

I Can Read!™

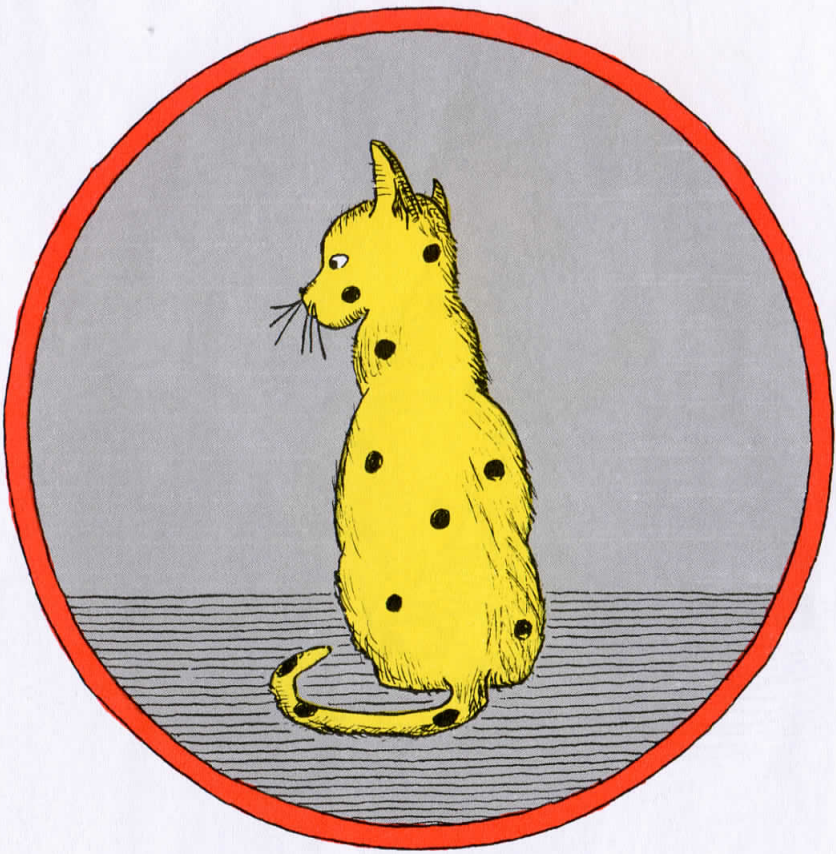
1

READING



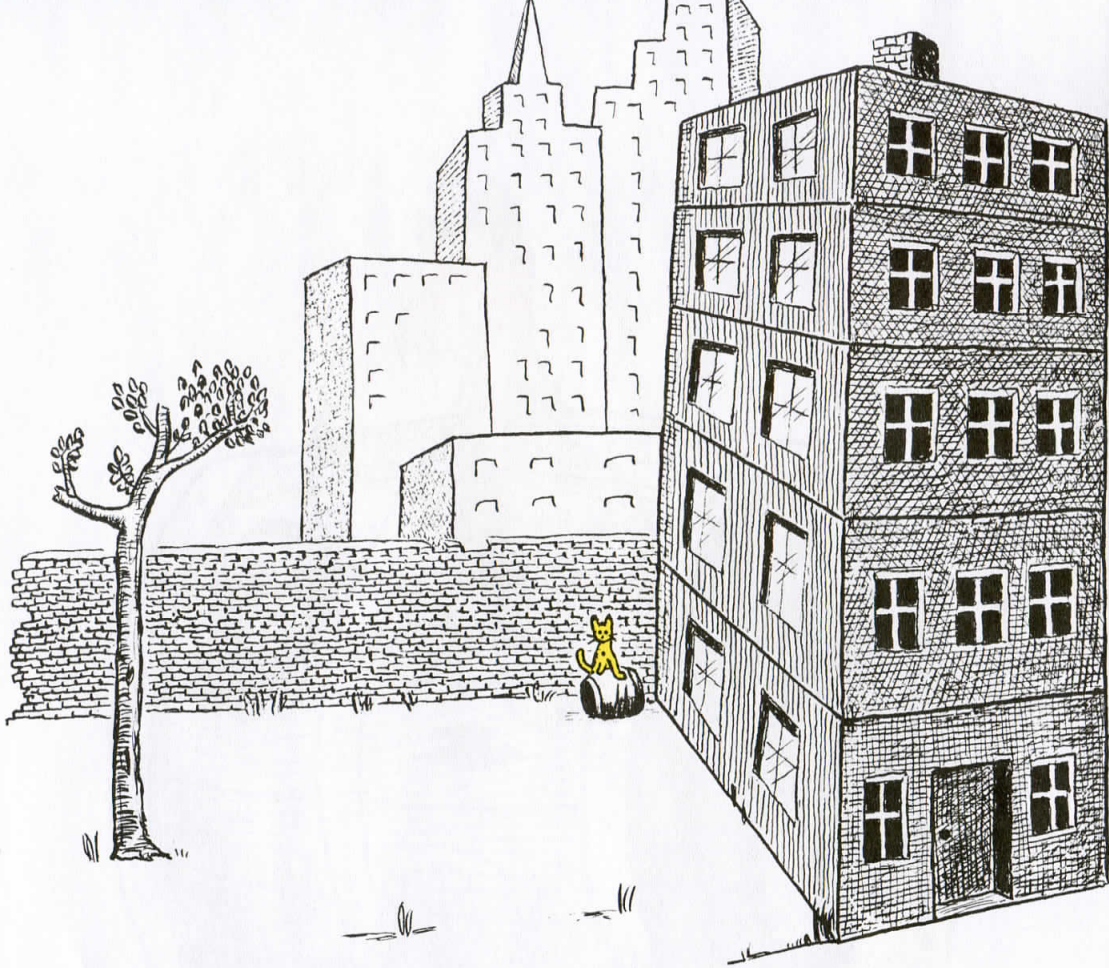
# THE FIRE CAT

by  
Esther Averill



## PICKLES

Once upon a time,  
there was a yellow cat  
with black spots in his fur.  
His name was Pickles.



Pickles's barrel was  
in an old yard  
where there was  
nothing big to do.  
So what did Pickles do?

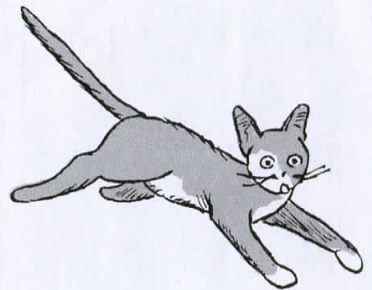
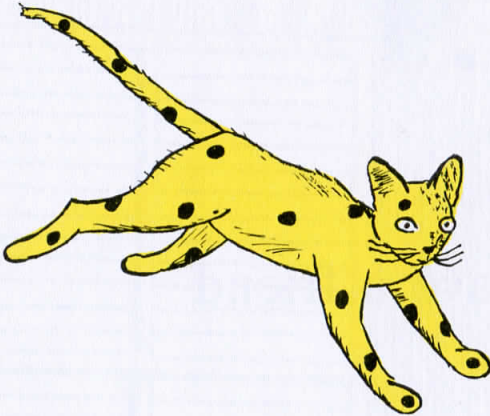
He ran after little cats.

He ran after every little cat  
that came into the yard.

And he chased the little cat  
out of the yard.

This was a bad, bad thing.

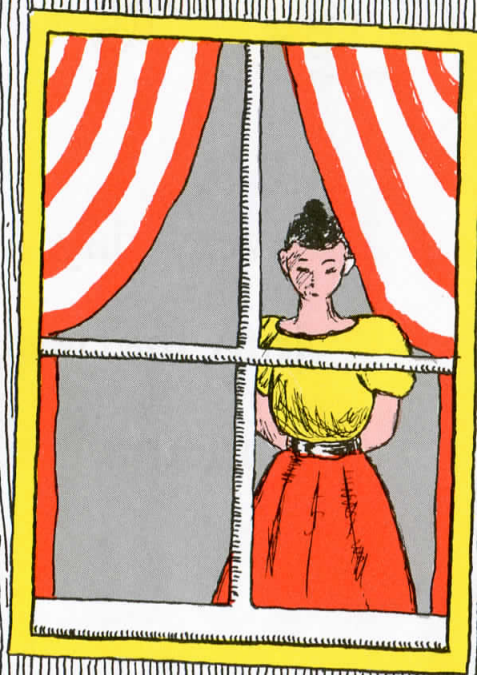
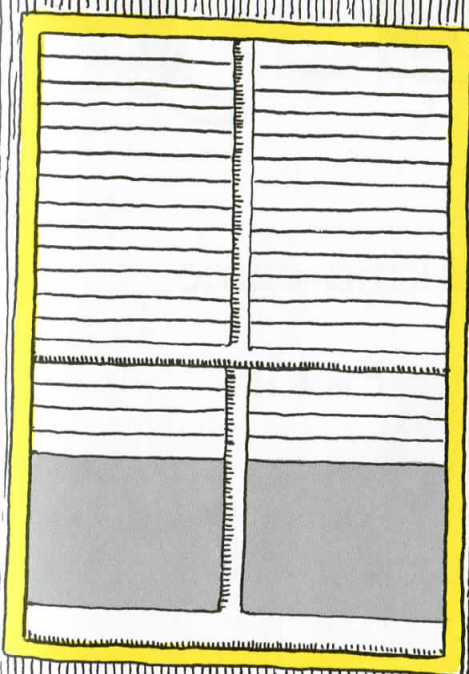
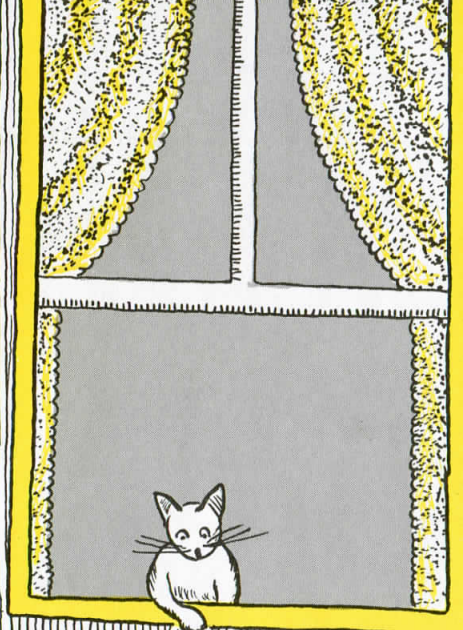
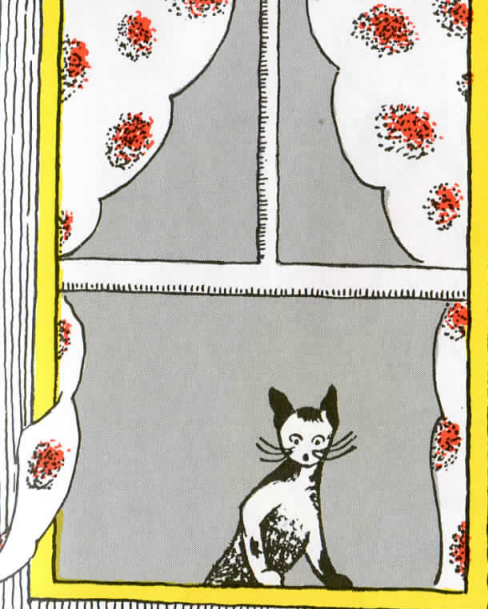
But it was all that Pickles  
could find to do.



