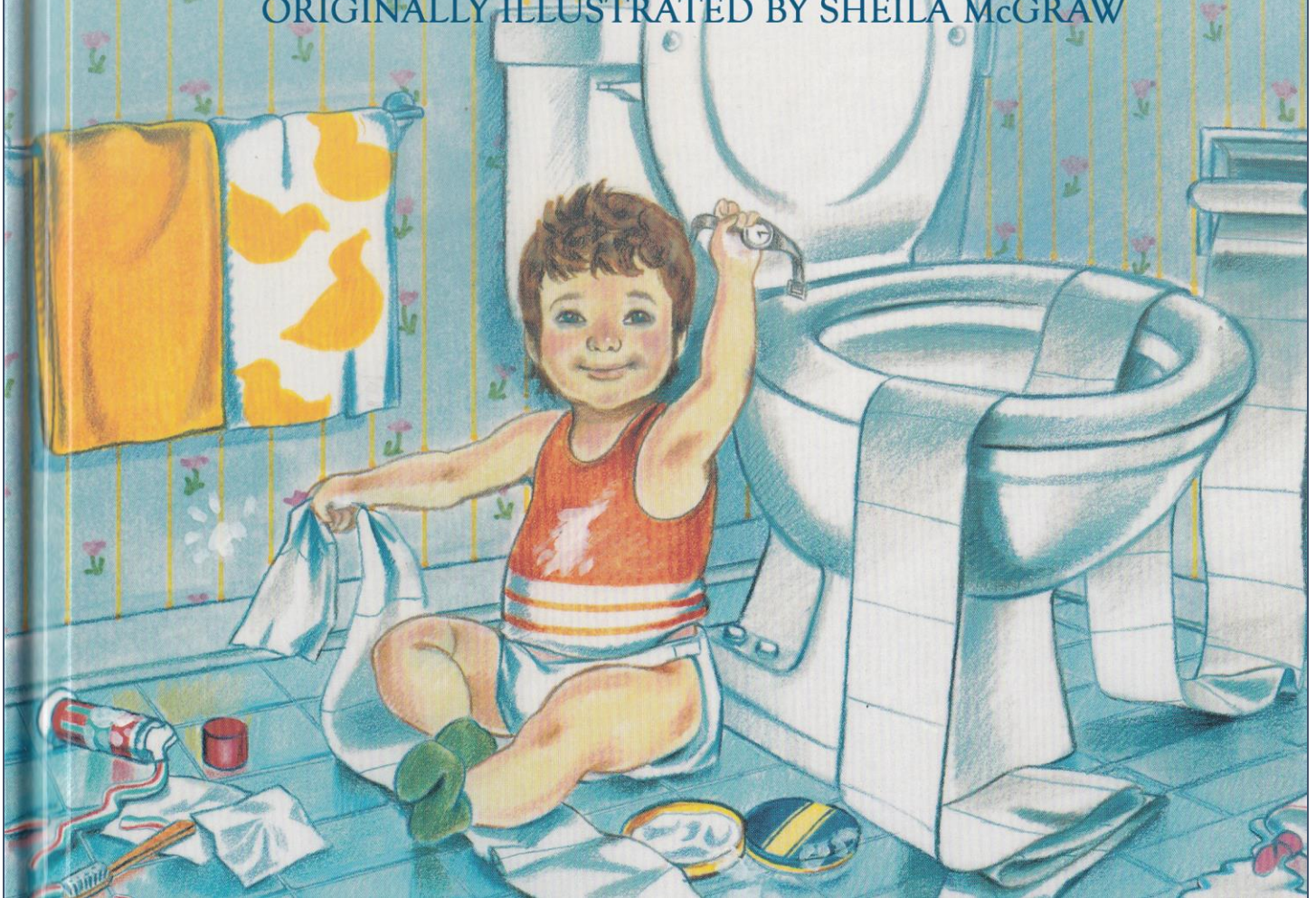


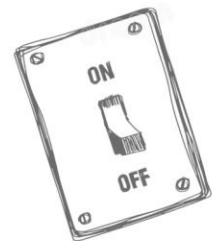
LOVE YOU FOREVER & I'LL CALL BEFORE I COME OVER

