

# SHIMMERLING

BY ANDREA SKYBERG





Dedicated to my brother Mitch (the wings)  
and my daughter Celia (the roots)

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The illustrations in this book were created by photographing sculptures made of fabric and metal. The students of Westside Academy I and Mary Bethune Academy engraved the feathers of the Shimmerling.

Photography and book design by Michael Greer.

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# Shimmerling

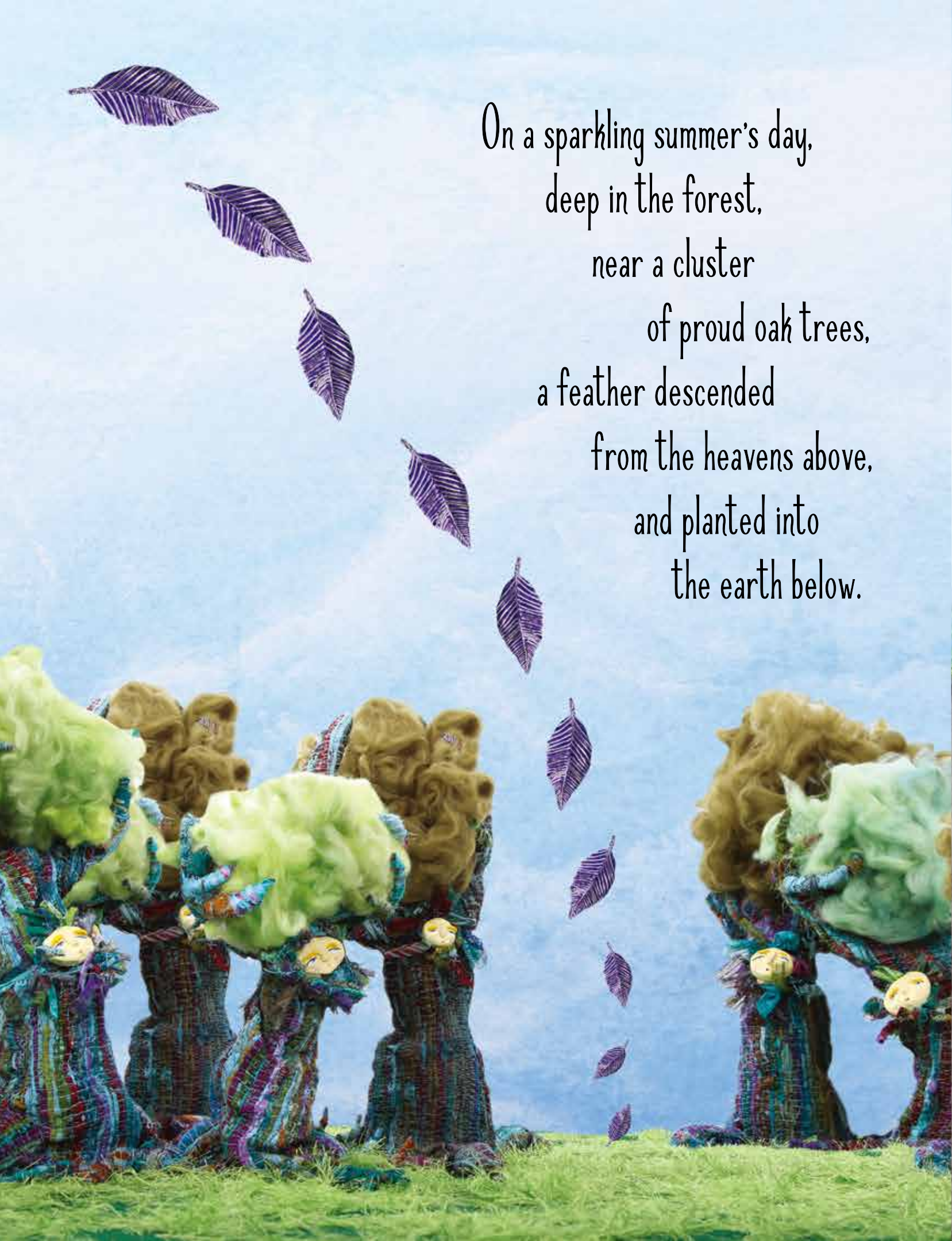
by Andrea Skyberg

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*Don't take any wooden nickels.*





On a sparkling summer's day,  
deep in the forest,  
near a cluster  
of proud oak trees,  
a feather descended  
from the heavens above,  
and planted into  
the earth below.