Next to Pickles's yard was a house.  
In the house lived many cats  
who called out to Pickles,  
"You are bad.  
You cannot be our friend."



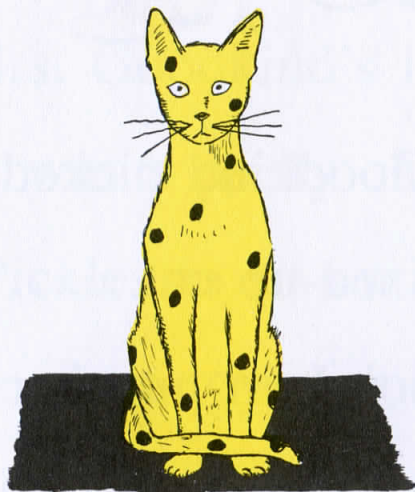
But Pickles did have a friend  
in the house.  
His friend was Mrs. Goodkind.





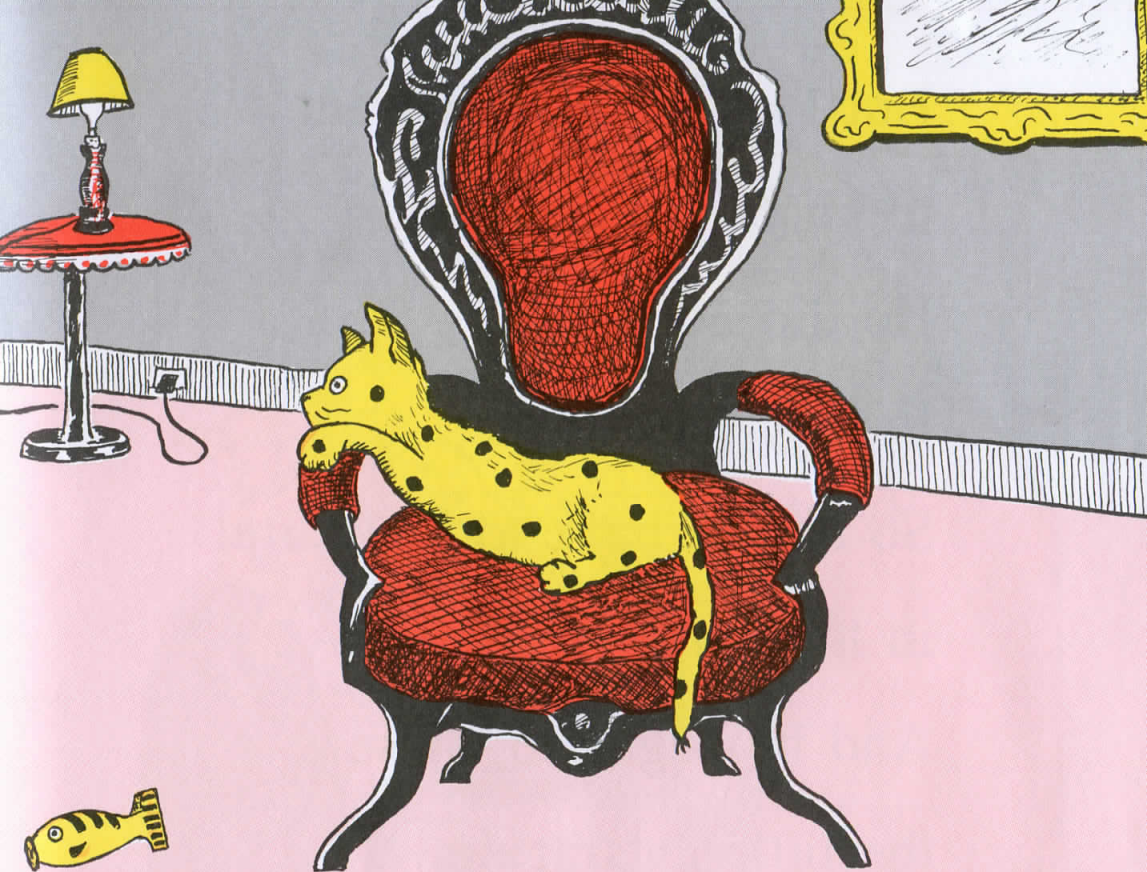
Every day Mrs. Goodkind came into the yard and gave Pickles something to eat.

One day Mrs. Goodkind said,  
“Pickles, you are not a bad cat.  
You are not a good cat.  
You are good and bad.  
And bad and good.  
You are a mixed-up cat.  
What you need is a good home.  
Then you will be good.”





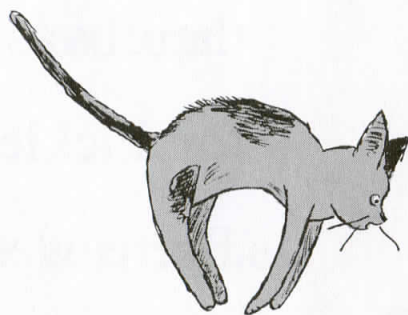
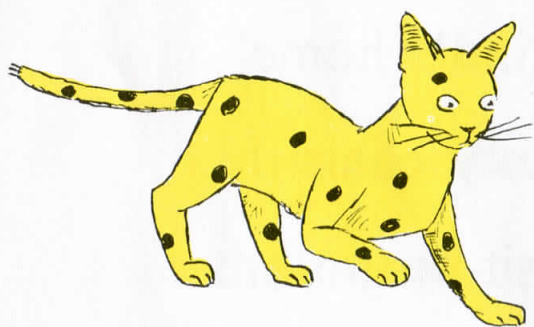
Mrs. Goodkind picked up  
the mixed-up cat.  
She took him into her home  
to live.



In Mrs. Goodkind's home  
there was a pretty chair  
for Pickles to sit on.

There were toys for him  
to play with.

But Pickles did not want  
to sit on a pretty chair.  
He did not want  
to play with toys.  
So he ran back to his barrel  
in the yard.  
And he began to chase  
the little cats again.





Mrs. Goodkind said to Pickles,  
“Things cannot go on like this.  
Something will happen.”

The next day  
Pickles chased  
a little cat  
up an old tree.  
He climbed  
after her.





Pickles sat up in the tree  
near the little cat.

He would not let her climb down.

After a time, the wind began  
to blow.

It blew and blew and blew.

And the rain came down hard.

It came down harder and harder.

At last Pickles let the little cat  
climb down and go home.

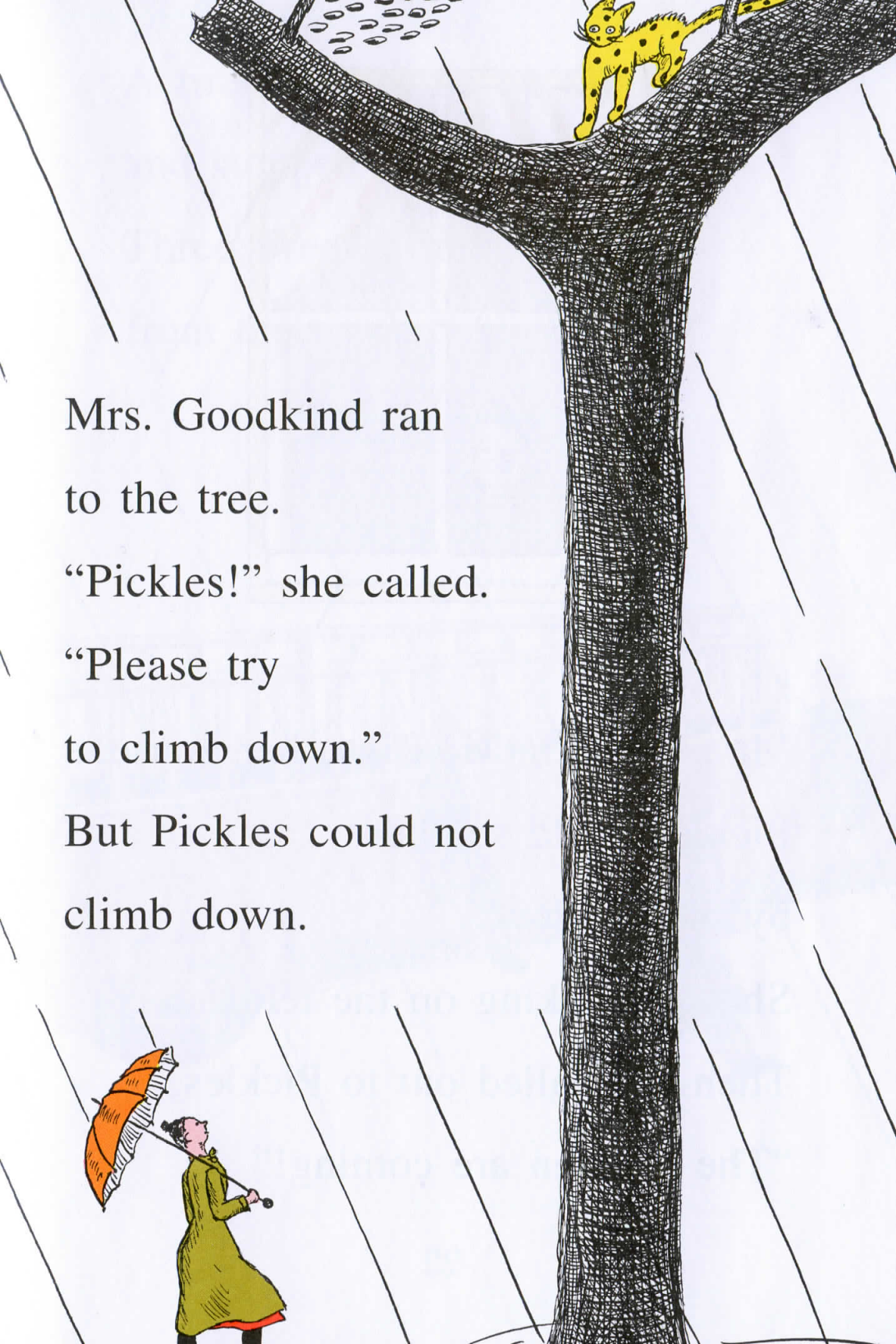
Pickles wanted to climb down, too.

He wanted to get back  
into his barrel.

But he could not climb down.