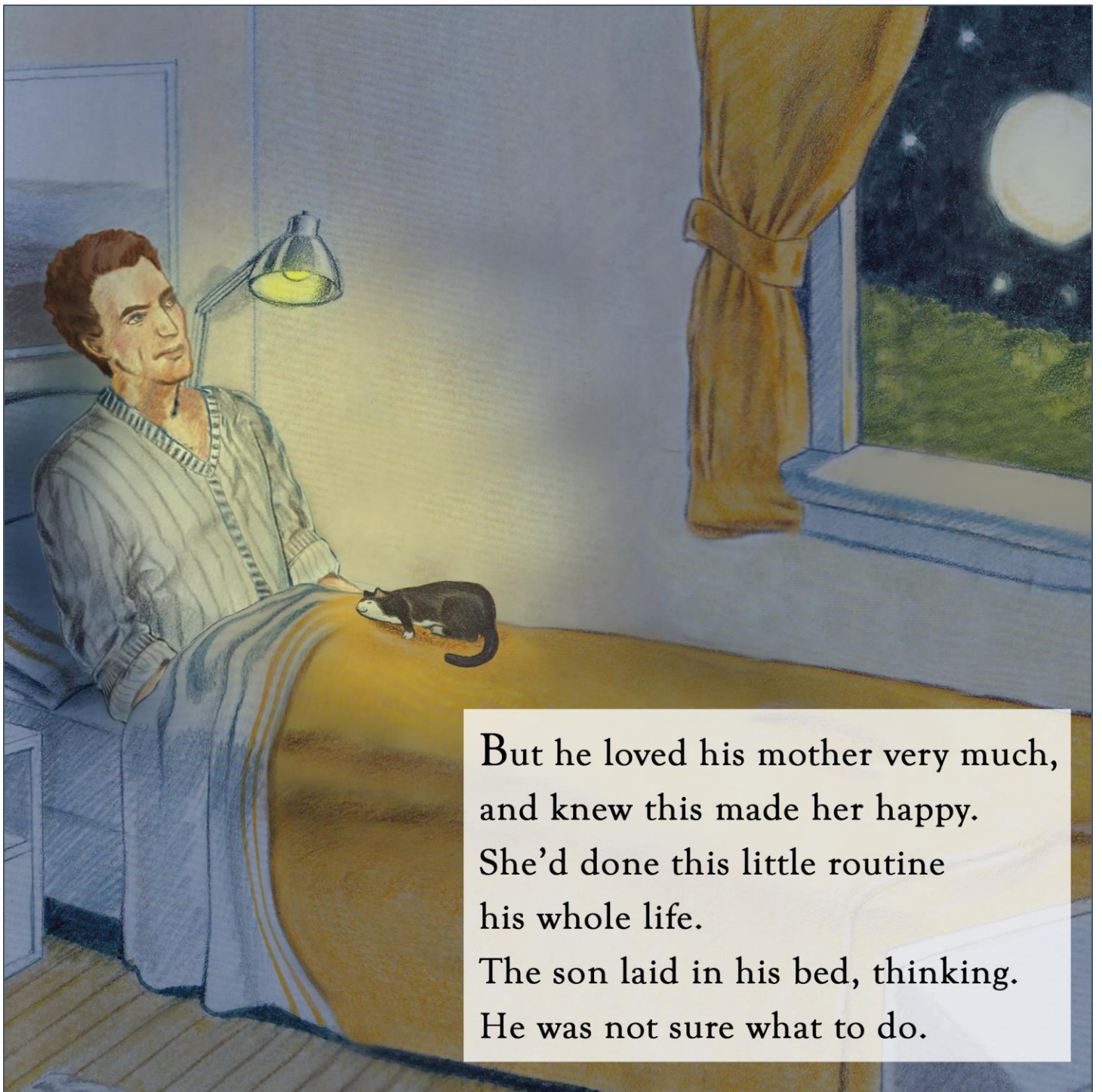
BY TOPHER PAYNE

AN ALTERNATE ENDING TO
LOVE YOU FOREVER BY ROBERT MUNSCHE
ORIGINALLY ILLUSTRATED BY SHEILA MCGRAW



Now, the son knew this was happening.
He was just pretending to be asleep.
He didn't particularly enjoy being awakened
in the middle of the night by his mother
climbing in the window,
crawling around on the floor,
and dragging him out of bed.
She wasn't exactly being stealth
about the whole thing.
She even turned on the overhead light.
It made his cat freak out.
How could anyone sleep through that?
He was always very tired at work the next day.