Out sprouted the Shimmerling.





It shot up with magnificent speed.  
The buds on its wings blossomed sparkling feathers  
that lifted themselves to the spirits in the sky.





Its large thick roots hugged the soil,  
digging into dirt, rich with the souls of ancestral trees.





The birds of the forest admired  
its large dazzling wings.





The oak trees delighted in its  
glittery bark and strong roots.







“Shine on! Shine on!”  
the trees and birds sang out  
to their new neighbor.



Autumn came. The leaves fell and the birds flew south,  
leaving for warmer weather.

"Fly with us, bird!" they called.

An encouraging breeze rustled its feathers  
inspiring the Shimmerling to rise up.



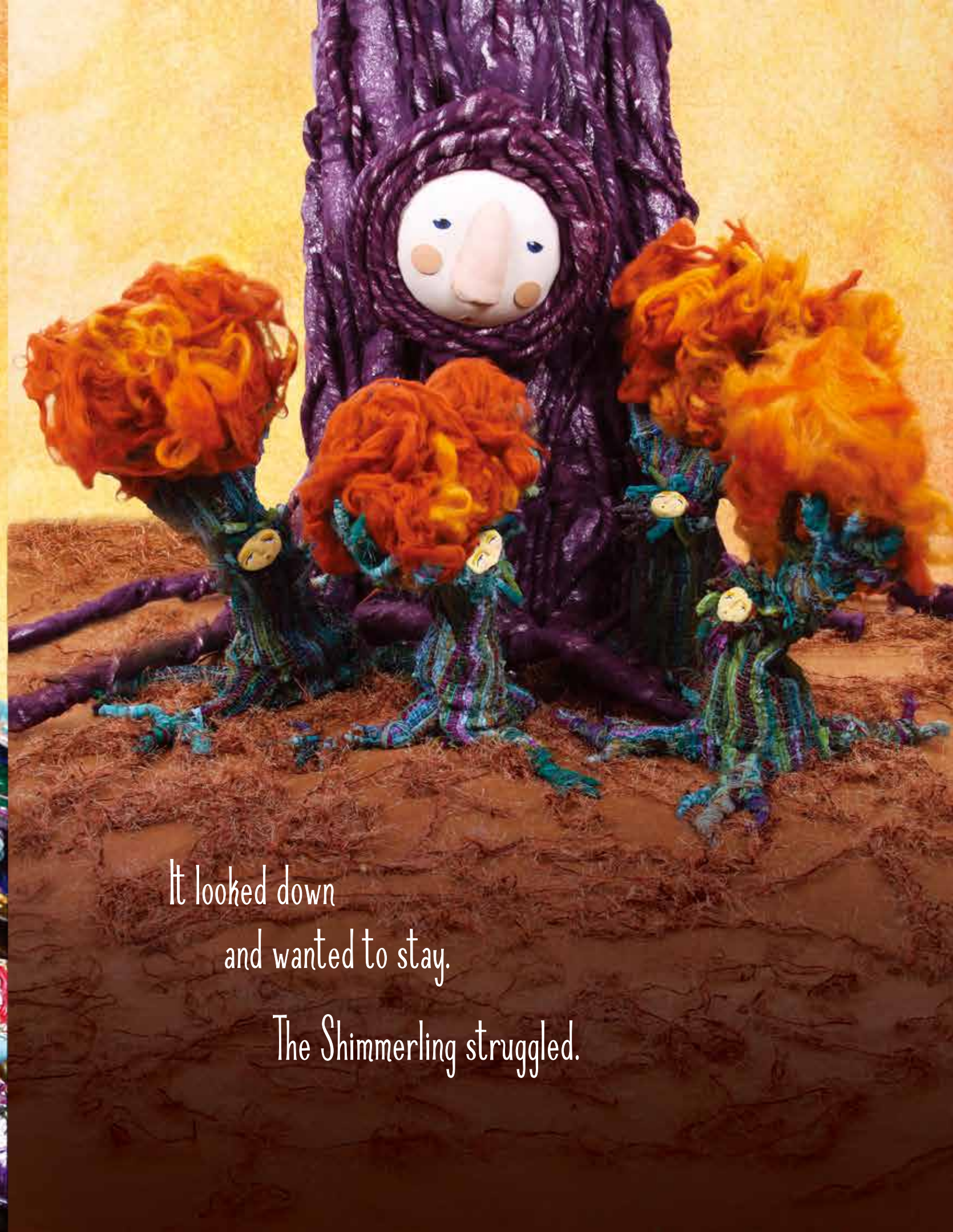
"Trees stay put," reminded the wise oaks.