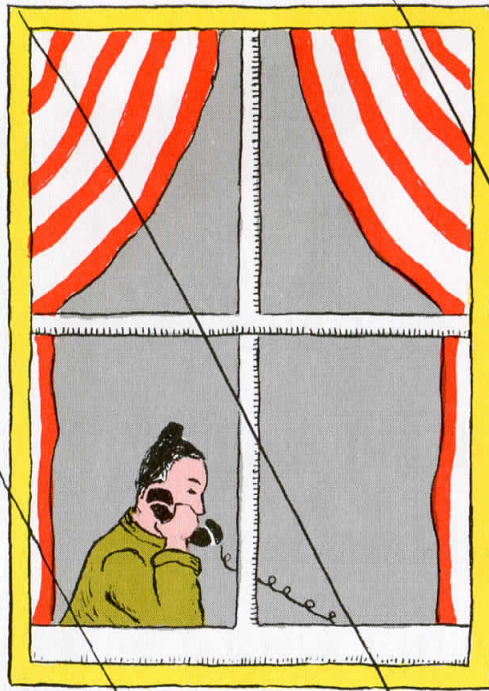
Sometimes this happens to a cat.

And it happened to Pickles.



Mrs. Goodkind ran  
to the tree.  
“Pickles!” she called.  
“Please try  
to climb down.”  
But Pickles could not  
climb down.





Mrs. Goodkind ran into her house.  
Pickles could see her  
by the window.  
She was talking on the telephone.  
Then she called out to Pickles,  
“The firemen are coming!”

A fire truck came up the street  
and stopped at Pickles's yard.  
Three firemen jumped down  
from the truck.



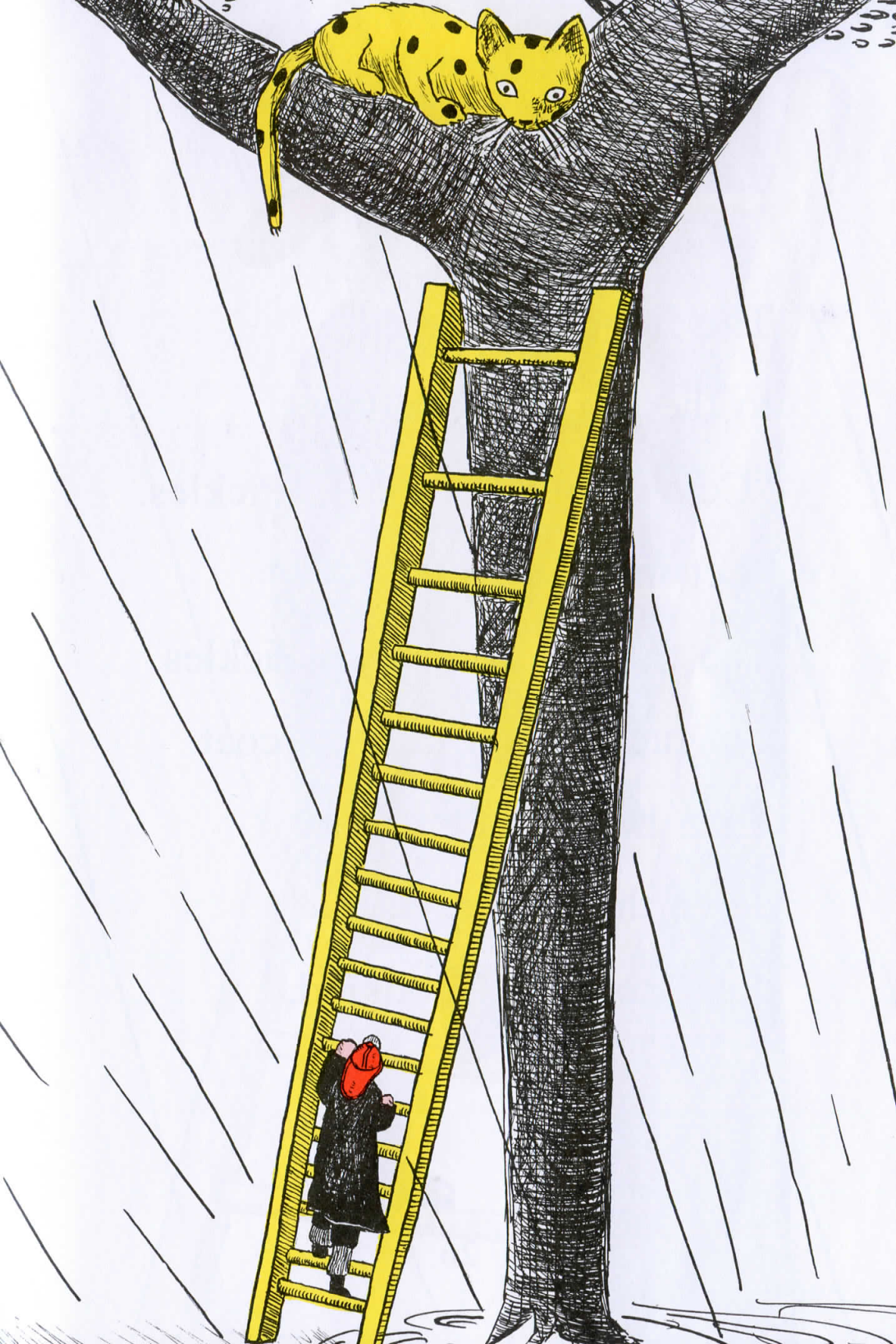
Mrs. Goodkind came  
out of her house.

She ran to the firemen,  
and pointed to Pickles.



The firemen put a ladder  
against the tree.

One of the firemen began  
to climb up the ladder.



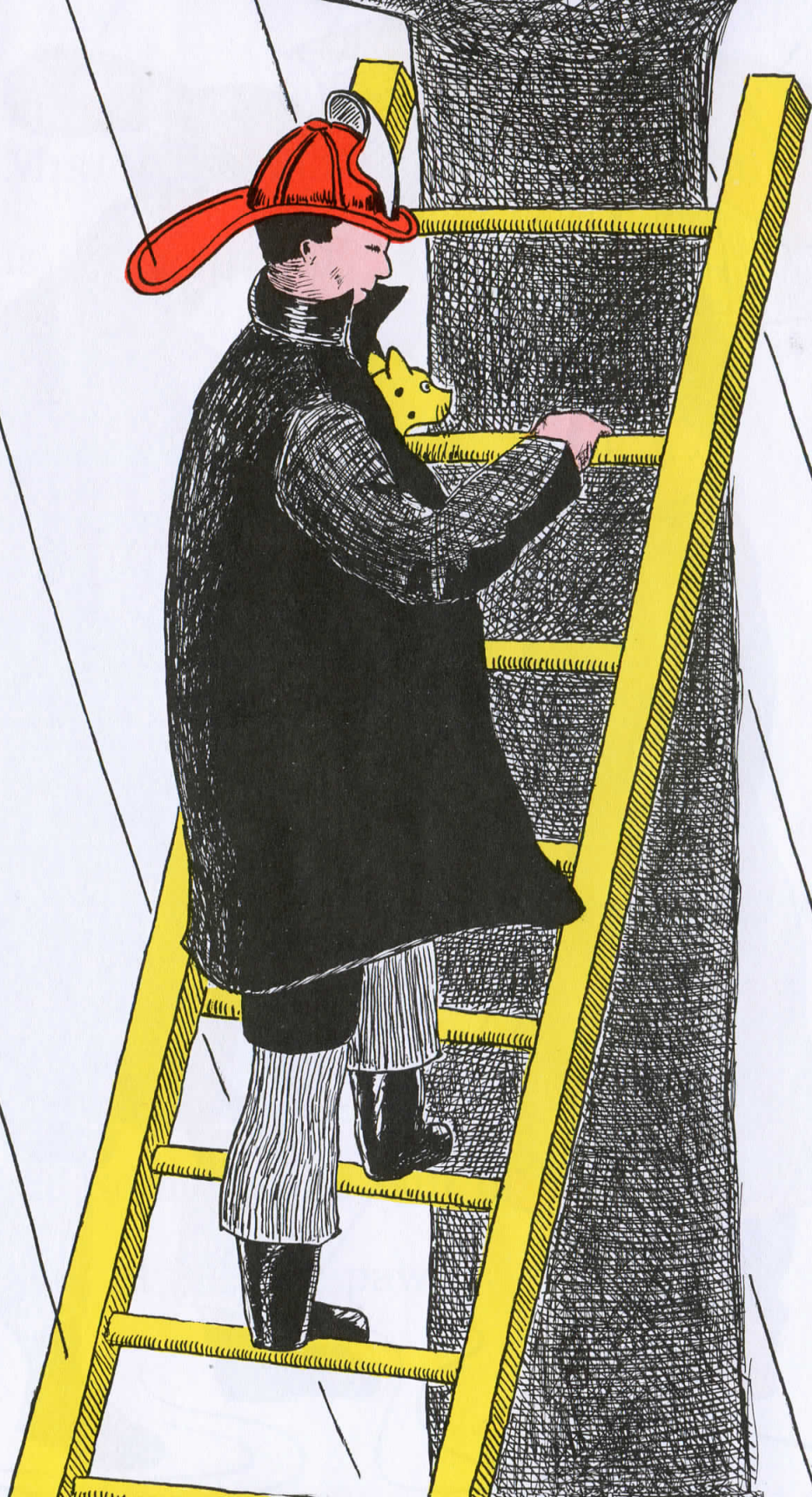
The fireman climbed  
to the top of the ladder.

