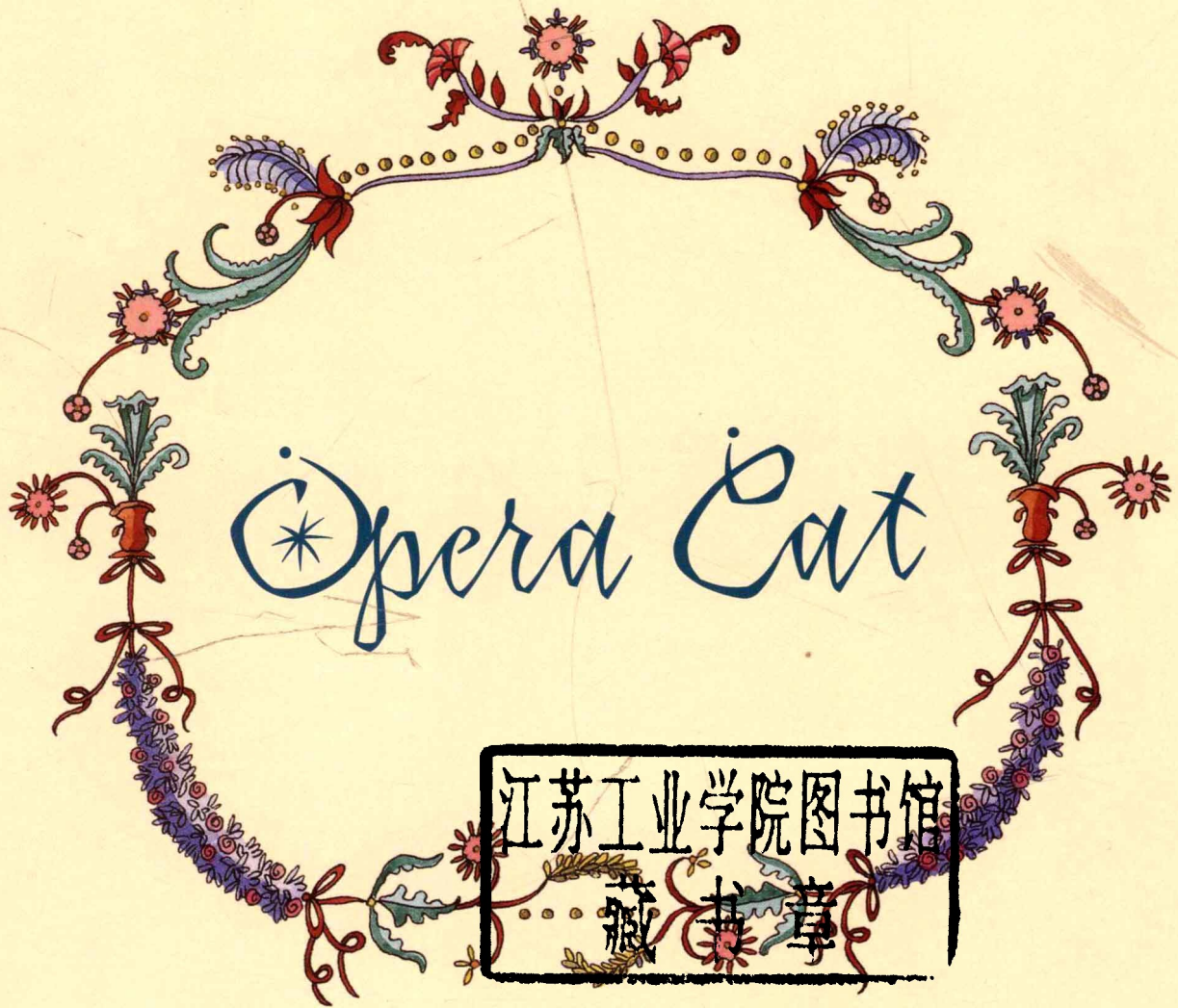


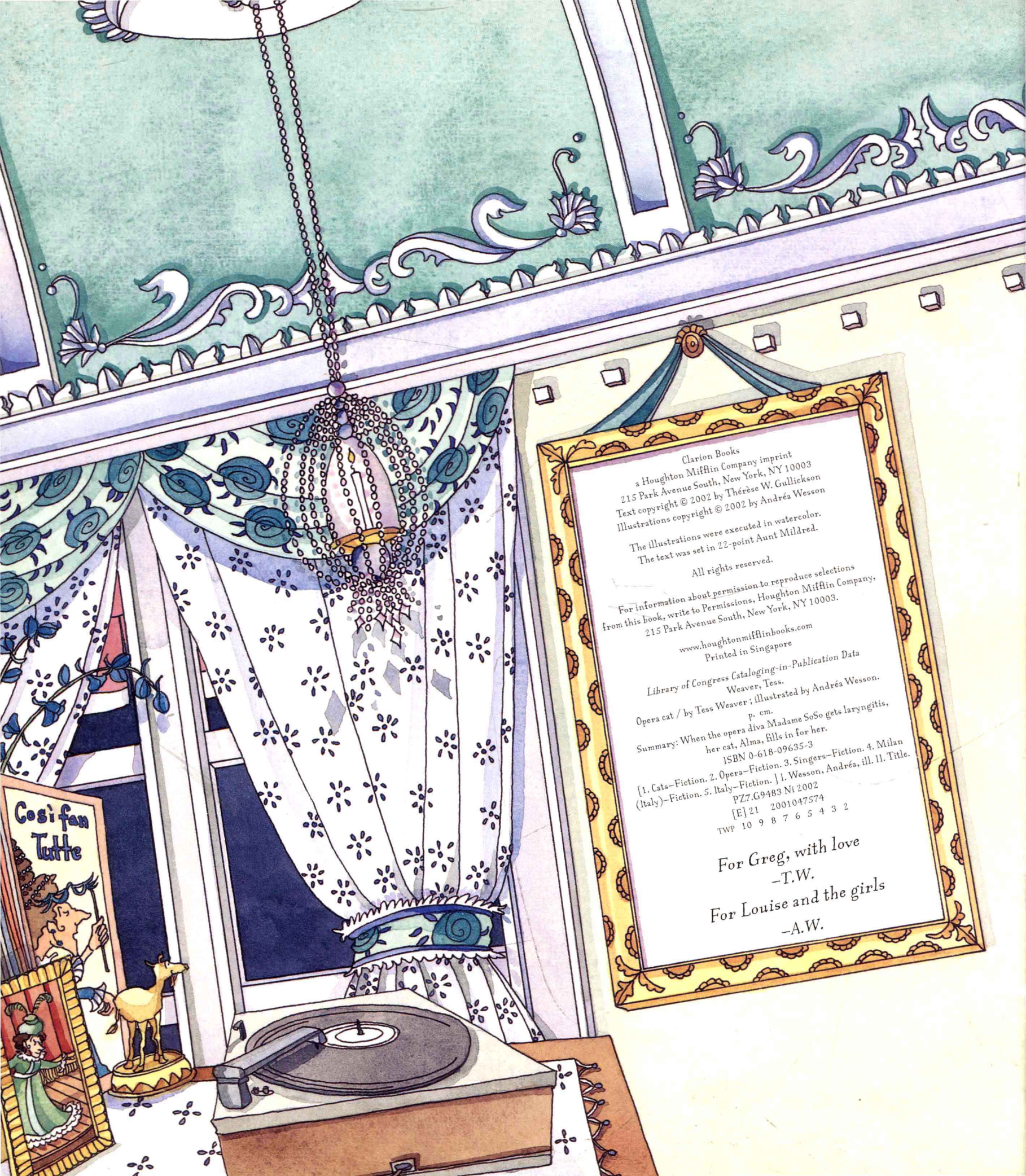
# Opera Cat





Opera Cat

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For Greg, with love  
—T.W.

For Louise and the girls  
—A.W.