And like the trees,  
the Shimmerling's roots sank  
down preparing for winter.



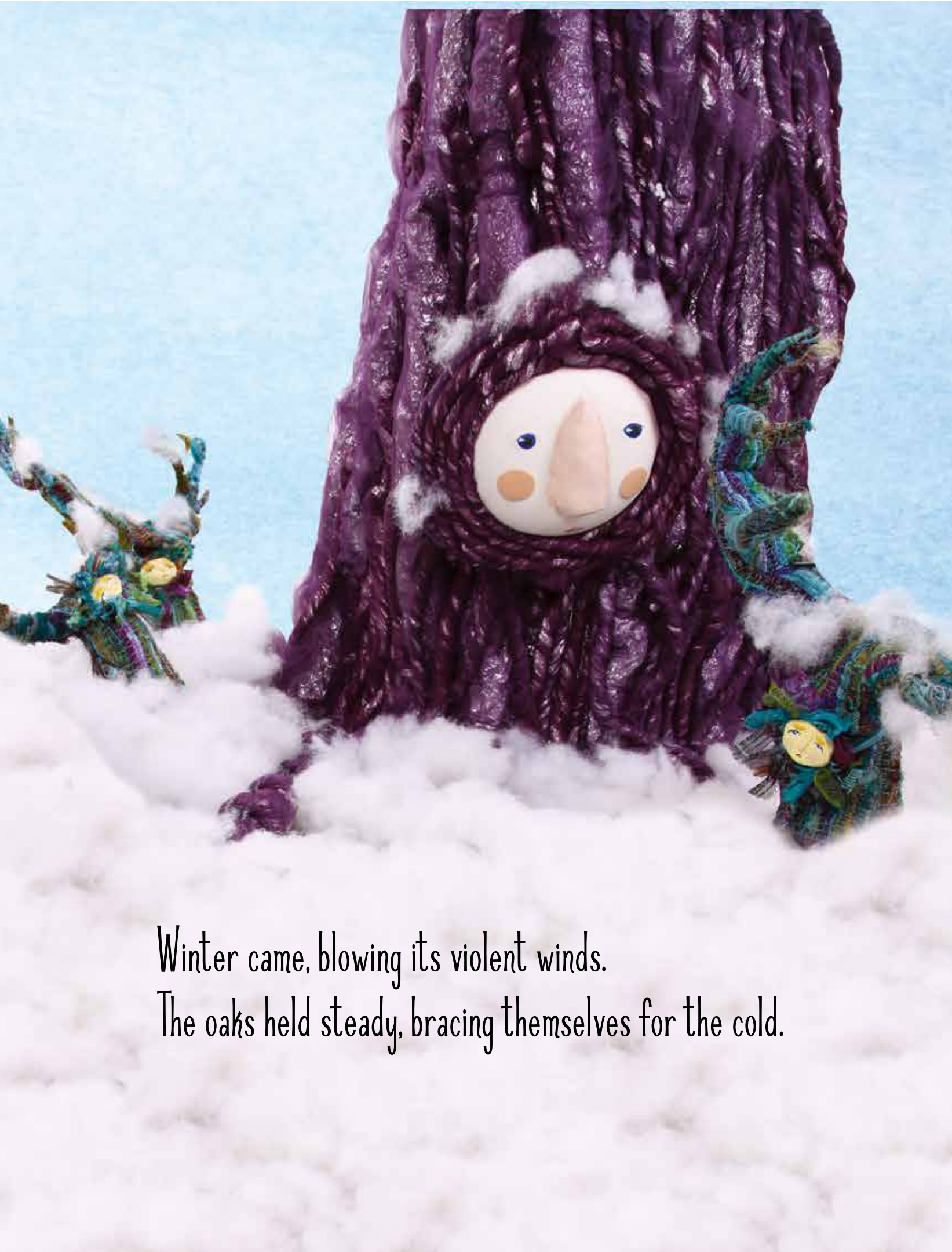


It looked up  
and wanted to fly.



It looked down  
and wanted to stay.  
