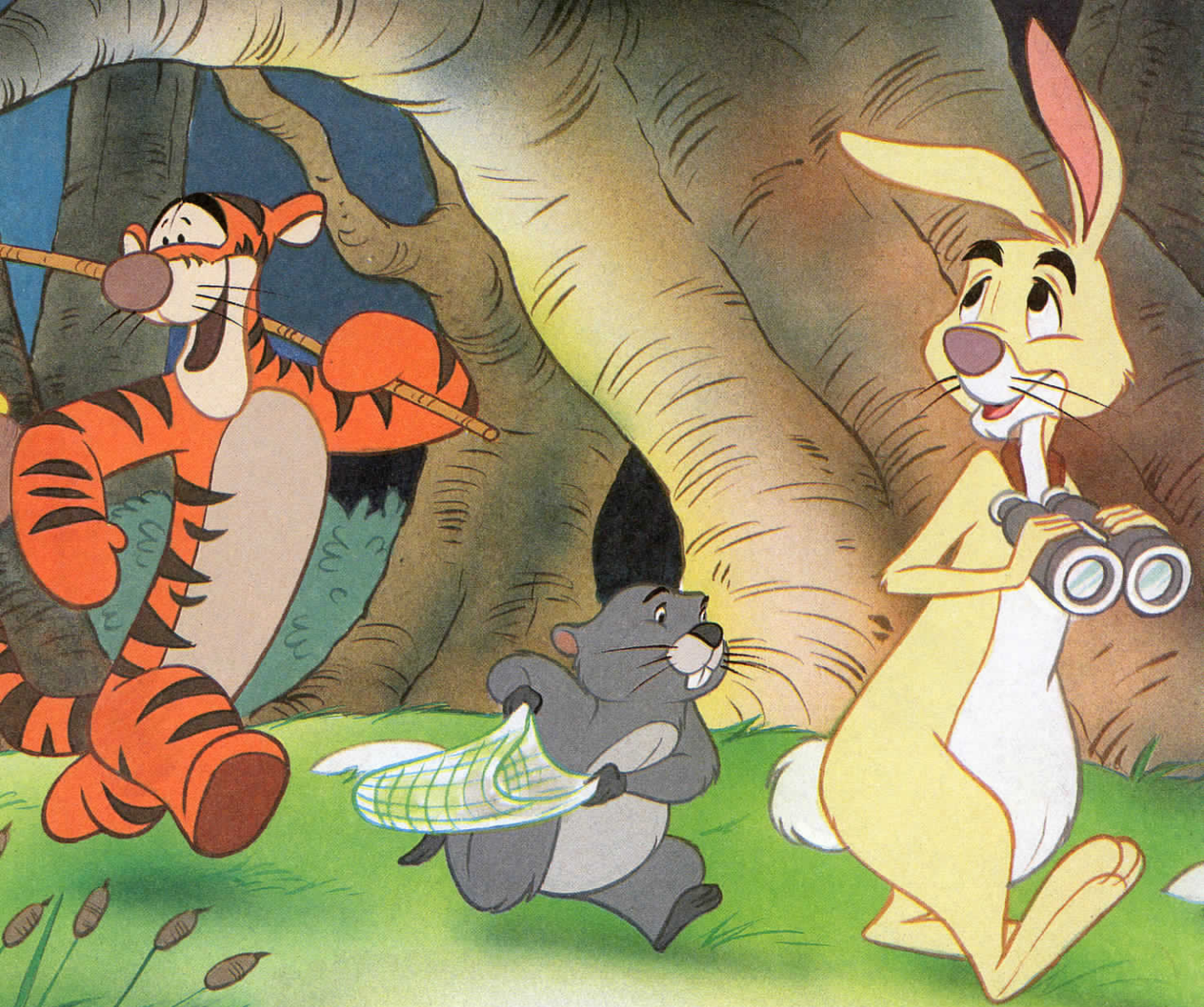
Just then, Pooh looked down at the honey pot he'd brought along. "Oh, bother," he said. "Somebody or *something* has found my honey."