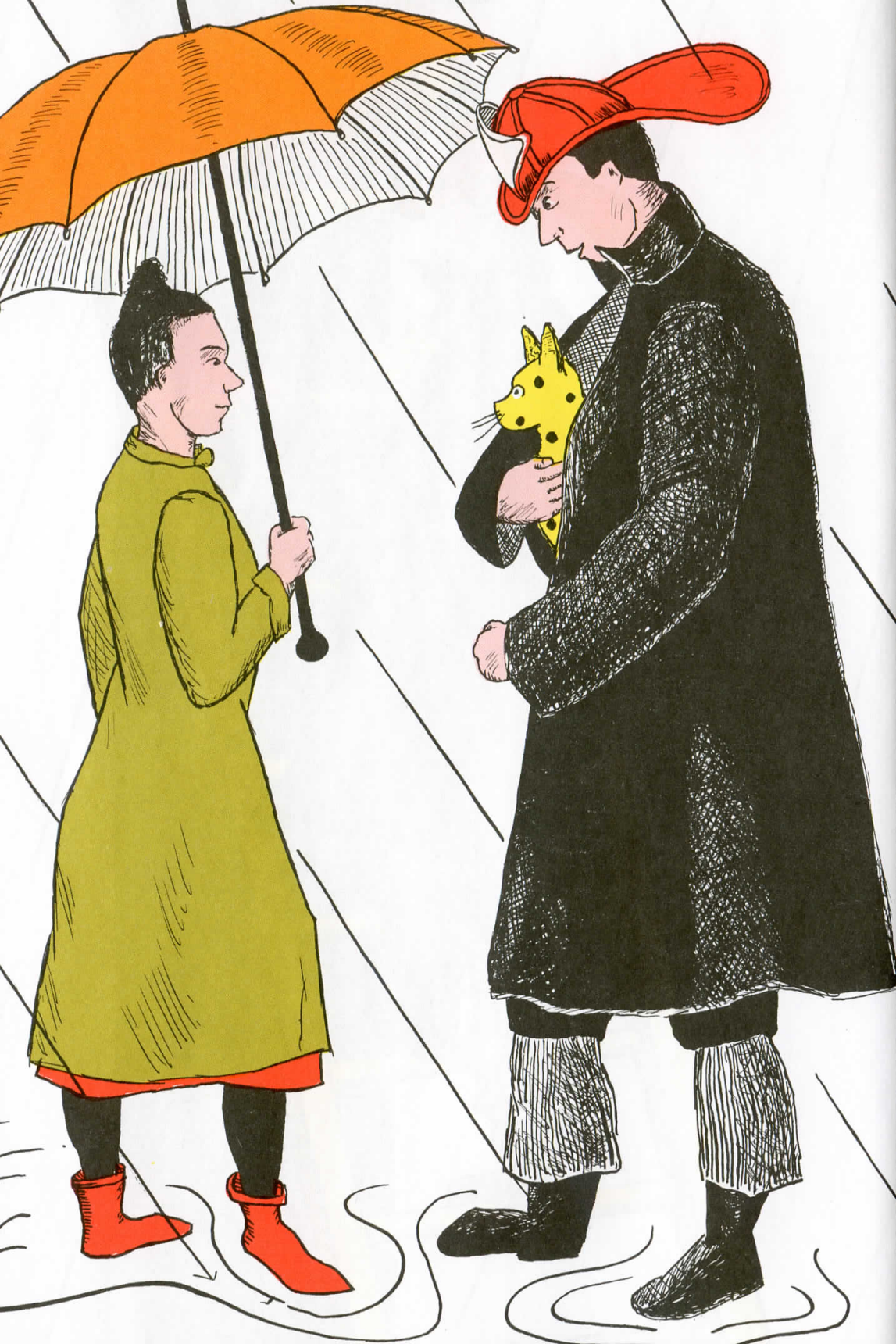
“Come, cat,” he said to Pickles.

“Let me help you.”

The fireman picked up Pickles  
and tucked him into his coat.

Then he took Pickles  
down the ladder—  
down to Mrs. Goodkind.





“Mrs. Goodkind,” said the fireman,  
“is this your cat?”

“No, Joe,” said Mrs. Goodkind.

“Pickles has no home,  
and he does not want  
to live with me.”

“Why?” asked Joe.

Mrs. Goodkind answered,

“My home is too little for Pickles.

Pickles is a cat who wishes  
to do big things.

And someday he will do them.

Look at his big paws.”

Pickles put out a paw for Joe to see.



“My goodness, Pickles,” said Joe,  
“what big paws you have!”

Pickles looked at Joe and said  
the one word he could say:

“MEOW!”

And Joe could see  
that Pickles wanted  
something very much.

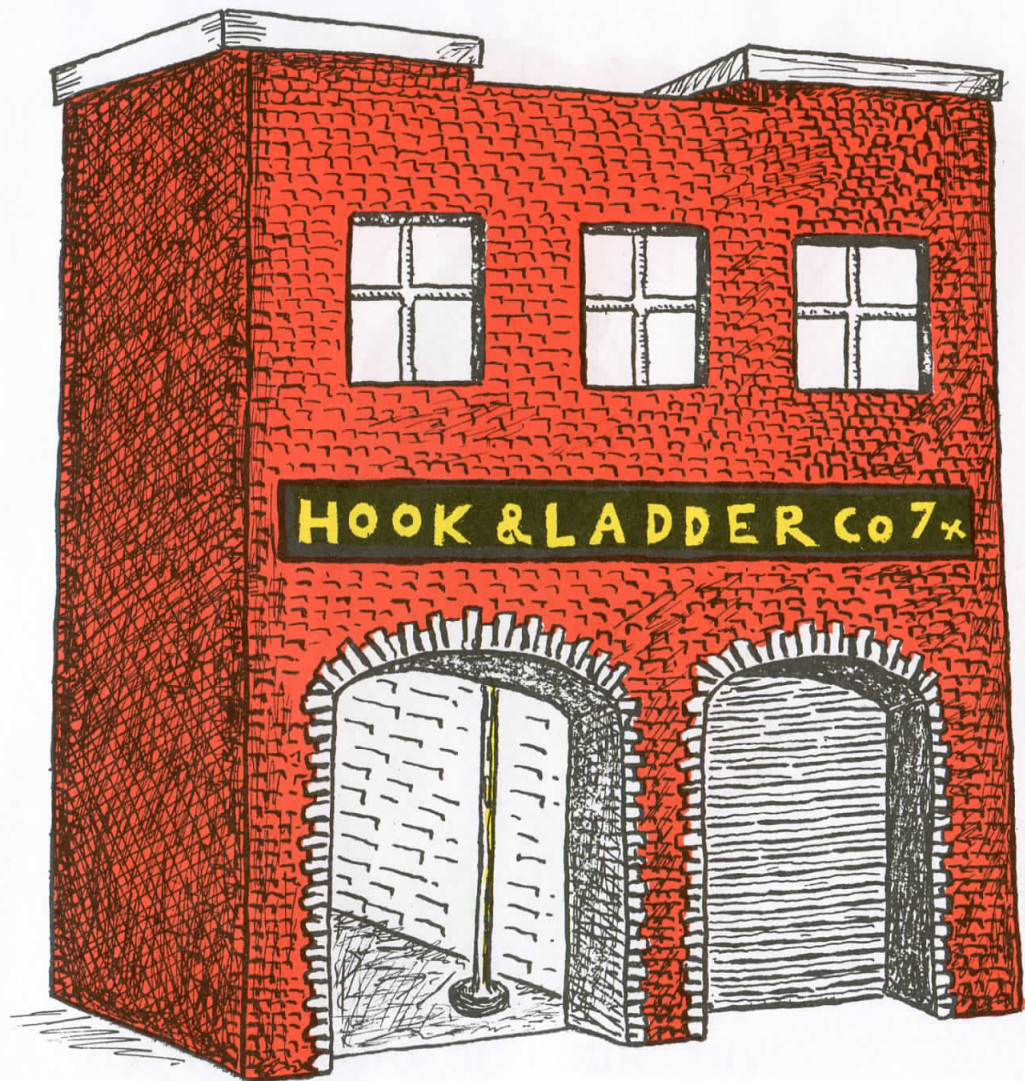


Joe gave Pickles a pat.

“Pickles,” he said.

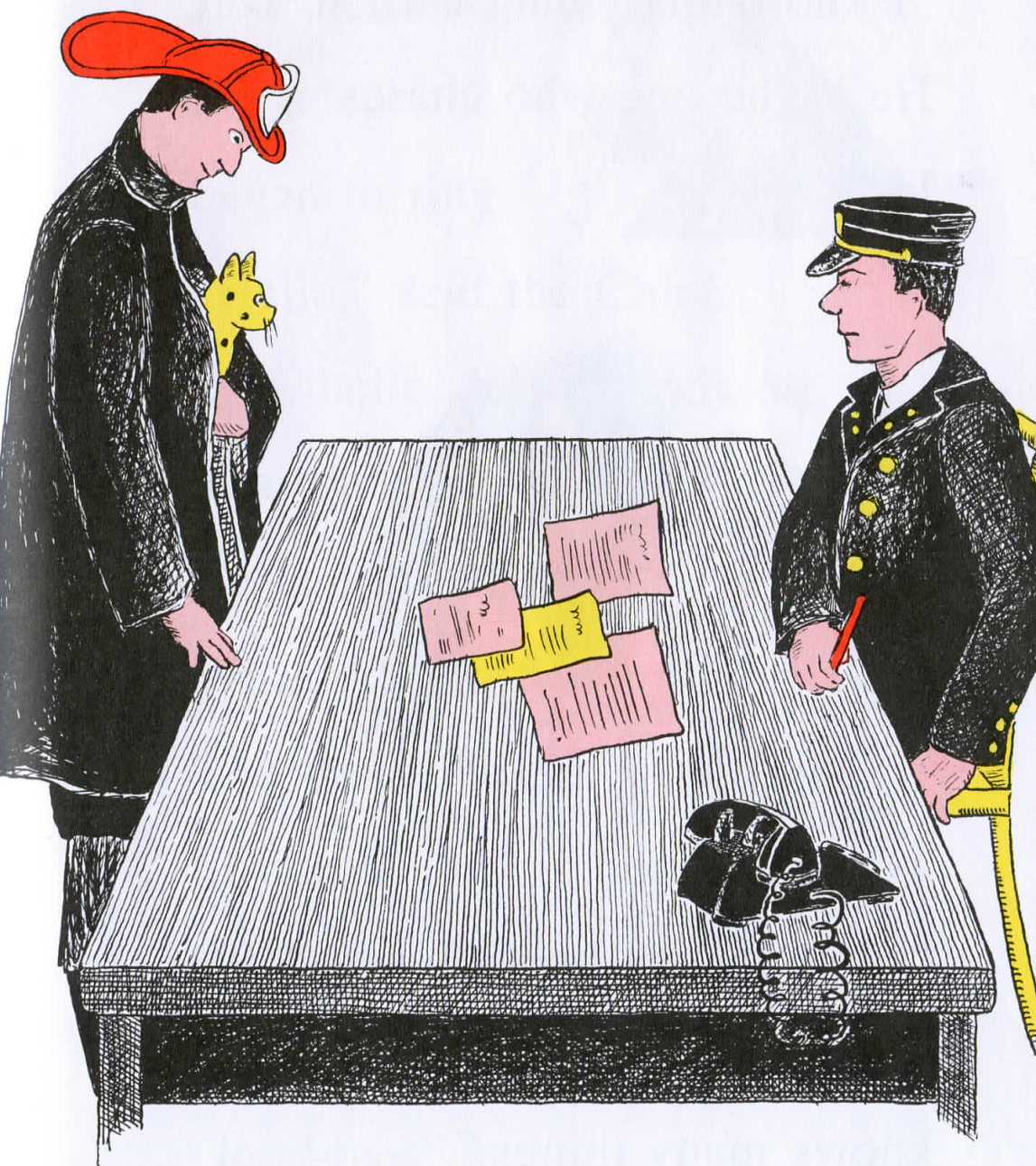
“I will take you to our firehouse.

Maybe our Chief will let you stay.”



## THE FIRE CAT

Joe took Pickles to the Chief,  
who was sitting at his desk.



“Oh!” said the Chief.

“I know this young cat.

He is the one who chases  
little cats.”



“How do you know?” asked Joe.

The Chief answered, “A Fire Chief  
knows many things.”

Just then  
the telephone  
began to ring.



“Hello,” said the Chief.

“Oh, hello, Mrs. Goodkind.

Yes, Pickles is here.

He came with Joe.

What did you say?

You think Pickles would like  
to live in our firehouse?

Well, we shall see.

Thank you, Mrs. Goodkind.

Good-bye.”