Così fan  
Tutte

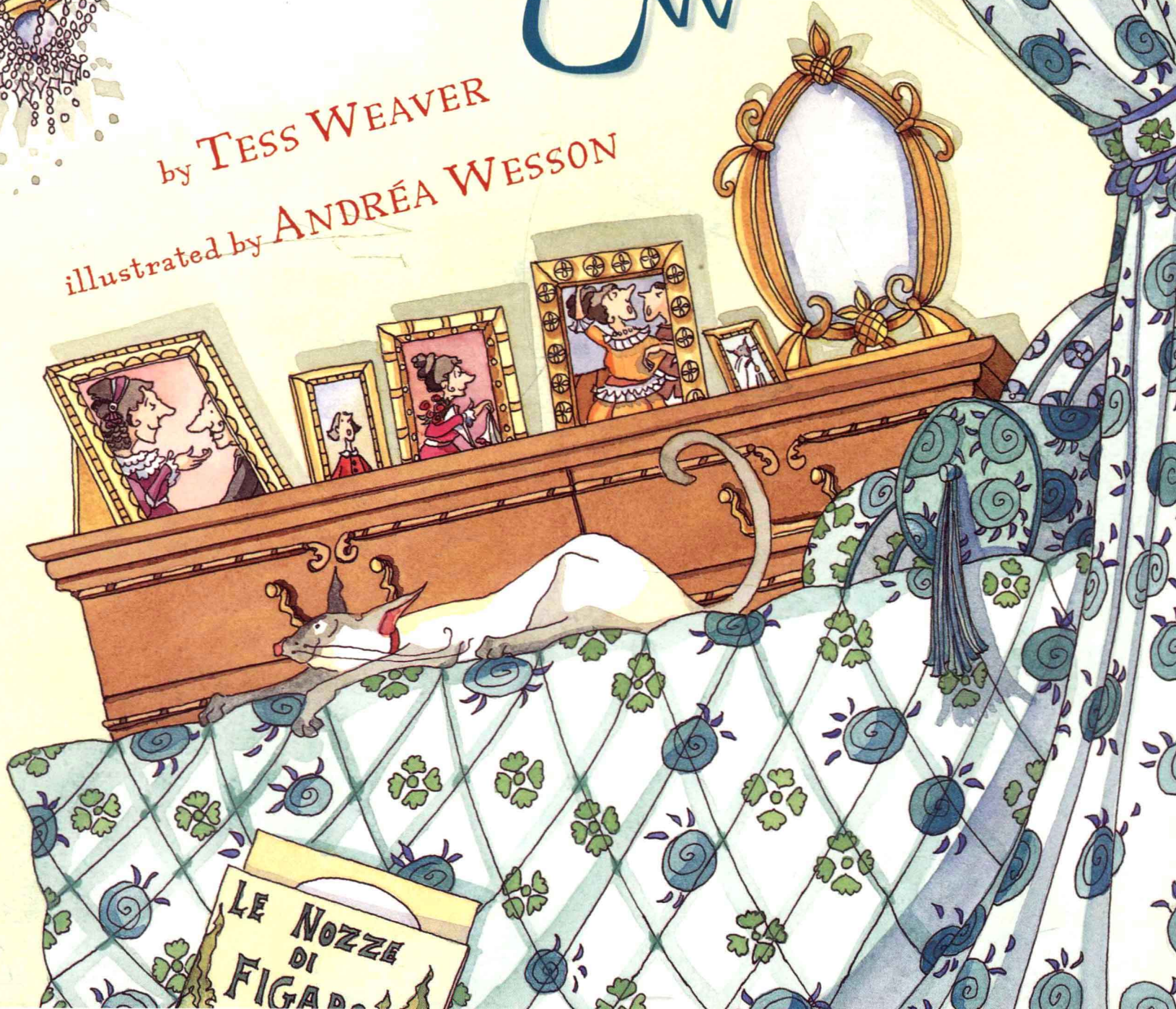


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# Opera Cat

by TESS WEAVER

illustrated by ANDRÉA WESSON



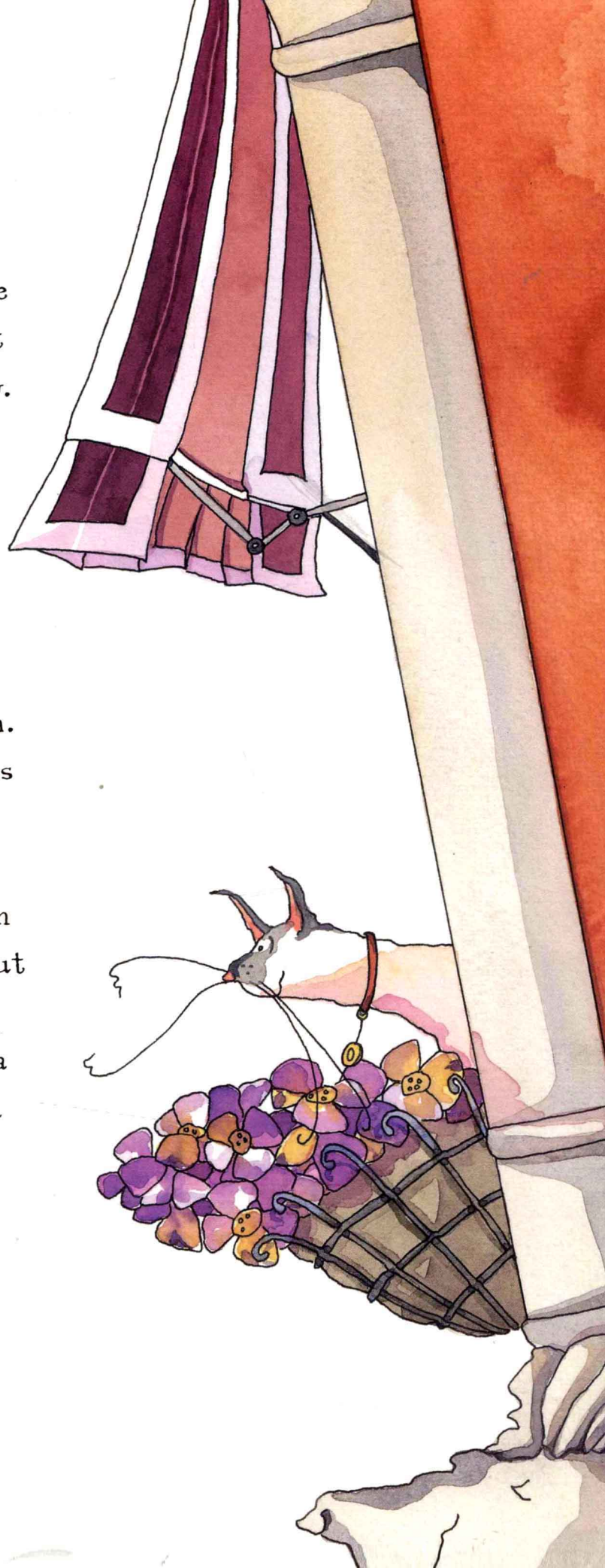


On Saturday morning, Alma sat on the windowsill of Madame SoSo's apartment licking her paws. It was an ordinary day. Alma looked out at Milan and noticed ordinary things.

Signora Gatti stood behind her street-cart, wrapping flowers in shiny paper. Shoppers strolled through the market, buying bread and cheese and fresh fish. A boy jumped into the fountain and was rescued by a woman wearing a red hat.

Alma wished she could jump down from her windowsill and explore the city. But her window was much too high. And Madame SoSo never took her out. Alma rubbed her cheek against the glass and sighed. Another ordinary day.