The friends looked closely at the lip of the pot. "Ya don't suppose it's a—" Tigger began.

"Love bug!" the others cried happily.

But, suddenly, the love bug flew off. "Oh, no!" Pooh cried.
"It's going! It's going!"
"It's gone!" Tigger said.





The friends watched the bug zip into the forest. "We must find it," said Pooh, "or Christopher Robin will never be the same."

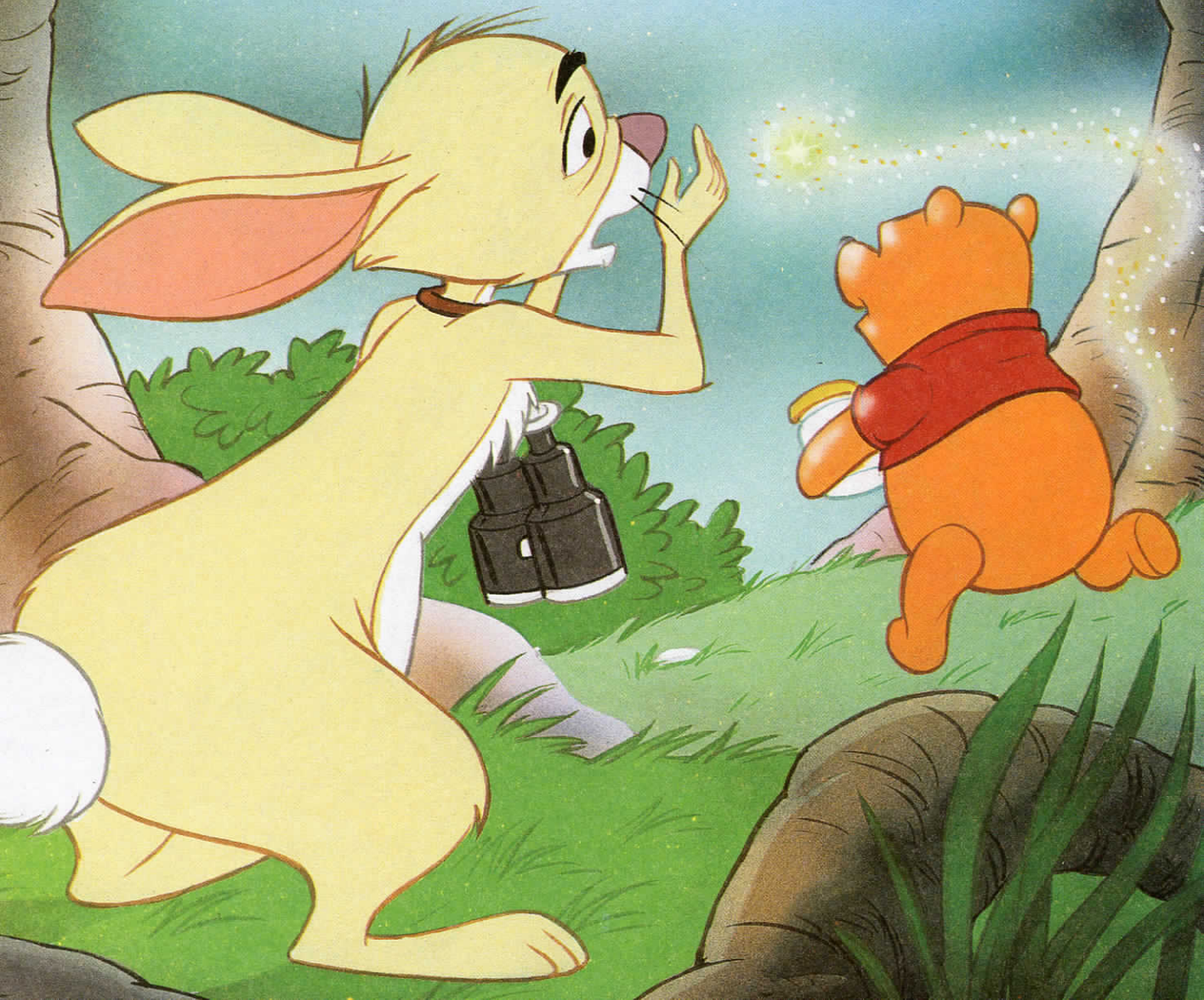
So Pooh and his friends went in search of the love bug. They took a glass jar, a butterfly net, and all sorts of other bug-catching things.