The Shimmerling struggled.





Winter came, blowing its violent winds.  
The oaks held steady, bracing themselves for the cold.



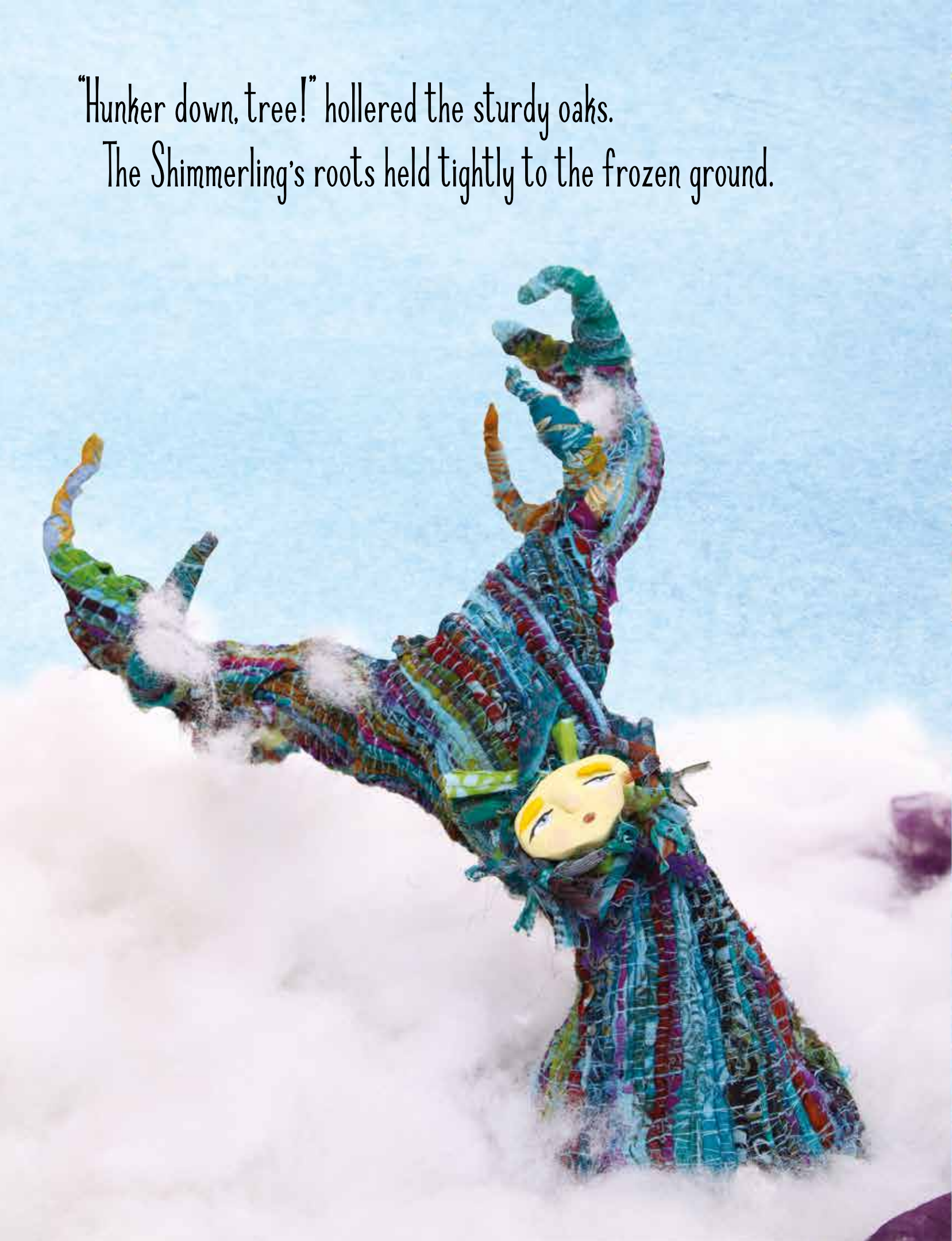
"Birds take to the sky,"  
crooned a bird from above.