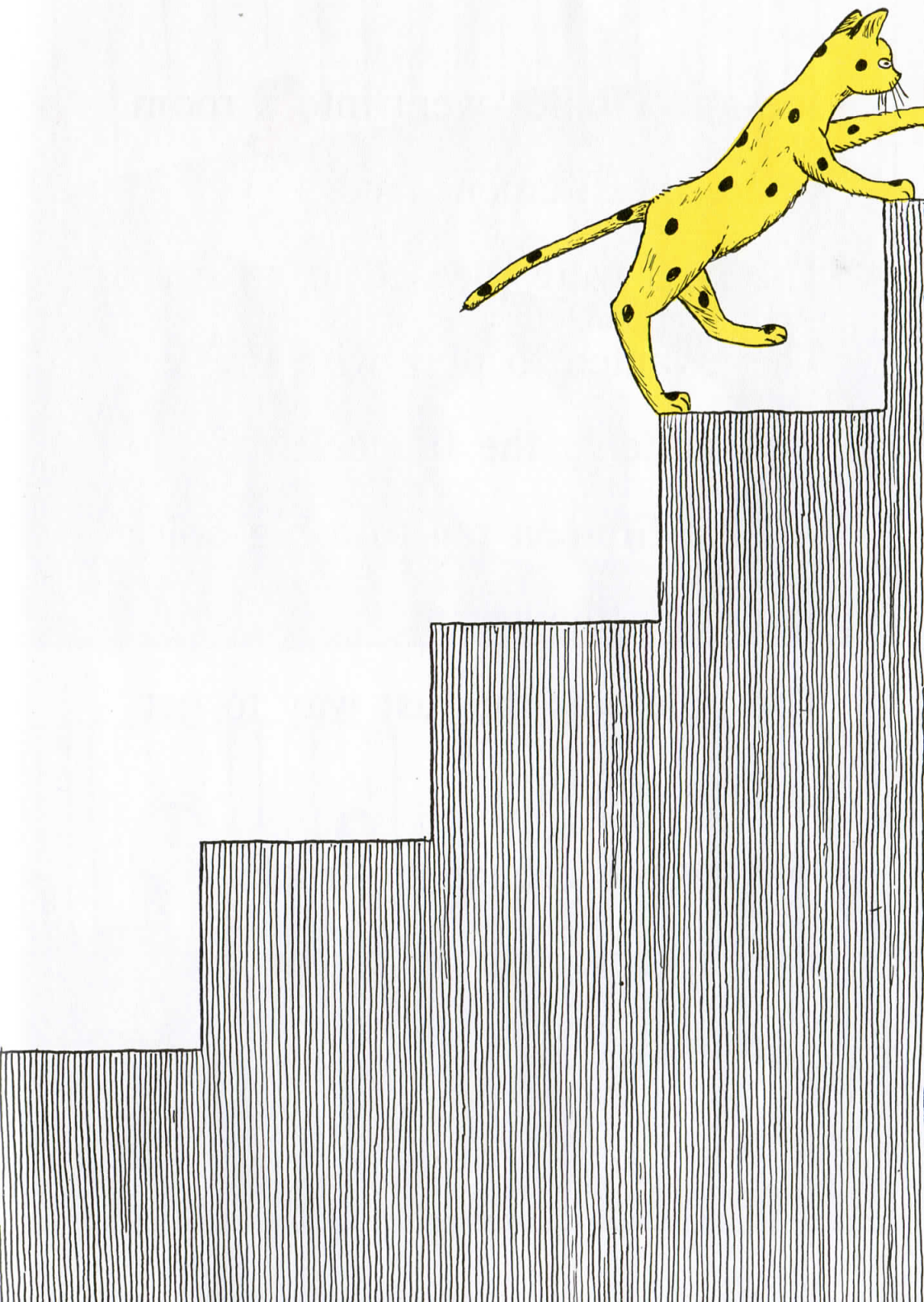
The Chief looked at Pickles  
and said, "Mrs. Goodkind says  
you are not a bad cat.

And Joe likes you.

I will let you live here

IF you will learn to be  
a good firehouse cat."

Pickles walked quietly  
up the stairs after Joe.



Joe and Pickles went into a room  
where the firemen lived.

The men were pleased to have a cat.

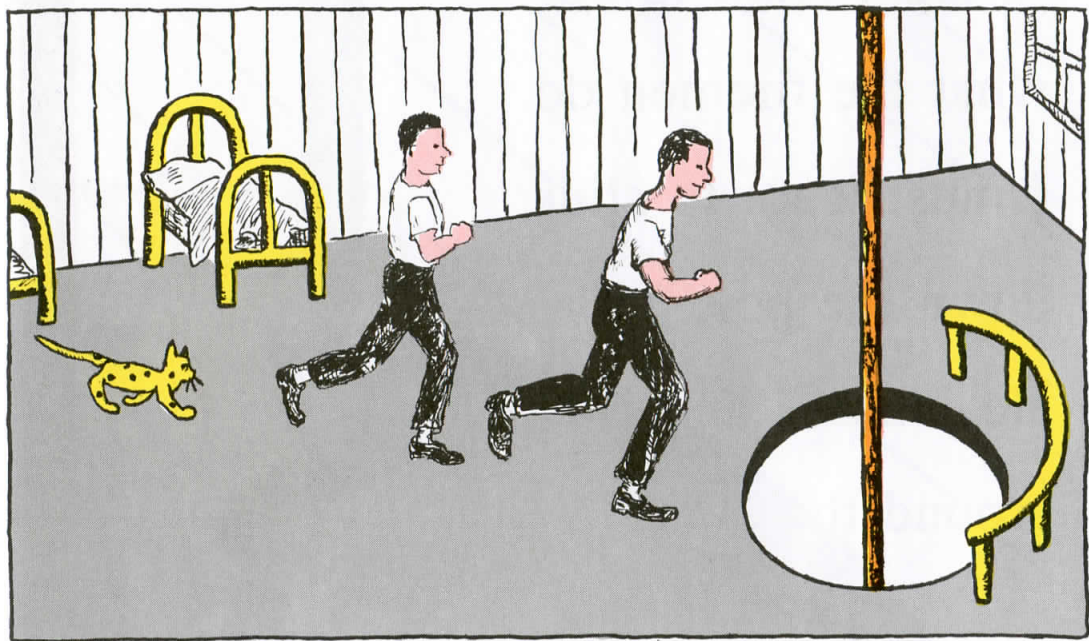
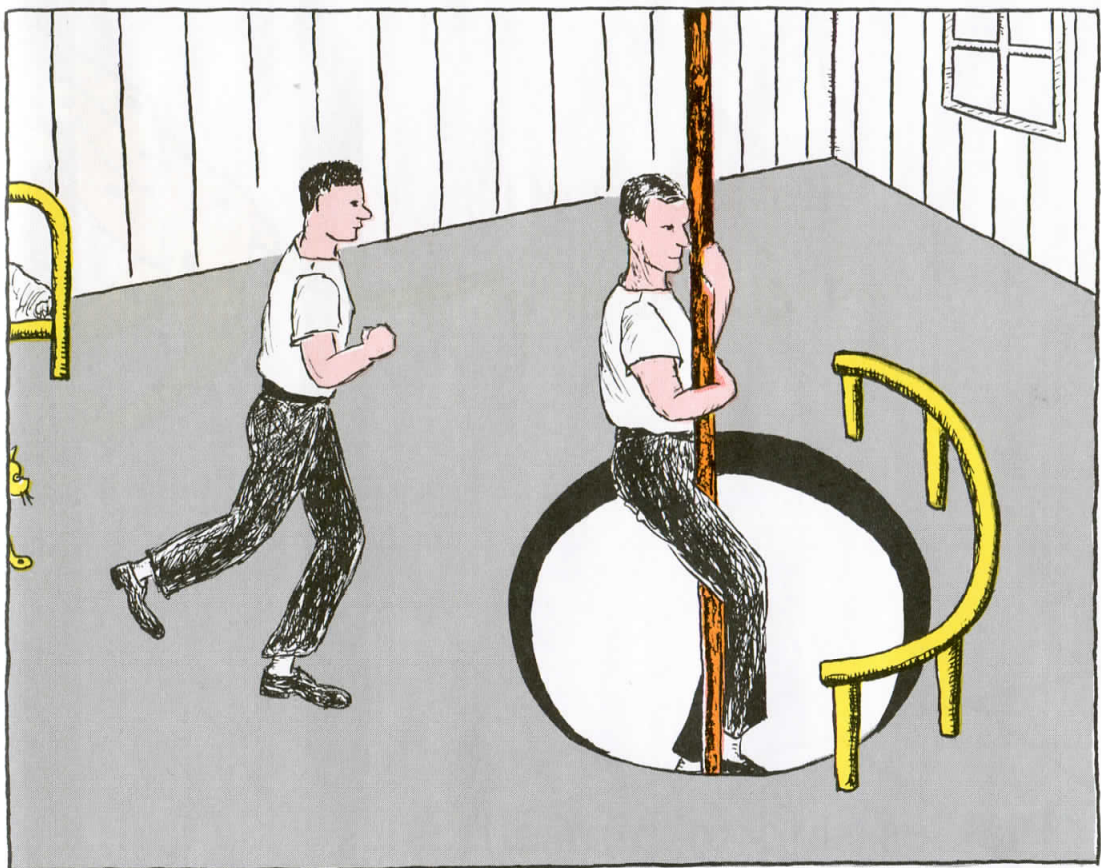
They wanted to play with Pickles.

But suddenly the fire bell rang.

All the firemen ran to a big pole  
and down they went.

The pole was the fast way to get  
to their trucks.

Pickles could hear the trucks  
start up and rush off to the fire.