Soon the friends found themselves deep in the forest.
Night was falling and it was getting dark.

Suddenly Pooh spied the bug and dashed after it.

“No, Pooh!” Rabbit cried. “Wait! Don’t run off!”

But Pooh didn’t hear. He disappeared into the darkness. And as the others hurried after him, they all became separated from one another.



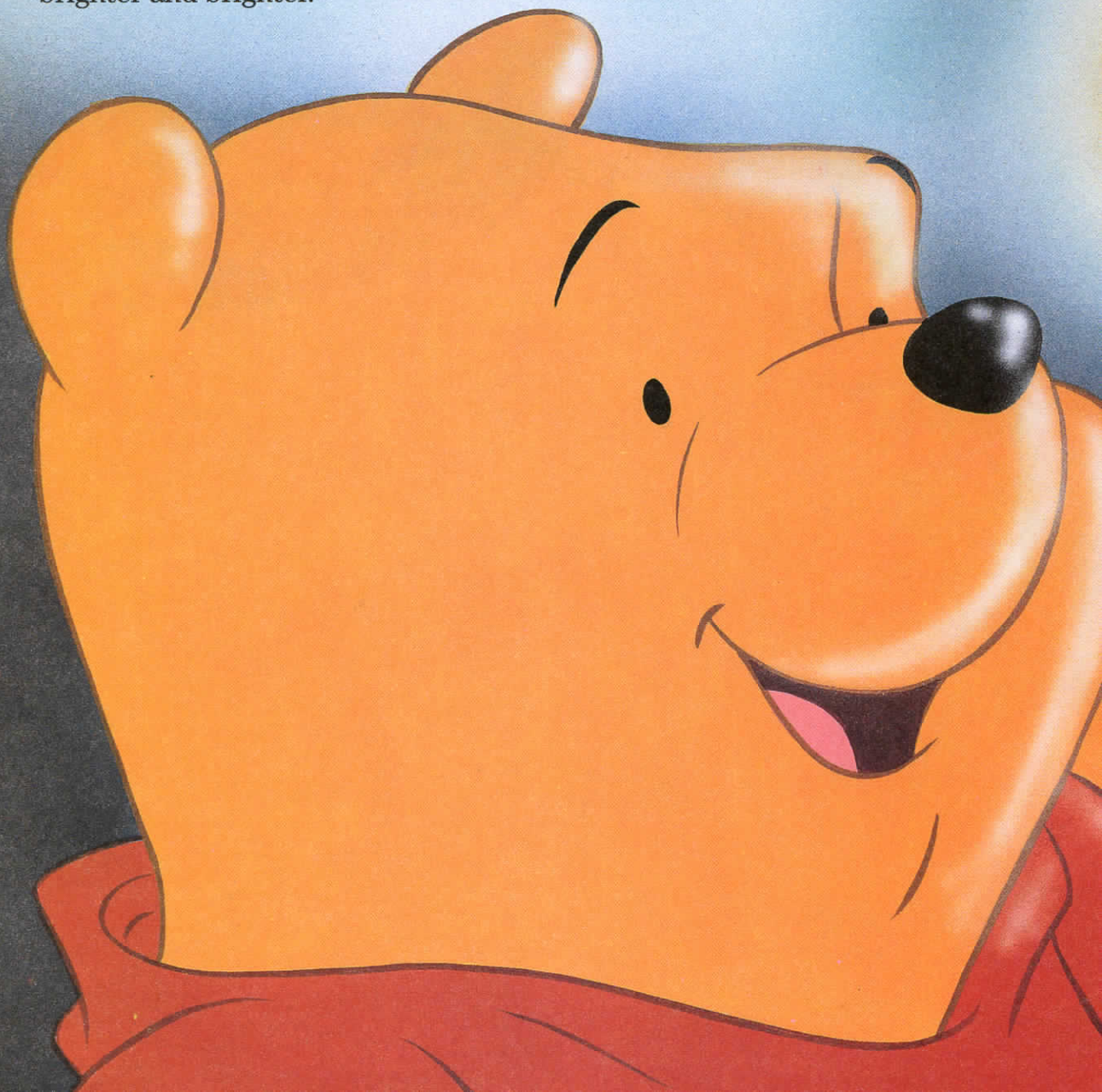
Pooh finally got close to the love bug and caught it in his jar. "I have it!" Pooh cried. "Now Christopher Robin will be quite all right. Look, everyone—"

