

# Dog Breath

Carolyn Beck • Illustrated by Brooke Kerrigan



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Your favourite bone sits  
on the edge of the rug  
at the foot of my bed  
in that spot where the sun  
makes a big warm puddle  
in the middle of the afternoon.

Just the way you left it.





Two floorboards over  
in the lumpy shadow of your basket  
lie your red rubber ball,  
ragged with toothmarks,  
  
and a stolen sock, no toe left.



We slept here  
every night—  
you in your basket,  
curled nose to tail  
on your dug-bare cushion,  
me in my bed,  
tucked into my quilt.  
Sometimes you twitched and  
woofed inside a dream.  
Squirrels.

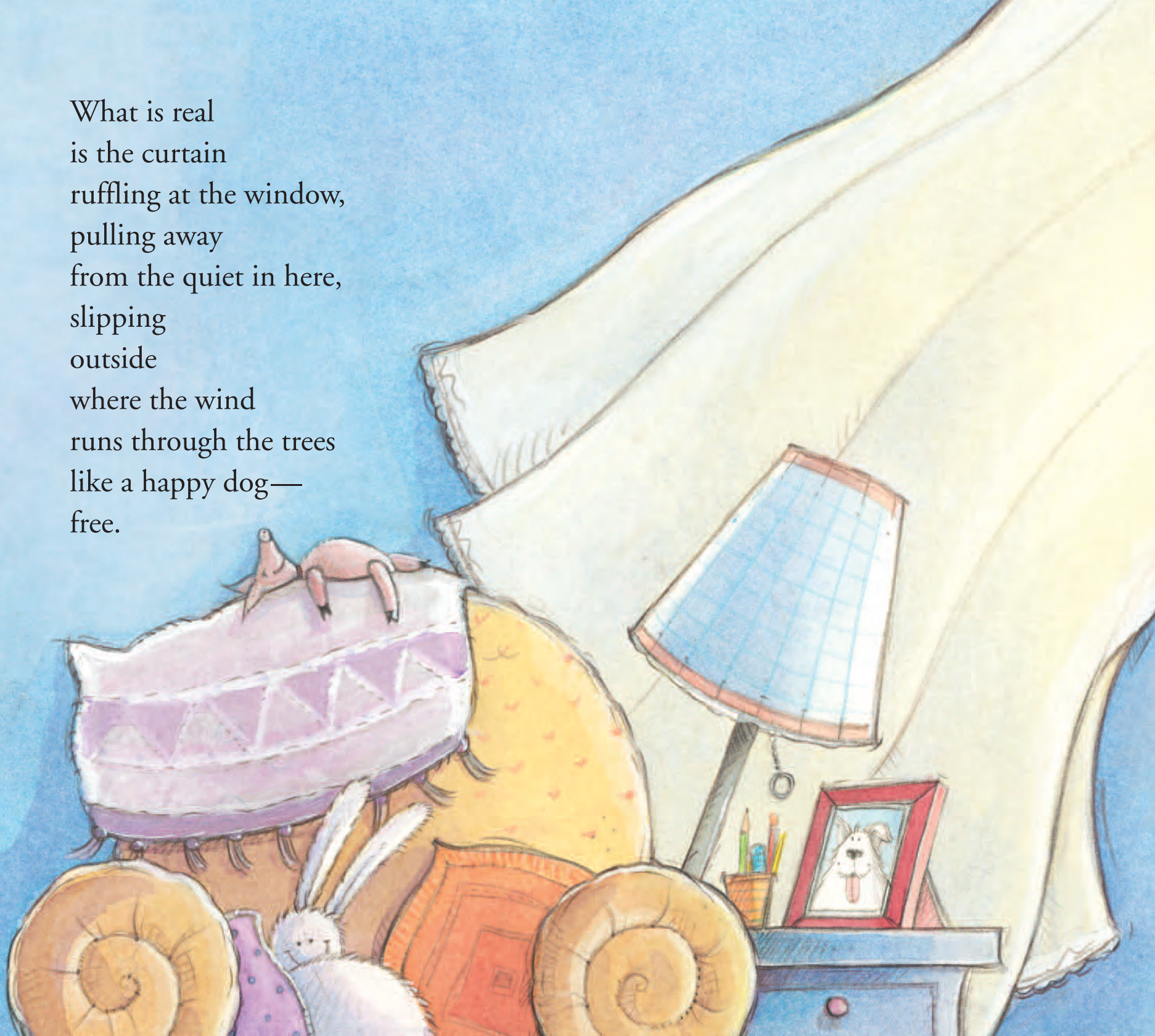


Sometimes  
I woke  
not knowing  
what was real  
till your nose  
touched my face.

Dog breath.