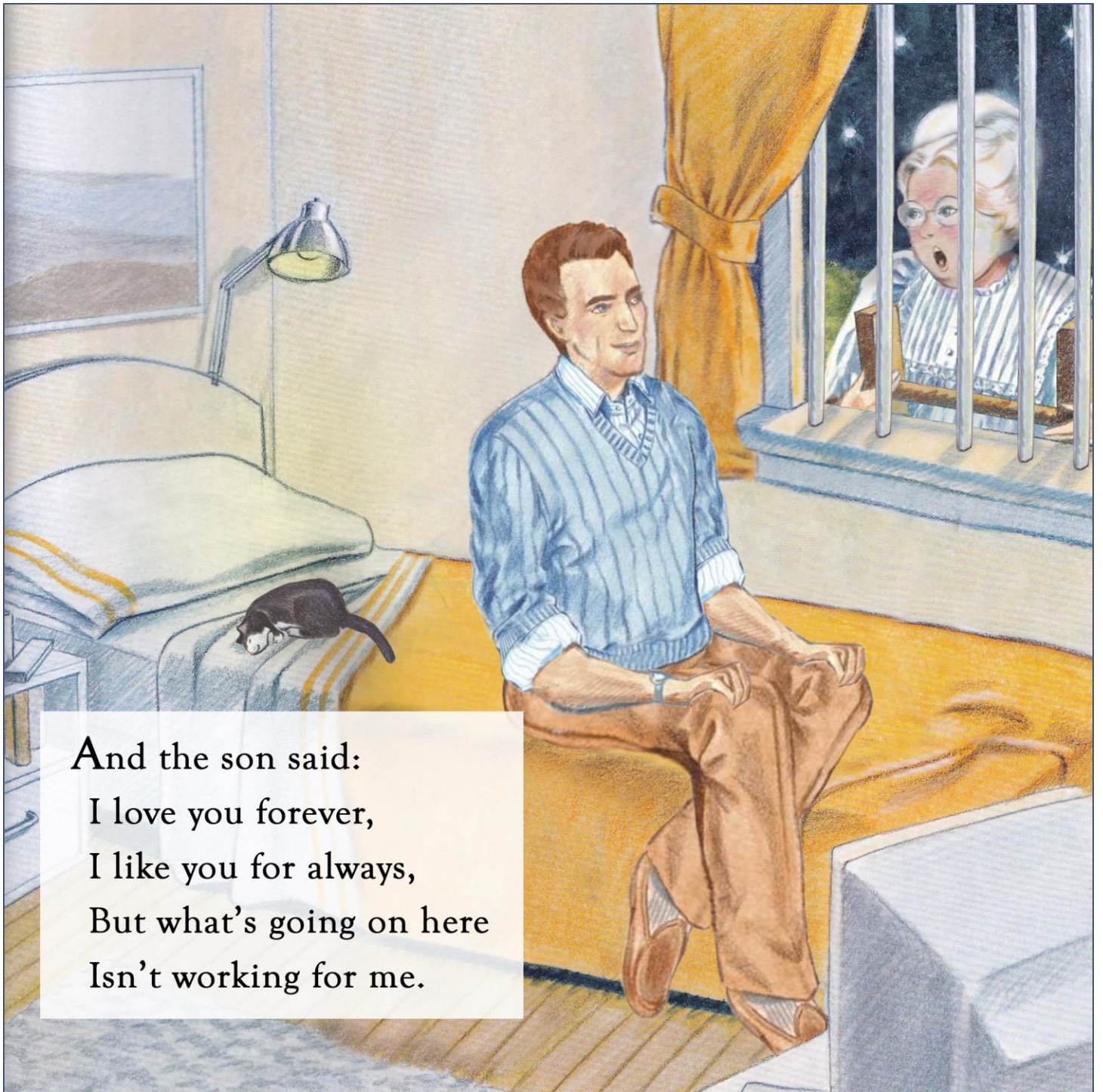




But he loved his mother very much,
and knew this made her happy.
She'd done this little routine
his whole life.
The son laid in his bed, thinking.
He was not sure what to do.

And then, he thought of a solution.

So the next time the mother
climbed up her ladder
to crawl into the son's house
and rock him back and forth
and back and forth,
she was surprised to find
the son awake and waiting.
He had installed security bars
so a person couldn't just come and go
through that window
whenever they pleased.
The mother was very confused.
"Son," she said. "Is something wrong?"



And the son said:
I love you forever,
I like you for always,
But what's going on here
Isn't working for me.

The next night, he invited his friend Alejandra over to make dinner together.

They'd been very best friends since they were little-back when he would sing into floor lamps and Alejandra would talk on the phone upside down.

It's important to have a friend you can talk to, who will listen to the good things and the bad.

He told her that he'd installed new security measures and his mother had gone home.

Alejandra asked why he hadn't just talked to his mother.