The Shimmerling lifed its wings,  
letting its feathers catch the wind.





"Hunker down, tree!" hollered the sturdy oaks.  
The Shimmerling's roots held tightly to the frozen ground.



It looked up  
and wanted to fly.  
It looked down  
and wanted to stay.  
The Shimmerling  
struggled.





Finally, the snow melted and the heavy rains of spring arrived,  
showering down upon the Shimmerling.

Bright colors filled the forest.



The birds returned and the trees nurtured their newly budded leaves.





The Shimmerling's wings drooped from the recent downpour.



The birds ruffled their feathers and chimed,  
“What’s wrong, bird?  
Shake off your wings and fly!”





The Shimmerling slumped as its roots sunk deeper into the ground.

The grounded oaks shook their branches in disbelief.  
“Why do you sag into the earth, tree?  
Stand tall and grow where you’ve been planted!”



It looked up and wanted to fly.  
It looked down and wanted to stay.  
The Shimmerling struggled.







On a magical night, when the moon swelled full,  
the Shimmerling gazed at its reflection in the  
rainwater puddled at its feet.

It marveled at the dazzling feathers covering its  
wings and at its luminous bark sparkling from  
the glow of the moon.

It felt the solid footings of its  
roots fixed into the earth.





"I'm neither a bird nor a tree.  
I'm a Shimmerling."





A powerful gush of air pushed through its feathers.  
The Shimmerling raised its wings  
to catch the wind.  
It plunged its roots deeper  
into the ground.

It was at peace.  
It was happy.









And the Shimmerling shined on.



## The Birth of the Shimmerling

I collaborated with two Milwaukee Public schools, West Side Academy and Bethune Academy, to create *Shimmerling*. Over three-hundred students created the artwork for the book, working with me over the course of a few months. Students also explored how writing can help heal painful emotions, and they used guided meditation to help explore their inner spirits, all of which led them to create beautiful expressions.



Students designed an image of a bird and tree, and engraved it into the metal feathers.



Students colored their designed feathers with permanent markers.



When all the feathers were finished, I assembled them to form the wings and headdress of the Shimmerling. In addition to the metal feathers, the Shimmerling was created using tinfoil, fabric, foam, and wire.



## The Birds and the Trees



The oak trees were created out of wire and fabric, and the tops were made from dyed wool.



The faces of the birds and trees were sculpted out of clay and hand painted.



The trunk of the Shimmerling was sculpted out of tinfoil and tulle fabric.



Michael Greer photographed the scenes and digitally composited the images.

Arts @ Large funded the residency project which took place at two Milwaukee Public schools. Arts @ Large is a non-profit organization that connects arts to academics through meaningful arts experiences for Milwaukee Public School students. In addition to creating the engraved feathers for *Shimmerling*, the students also created feathers to decorate their schools. These feathers were attached to large wooden cutouts and displayed in their schools to allow students to remember their involvement with the *Shimmerling* book project, as well as to beautify each school.

Find out more about the making of *Shimmerling*, and future artist residencies and book projects at [AndreaSkyberg.com](http://AndreaSkyberg.com)







Andrea Skyberg is an award-winning author, illustrator, and artist educator. She has a unique method for creating her books, collaborating with hundreds of students to illustrate and sometimes write the story. Andrea loves visiting schools as an artist educator, because she believes encouraging children to use art and writing to understand themselves and others leads to more empathetic people and therefore, a better world. *Shimmerling* is Andrea's fourth book. She lives in Milwaukee, WI with her husband and two daughters. Find out more at [andreaskyberg.com](http://andreaskyberg.com).