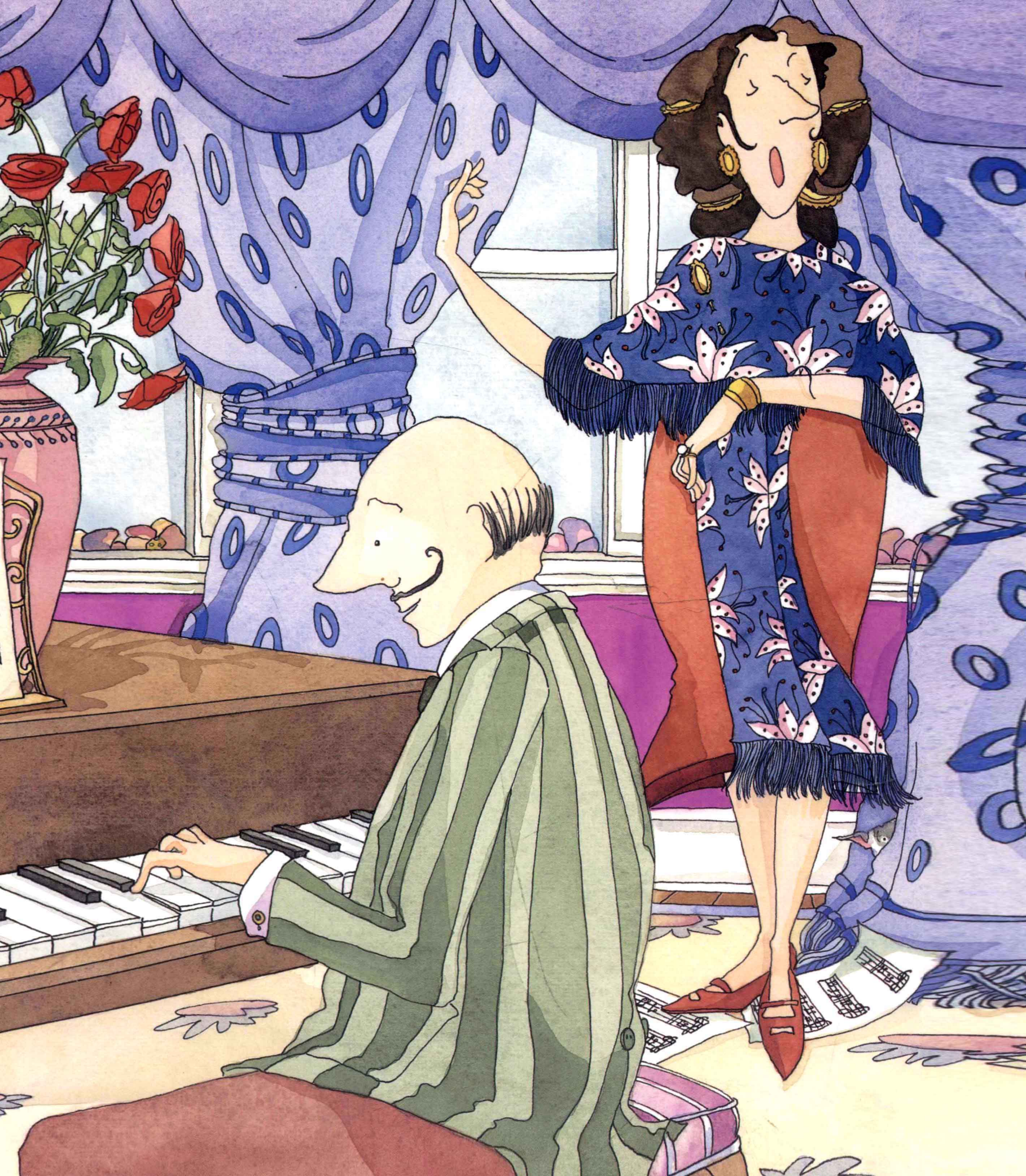
Or was it?