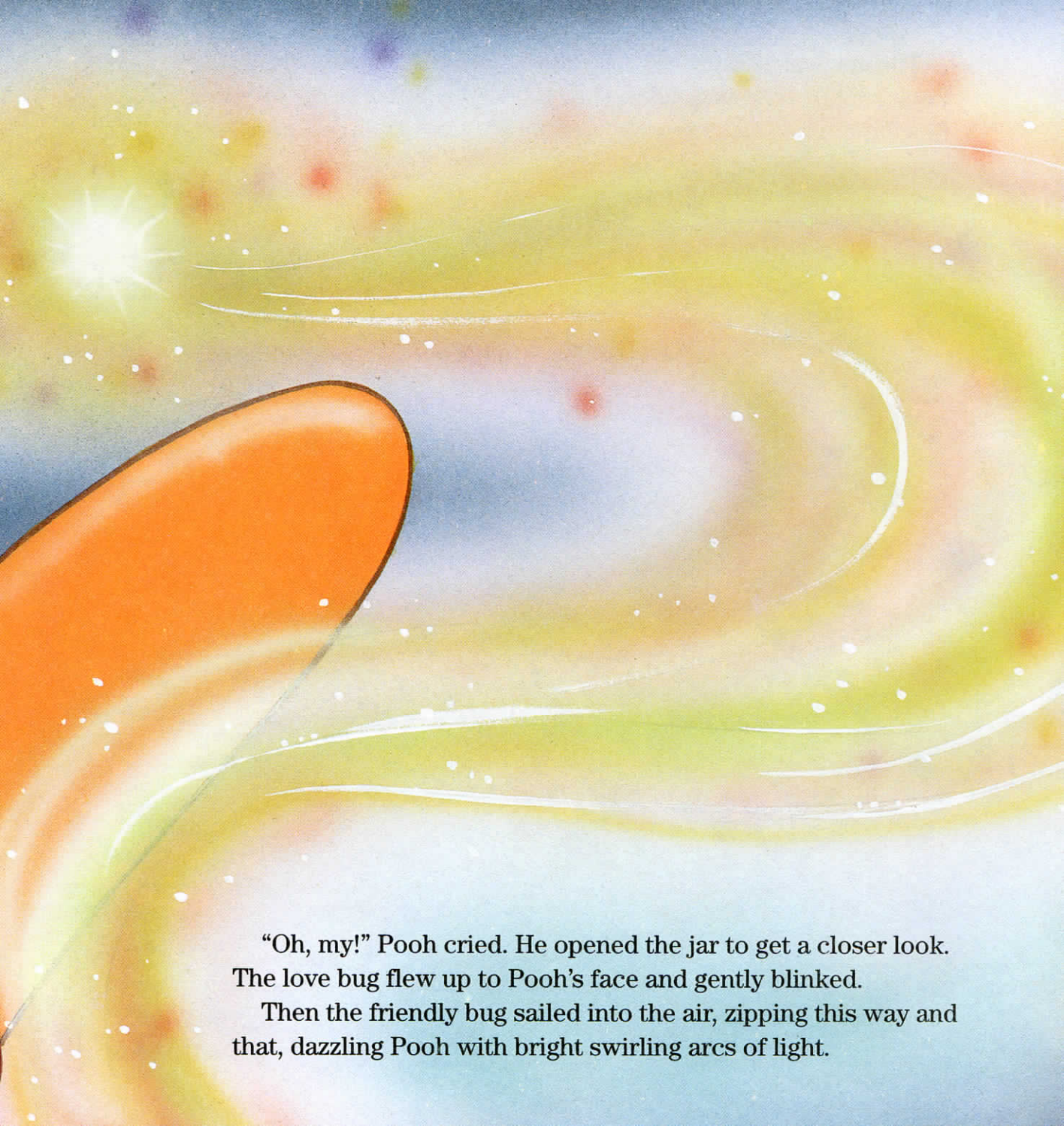
Pooh turned around. "Piglet?" he said nervously. "Rabbit? Tigger? Gopher? Eeyore? Anyone?" He paused. "Oh, bother," he said when he realized that he was all alone in the forest—and lost.