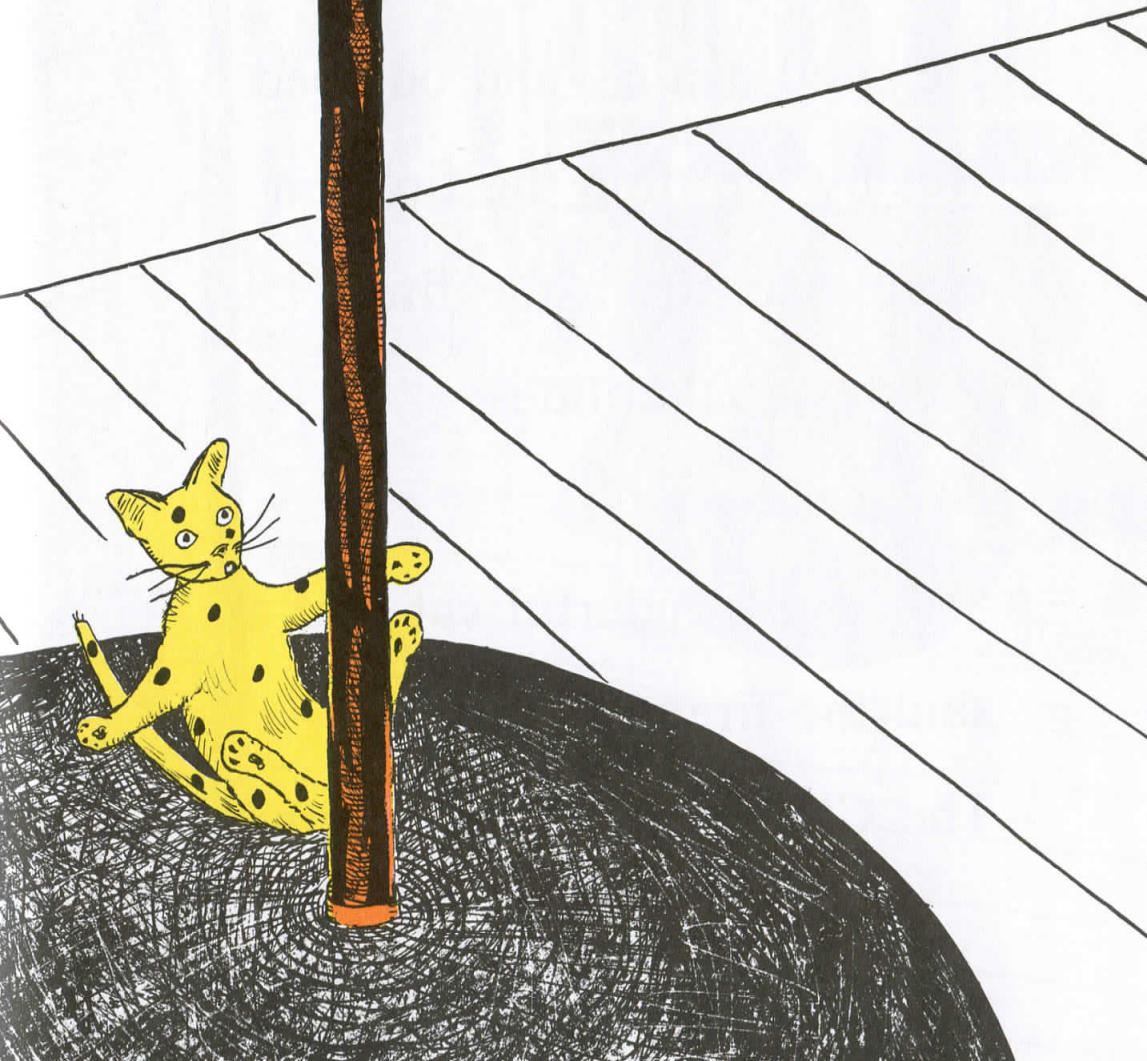
Pickles said to himself,

“I must learn to do  
what the firemen do.

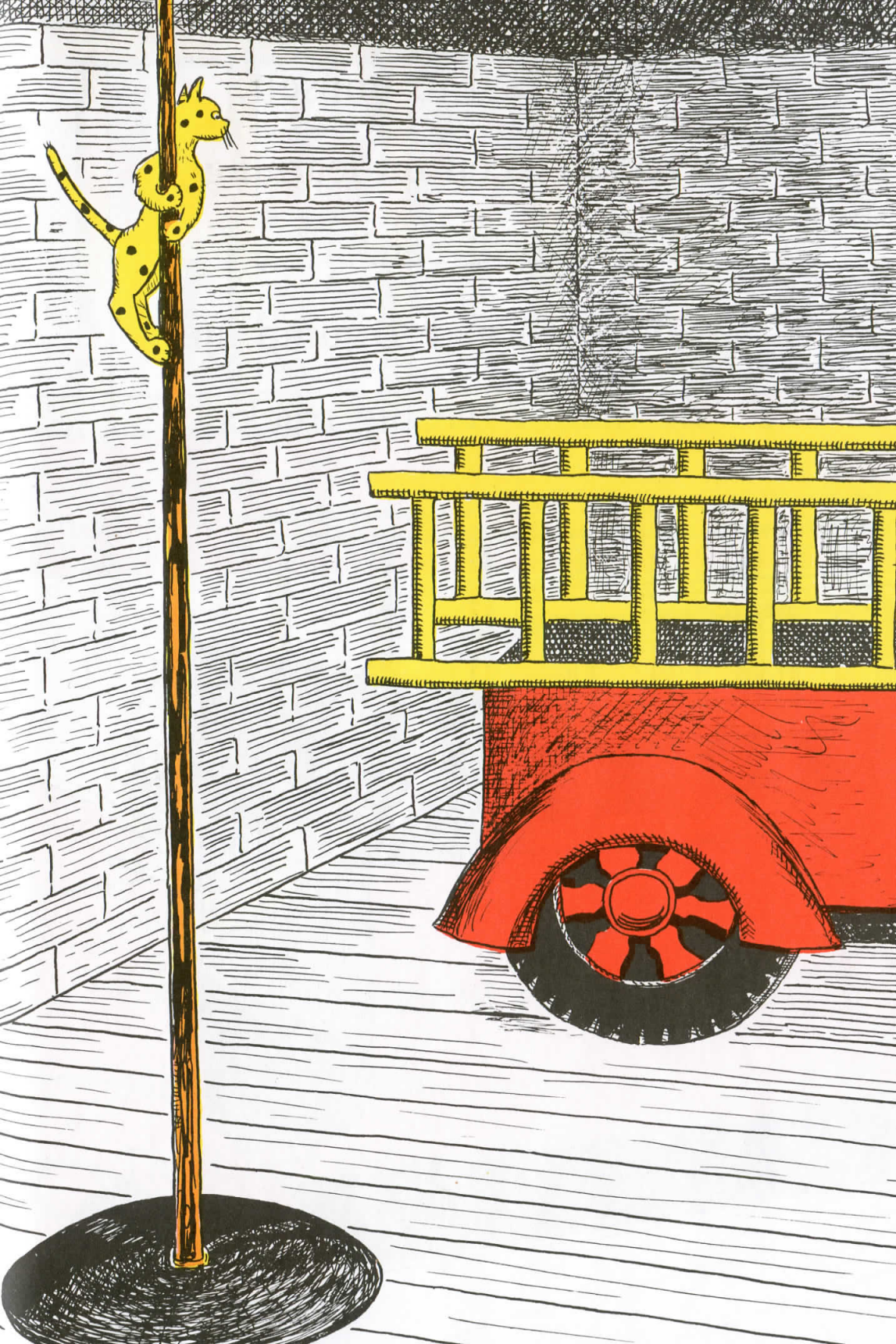
I must learn to slide  
down the pole.”

He jumped and put his paws  
around the pole.

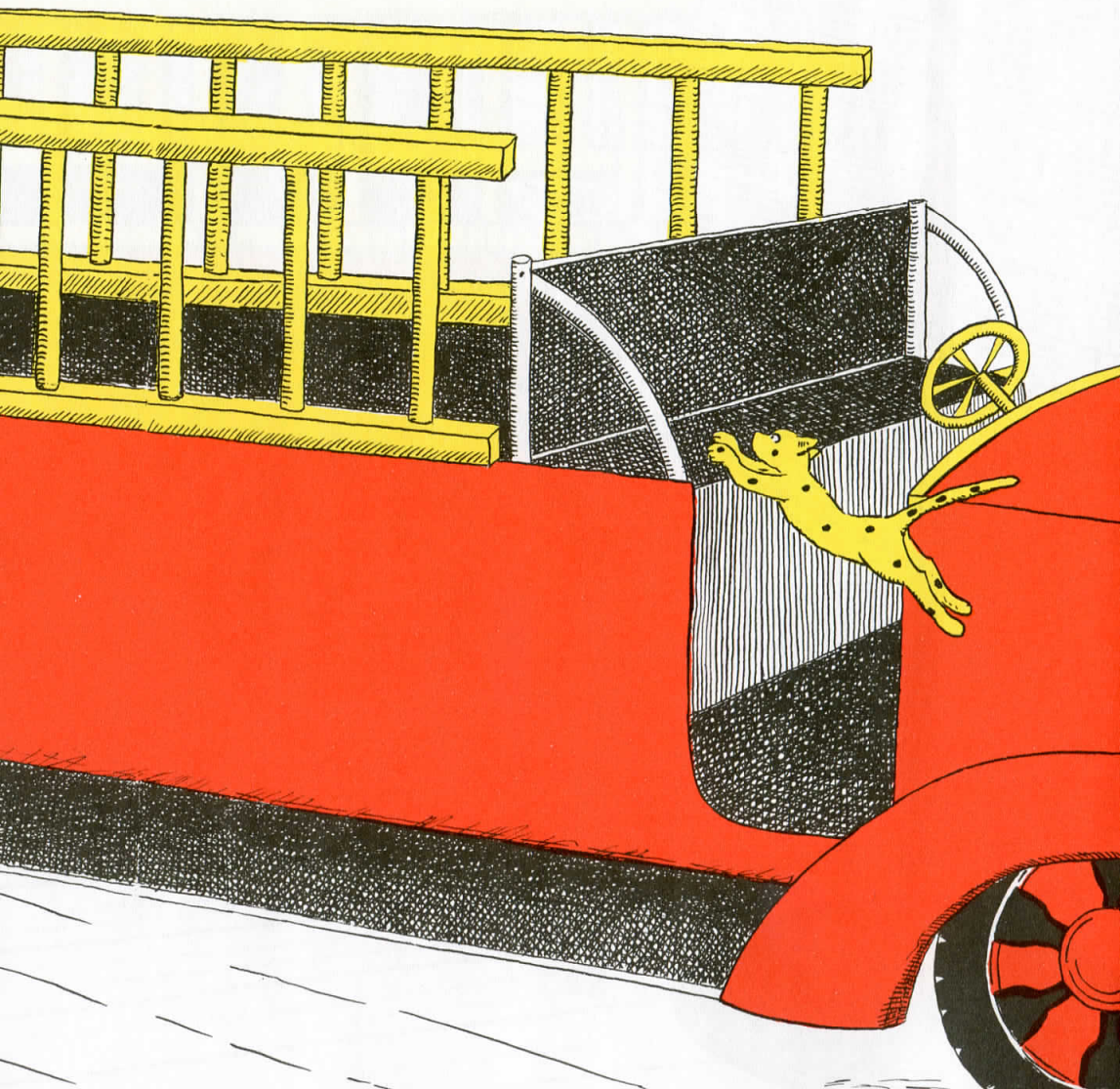
Down he fell  
with a BUMP.