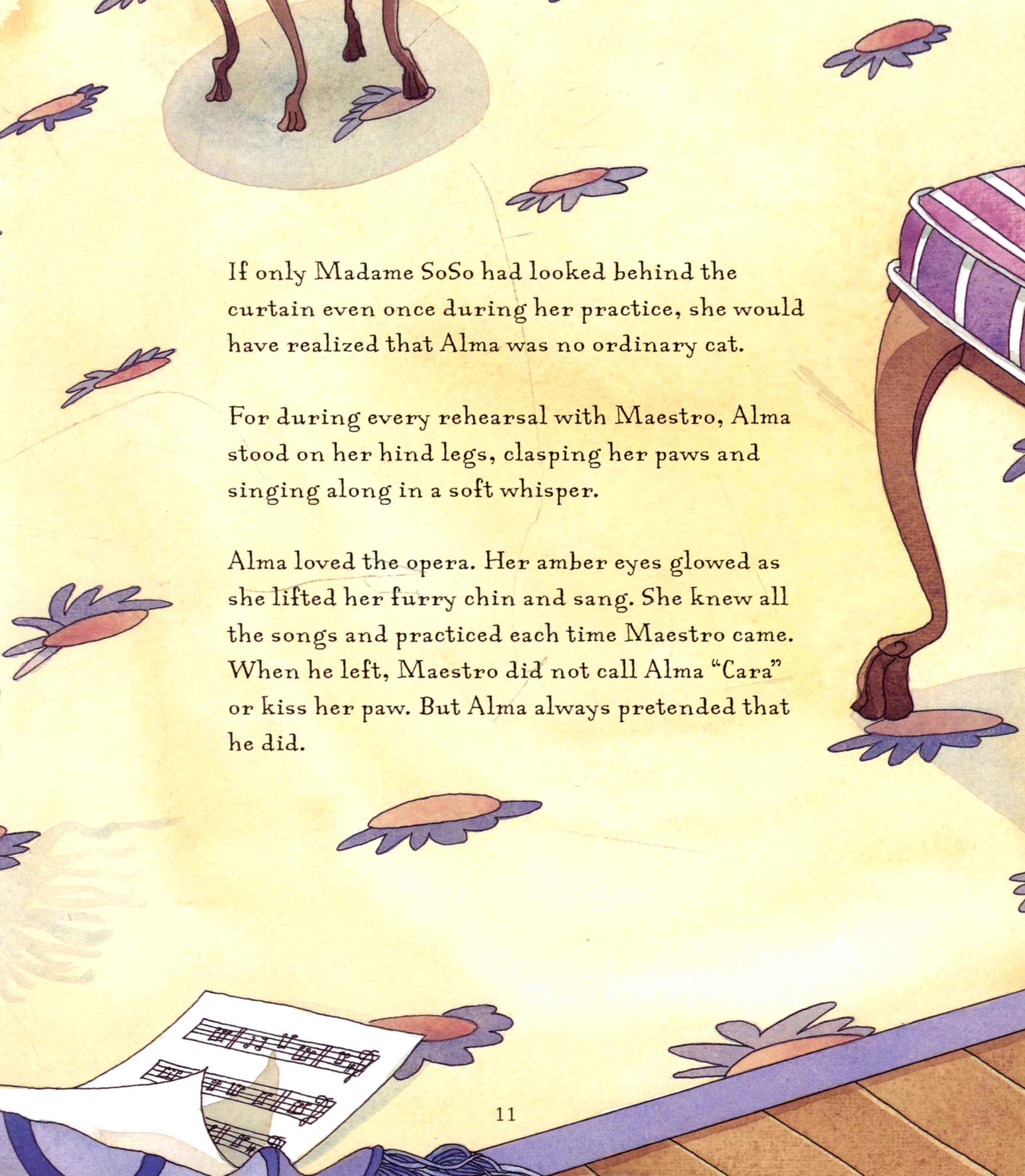


Maestro worked Madame SoSo very hard. He made her sing deep, grumbling low notes, “Dum, dum, dum, deeee,” and sharp, trembling high notes, “La, la, la, looo.” Madame SoSo had to rest several times. She sat on the sofa, fanning herself with magazines while Maestro spritzed her throat with mineral water.

When they finished, Maestro kissed Madame SoSo’s hand and called her “Cara.” This was Alma’s favorite part. She always peeked from behind the curtain to see the kiss.







If only Madame SoSo had looked behind the curtain even once during her practice, she would have realized that Alma was no ordinary cat.

For during every rehearsal with Maestro, Alma stood on her hind legs, clasping her paws and singing along in a soft whisper.

Alma loved the opera. Her amber eyes glowed as she lifted her furry chin and sang. She knew all the songs and practiced each time Maestro came. When he left, Maestro did not call Alma “Cara” or kiss her paw. But Alma always pretended that he did.

After dinner, Madame SoSo began to prepare for the night's performance. She took a long bath and curled her dark, thick hair. She put on shoes that made her look very tall and began to sing in front of the gold-leaf mirror.

"La, la, la, looo!" she tried. But this is what came out: "L-a-l-ul-gll." Her voice was cracking like an eggshell!

She cleared her throat and began again. This time only a whisper escaped her lips. "L-a-r-l-gll."

Madame SoSo stared into the mirror and inspected her hot, red throat. Her reflection told her what she already knew. She had laryngitis!







Madame SoSo tore at her hair and paced the room. She drank a cup of hot water and a cup of cold water. She gargled salt water and stamped her feet. When she cried, enormous tears the size of coins dropped from her eyes.

But no matter how hard she tried, Madame SoSo could not sing a single note.