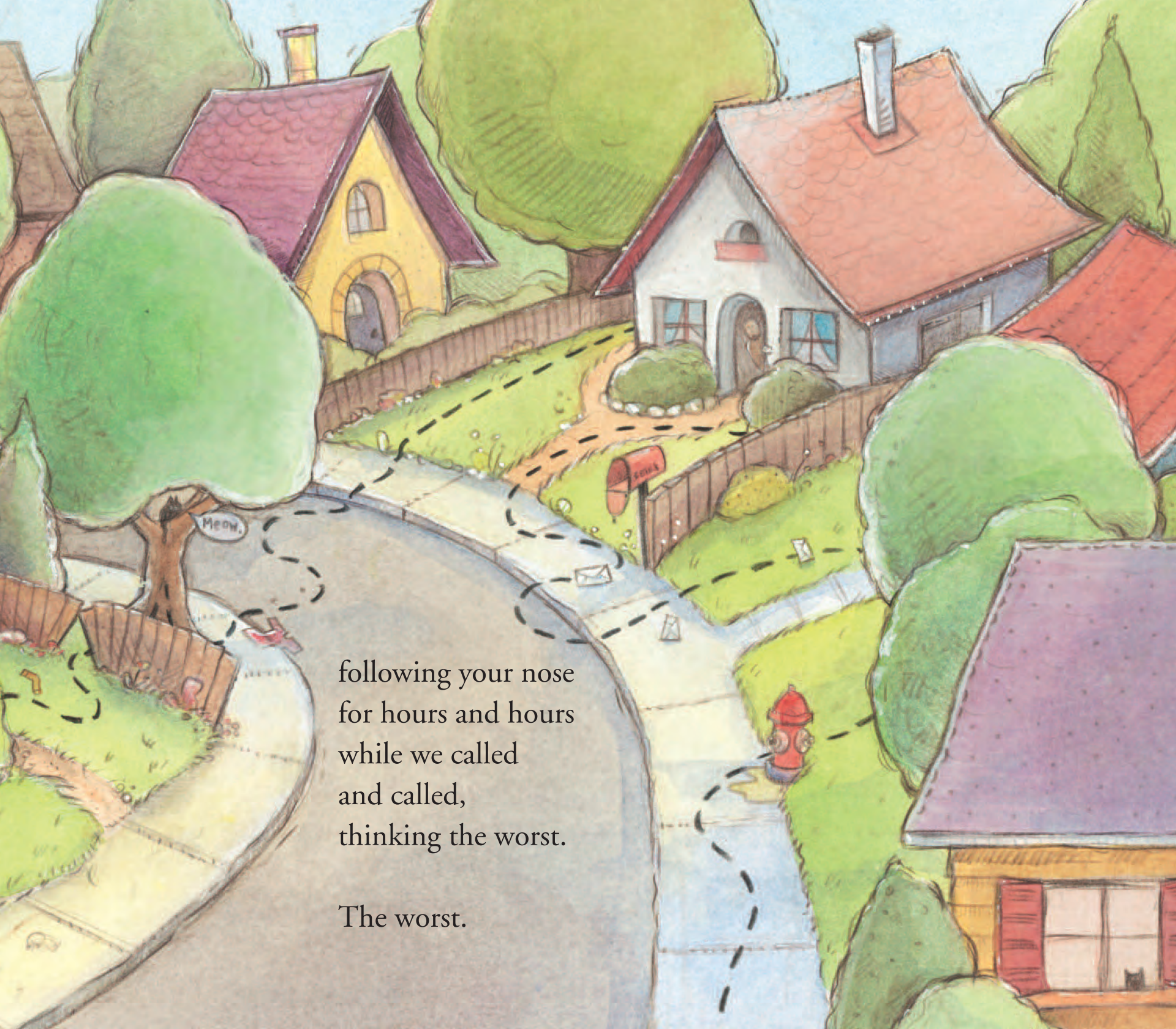
What is real  
is the curtain  
ruffling at the window,  
pulling away  
from the quiet in here,  
slipping  
outside  
where the wind  
runs through the trees  
like a happy dog—  
free.







You escaped any chance you got.  
If the door opened a crack,  
if for one second we forgot  
how crafty you were,  
out you went —  
raiding garbage cans,  
finding stinks to roll in,



following your nose  
for hours and hours  
while we called  
and called,  
thinking the worst.

The worst.

Suddenly, there you were  
at the door,  
scratching to come in,  
smelling like rotten cheese,  
looking all waggy and happy with yourself.  
At first  
all we did was cry some more.  
Tears of lost  
turned to tears of found.





Then we hauled you to the tub.  
Wet and skinny,  
fur stuck to your bones,  
you looked pretty sorry for yourself  
till you shook end to end.  
Revenge!

We all ran for cover,  
laughing our heads off.