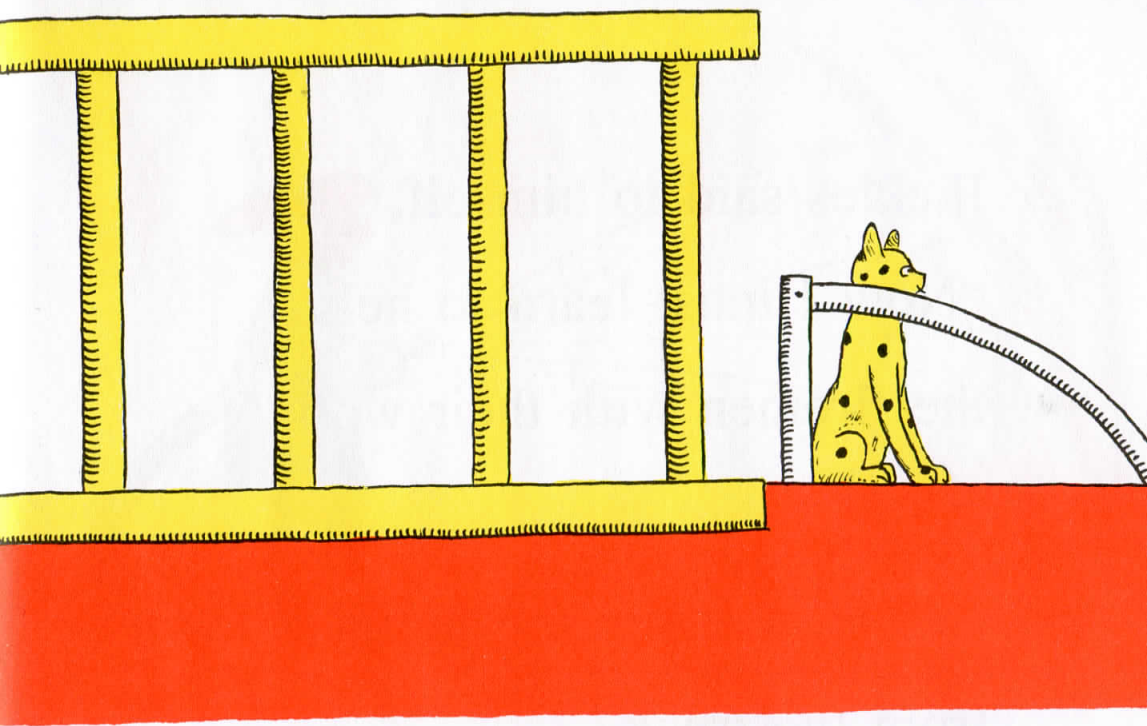


“Bumps or no bumps,  
I must try again,” said Pickles.  
Up the stairs he ran.  
Down the pole he came—  
and bumped.  
He tried again—and bumped.  
But by the time the firemen  
came back from the fire,  
Pickles could slide  
down the pole.  
“What a wonderful cat you are!”  
said the firemen.  
The Chief did not say anything.



Pickles said to himself,  
“I must keep on learning  
everything I can.”  
So he learned to jump up  
on one of the big trucks.





And he learned to sit up straight  
on the seat while the truck  
raced to a fire.

“What a wonderful cat you are!”  
said the firemen.

The Chief did not say anything.

Pickles said to himself,

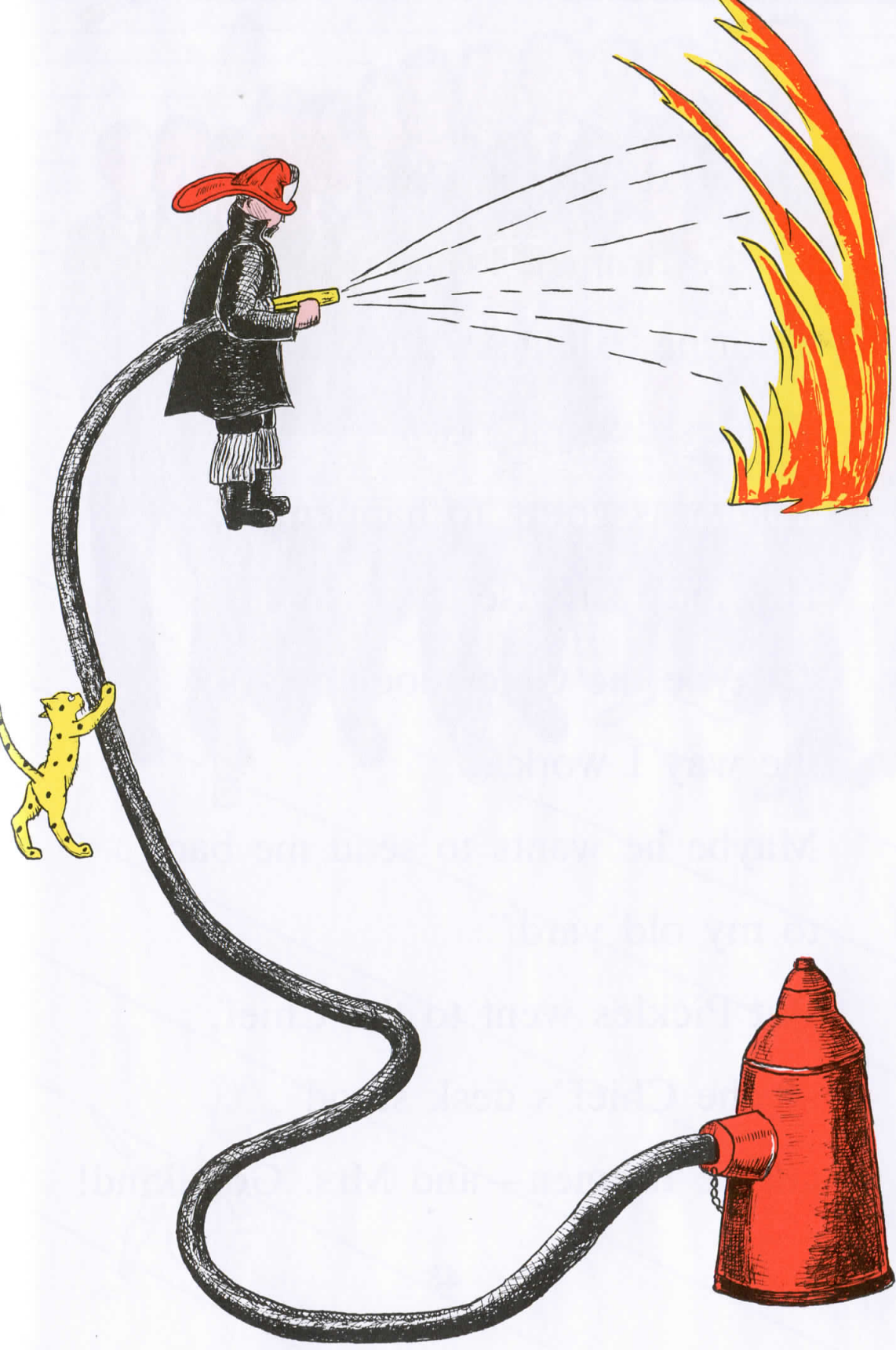
“Now I must learn to help  
the firemen with their work.”

At the next fire, he jumped down  
from the truck.

He ran to the big hose,  
put his paws around it,  
and tried to help a fireman  
shoot the water at the flames.

“What a wonderful cat you are!”  
said the firemen.

The Chief did not say anything.



The next day the Chief called  
all the firemen to his desk.  
Then he called for Pickles.  
Pickles did not know  
what was going to happen.  
He said to himself,  
“Maybe the Chief does not like  
the way I work.  
Maybe he wants to send me back  
to my old yard.”  
But Pickles went to the Chief.  
At the Chief’s desk stood  
all the firemen—and Mrs. Goodkind!



The Chief said to Pickles,

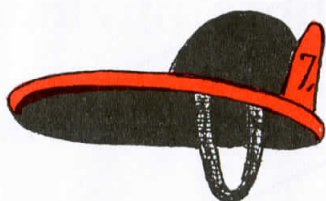
“I have asked Mrs. Goodkind to come because she was your first friend.

Pickles, jump up on my desk.

I have something to say to you.”

Pickles jumped up on the desk and looked at the Chief.

Out of the desk the Chief took—



a little fire hat!

“Pickles,” said the Chief,

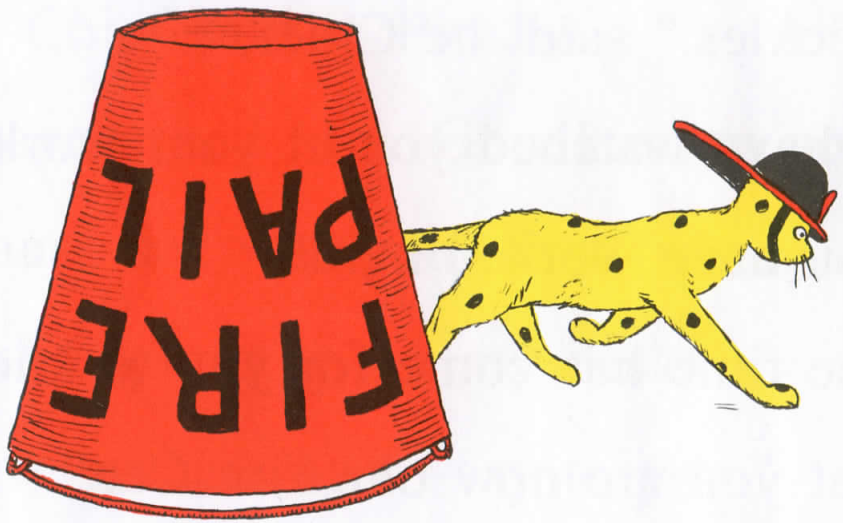
“I have watched you at your work.

You have worked hard.

The time has come for you to know  
that you are now our Fire Cat.”

And with these words, the Chief  
put the little hat on Pickles’s head.



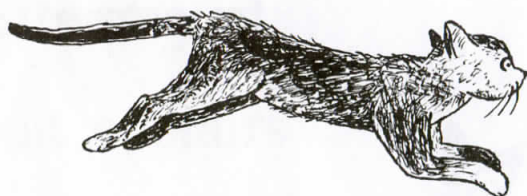
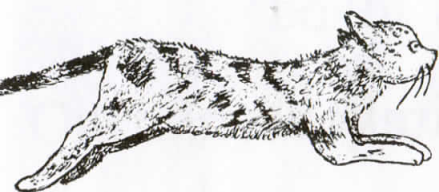


## THE OLD TREE

Pickles made friends  
with all the firemen.

But he did not make friends  
with any cats.

When cats came to the firehouse  
to look at the trucks,  
Pickles chased them away.



The Chief called Pickles to him  
and said,

“A Fire Cat must be kind  
to everyone.

You must be good  
to other cats.”

Little by little, Pickles learned  
to be good to the cats he met.  
He made friends with them, too.

Then all the cats loved  
to come to the firehouse.



On rainy days, most cats stayed at home, and Pickles sat upstairs with the firemen.