Pooh looked at the love bug. "If only Christopher Robin were here to show me the way," he said sadly.

Suddenly the love bug began to glow. Its light was shining brighter and brighter.



A vibrant, colorful illustration of a night sky. The background is a mix of soft blues, greens, and yellows, with numerous small white stars and larger, bright, multi-pointed starbursts. Several thin, white, swirling lines of light arc across the sky, creating a sense of motion and magic. On the left side, a large, smooth, orange shape, possibly a finger or a part of a jar, is visible, reaching towards the center. The overall atmosphere is dreamy and whimsical.

“Oh, my!” Pooh cried. He opened the jar to get a closer look.
The love bug flew up to Pooh’s face and gently blinked.
Then the friendly bug sailed into the air, zipping this way and
that, dazzling Pooh with bright swirling arcs of light.

The magical glowing bug led the way through the woods, and Pooh happily followed. When they reached a clearing, the love bug flew off to find Pooh's friends. One by one, Tigger, Piglet, and the others followed the bug's light straight to the same spot.





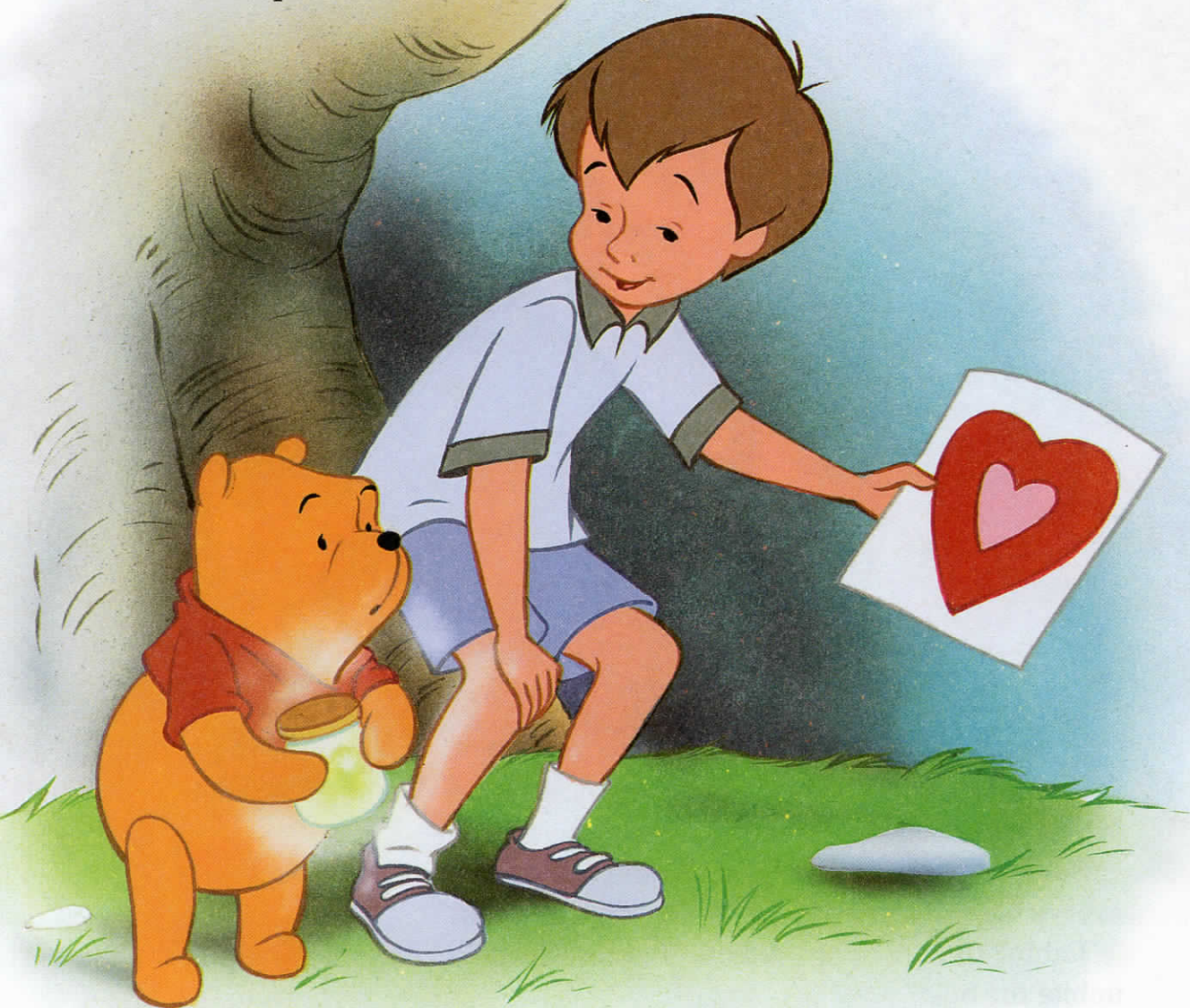
As the friends happily greeted one another, the love bug flew back into Pooh's jar. Then off they all went toward home.

Soon afterward, Christopher Robin found them. "I've been looking everywhere!" he cried. "Where have you all been?"

Rabbit nudged Pooh. "Go on," Rabbit whispered. "Let the love bug unbite the boy!"

But before Pooh could open the jar, Christopher Robin said, “Pooh, there’s something I want to show you.” Feeling quite shy, Christopher Robin showed Pooh the card addressed to Winifred. “I made this for a friend—a new friend. What do you think of it?”

Pooh peered at the card. “It’s very nice indeed,” he said.



Pooh was quiet for a moment. Then, to his friends' amazement, he opened the jar and set the love bug free.

Piglet hurried to Pooh's side. "Why did you let it go?" he cried.