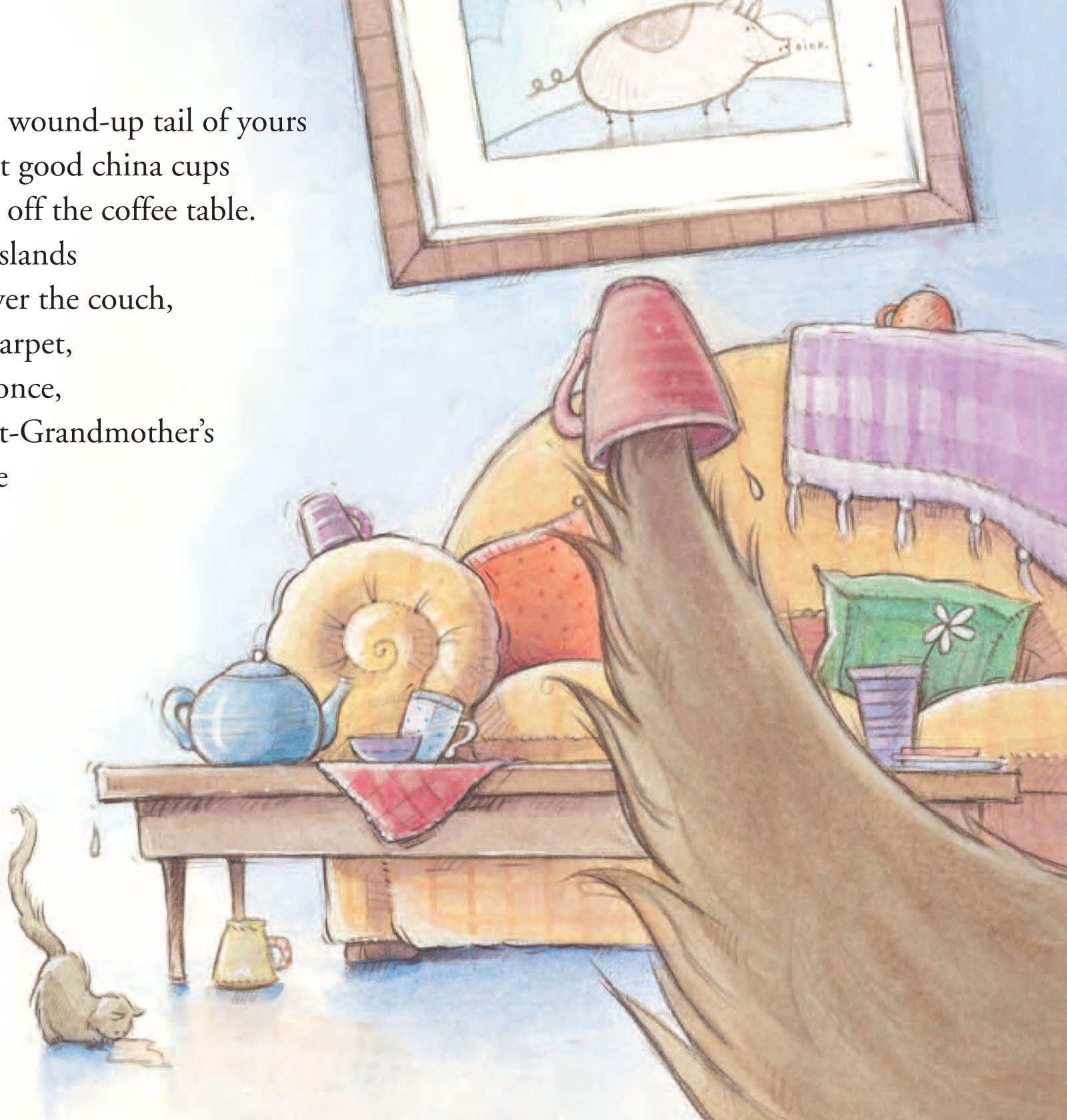


You howled your head off  
every time I played my clarinet.

And dribbled  
your long, cool toilet drinks  
halfway through the house.



That wound-up tail of yours  
swept good china cups  
right off the coffee table.  
Tea islands  
all over the couch,  
the carpet,  
and once,  
Great-Grandmother's  
white  
silk  
suit.



You chewed the mail.

And ate my dinner  
on liver night  
so quietly not even the liver  
knew.



*To Dan — CB*

*To Max and his doggy breath. You're the best brother a gal could have. — BK*

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*“You were trouble all right . . .*

A comfy dog bed, a red rubber ball, a favourite bone: a collection of images left behind stirs up memories, both poignant and humorous, of a child’s best friend.

**Carolyn Beck** loves dogs and loves writing about them. She presently lives in Toronto, Ontario, but not with a dog. She is still remembering Brandy, the sweetest mutt who ever lived. *Dog Breath* is Carolyn's fifth picture book.

**Brooke Kerrigan** has been drawing for as long as she can remember. Her doodling eventually led her to an Applied Arts degree at Sheridan College. Brooke currently divides her time between Toronto, Canada and Chamonix, France. *Dog Breath* is her third picture book.



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