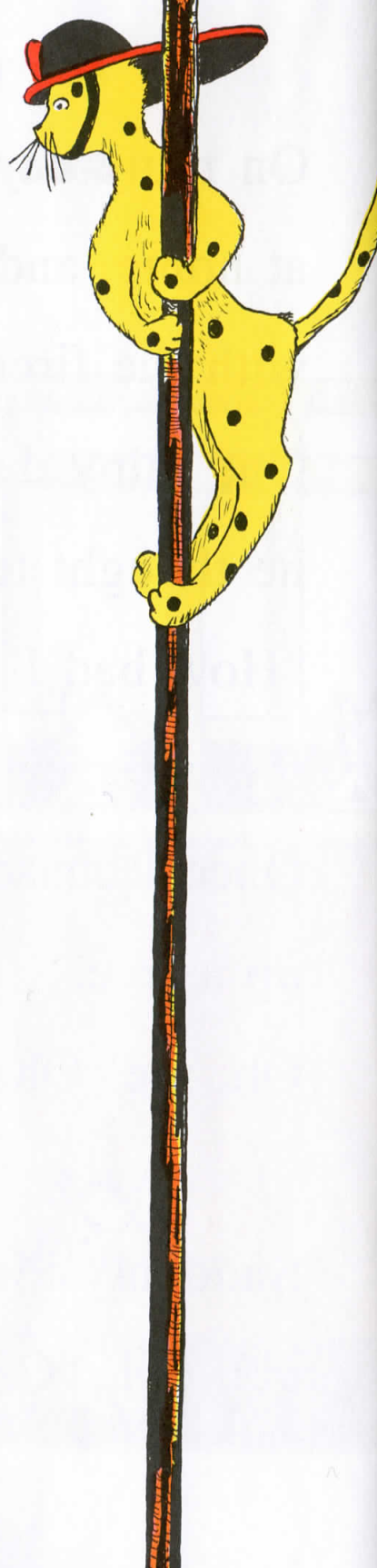
One rainy day, as he sat there, he thought to himself,

“How bad I was when I chased the other cats.

Once I chased a little cat up a tree.

Oh, me! Oh, my! Why did I do that?”

Suddenly Pickles heard the Chief call out, “Cat in a tree!”



Fireman Joe  
and two other men  
slid down the pole.  
Pickles slid down  
after them.

He heard the Chief say,

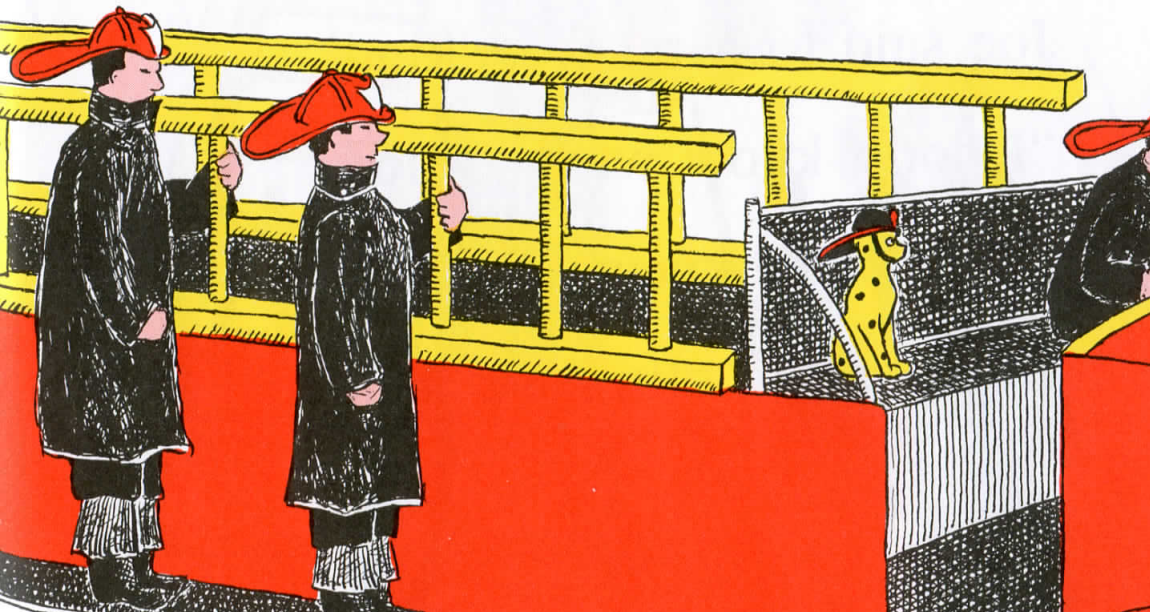
“The tree is in the old yard  
next to Mrs. Goodkind’s house.”

“Oh,” thought Pickles.

“That’s the yard where I lived.

And that’s THE TREE.”

Pickles jumped up on the truck  
with the three firemen.



Away they rode to the yard.

And there, in the wind

and the rain, stood Mrs. Goodkind,  
pointing to a very little cat.

The firemen put a ladder  
against the tree.

The ladder scared the little cat,  
and she ran to a high branch,  
where a fireman could not go.

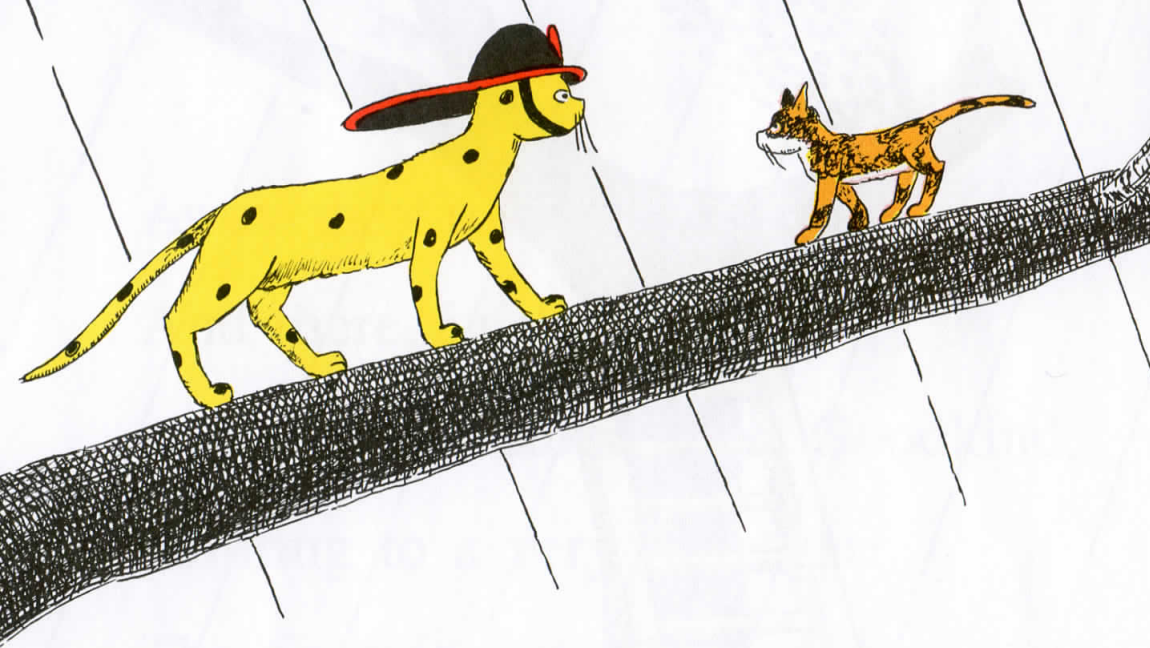
Joe said to Mrs. Goodkind,

“I don’t know what to do.”

But Pickles knew.

He began to climb the ladder.





Pickles climbed up and up and up.

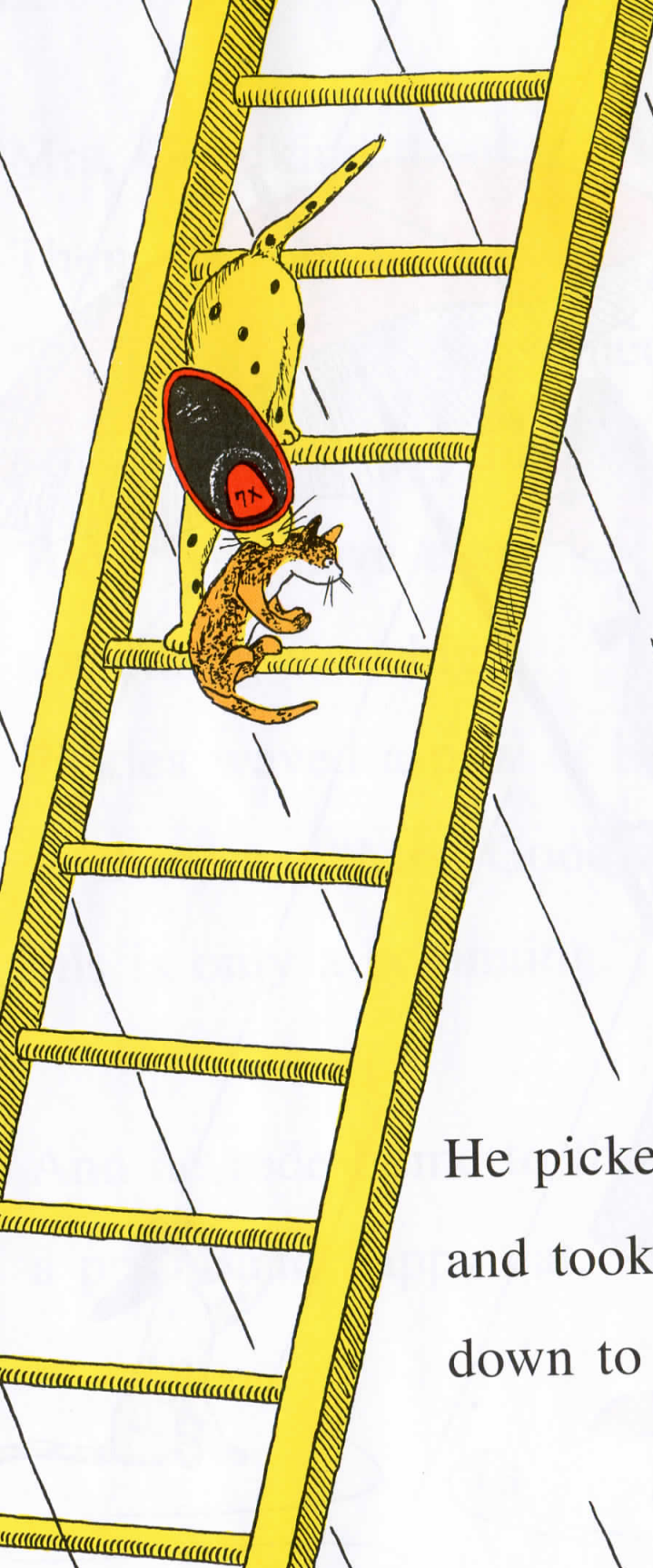
It was hard work.

But at last he came to the top  
of the ladder.

Then he climbed up the tree  
until he came to the little cat.

“Come, cat,” he said to her.

“Let me help you.”



He picked her up  
and took her gently  
down to Mrs. Goodkind.



Mrs. Goodkind thanked Pickles.

Then she said to him,

“I always knew that someday  
you would do big things.

Today you have done  
something very big.”

Pickles waved a paw at her,  
as if to say, “Mrs. Goodkind,  
this is only a beginning.”

And he rode home to the firehouse—  
a proud and happy cat.