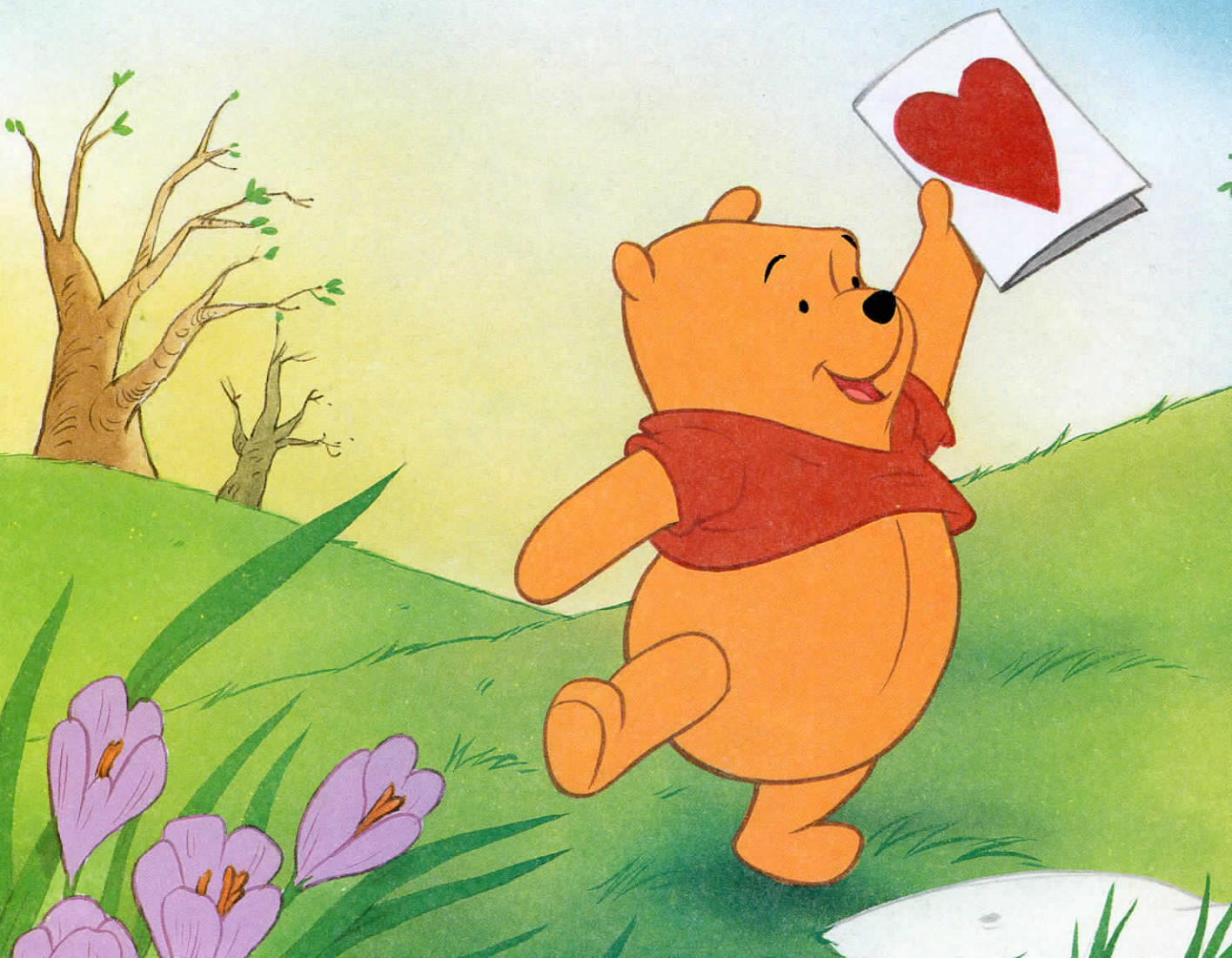
"Because," said Pooh, "Christopher Robin is happy as he is, and no matter what happens, I wouldn't want it any other way."



And so Pooh and his friends headed home, sad that Christopher Robin had found a new friend and didn't seem to need them anymore.

But they were as wrong as wrong could be. For when they arrived at home, each one found a big, beautiful valentine waiting.

Christopher Robin had *not* forgotten his old friends at all.





The next morning, carrying his valentine, Pooh again hurried to the hilltop hoping to find Christopher Robin. And there he was, waiting for Pooh.

“This card is from you,” Pooh said to him. “Is it really for me?”

“It really is,” his friend replied.

“But we thought you had found a new friend,” Pooh said.



Christopher Robin knelt beside Pooh. “Oh, Pooh,” he said. “Just because I have a new friend, it doesn’t mean I care any less for you.”

“That’s what I thought all along,” said Pooh, smiling. “Still, it’s nice to hear it said.”

And so the two friends—the very *best* of friends—joined hands and went off to enjoy the lovely day.