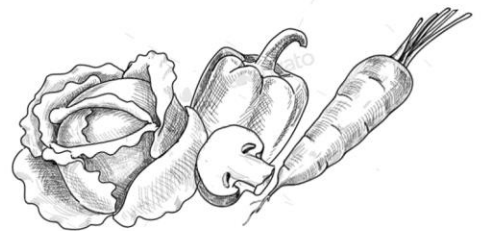
He told her that he couldn't find the right words to say.

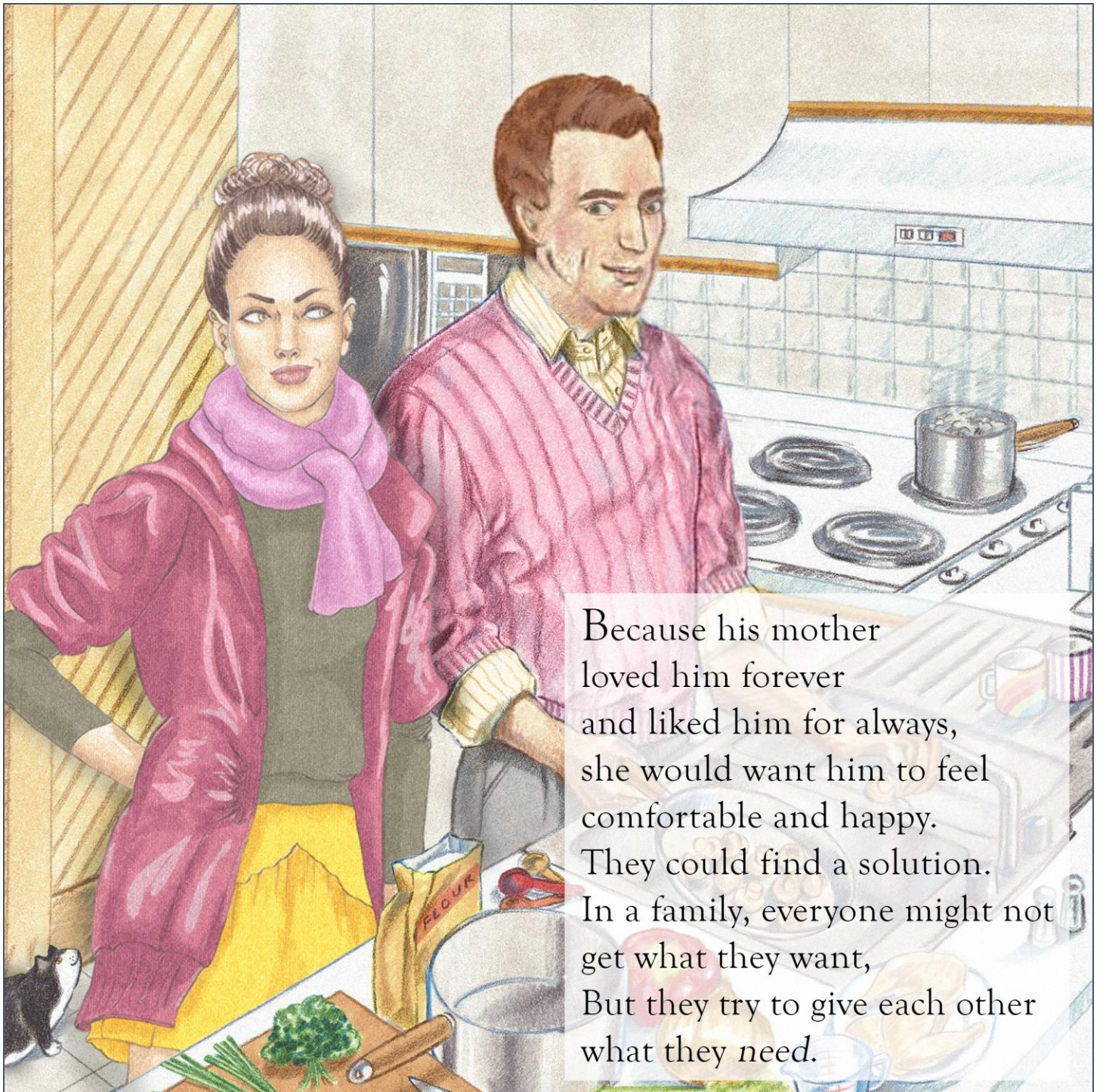
Sometimes we hesitate to tell someone we love that we need a little space

because we're worried about hurting their feelings.

But when we keep things bottled up inside, often we will get frustrated and overcorrect.

Alejandra reminded her friend that personal space and setting limits aren't just things we *want*, they're things we *need*.

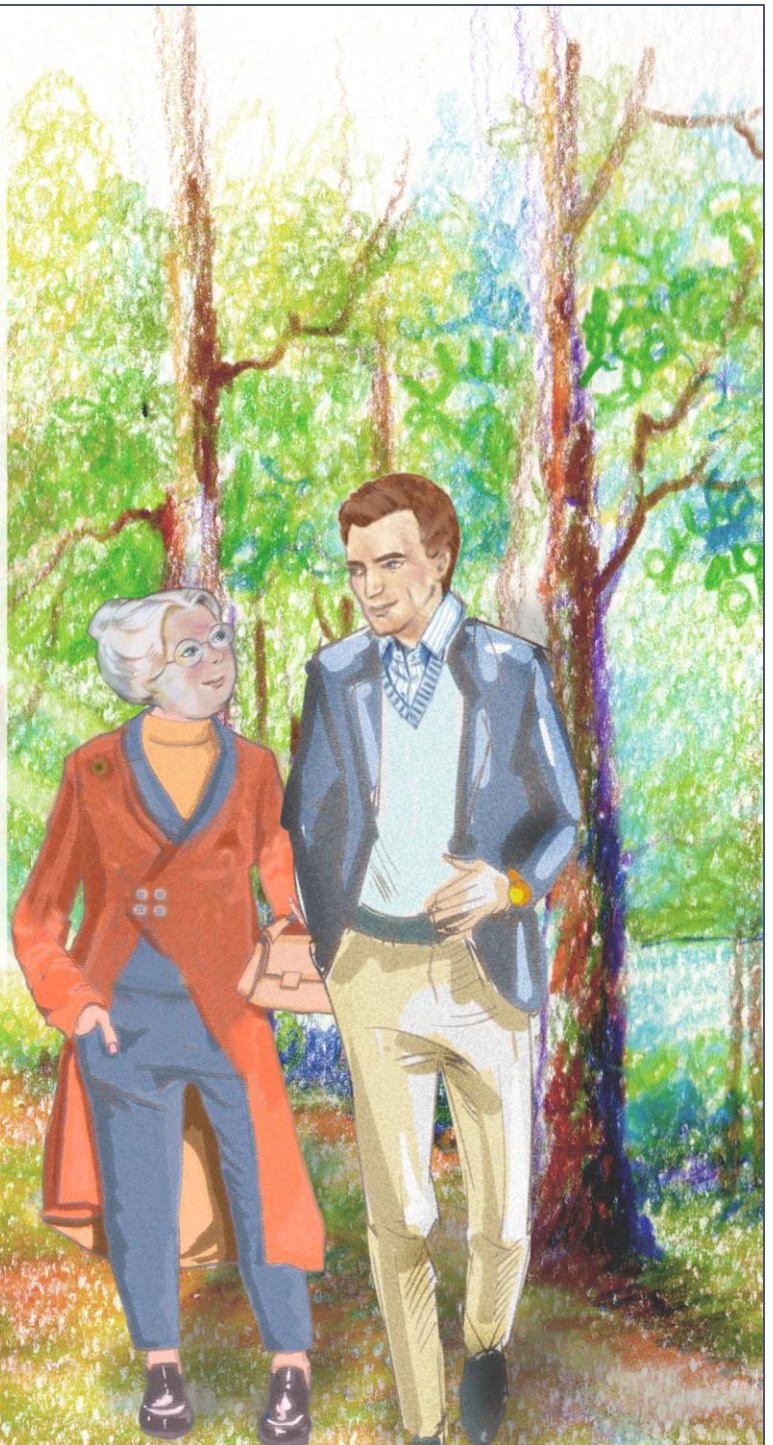




Because his mother loved him forever and liked him for always, she would want him to feel comfortable and happy. They could find a solution. In a family, everyone might not get what they want, But they try to give each other what they need.

The son invited his mother
on a walk in their favorite park.
He apologized for installing the bars
instead of having a conversation.
The son explained that he loved having his mother visit,
but he liked having quiet time for himself, too.
So he needed her to call or text before coming over,
and he would prefer that she use the door.
The mother apologized. She told him
that watching her little boy grow and grow and grow
into a grown up man made her very happy,
but also very sad.
No matter how wonderful things are going to be,
sometimes it's hard to let go of how things were.
And she didn't know how to say,
"I miss you, Son. I wish we had more time together."
*You see, even parents can struggle with
asking for what they need.*

The son was happy to make special plans with his mother. They could watch a movie together, or take a walk, or just sit around and have hot cocoa with star marshmallows (*because everything is a little better when you've got hot cocoa with star marshmallows.*)

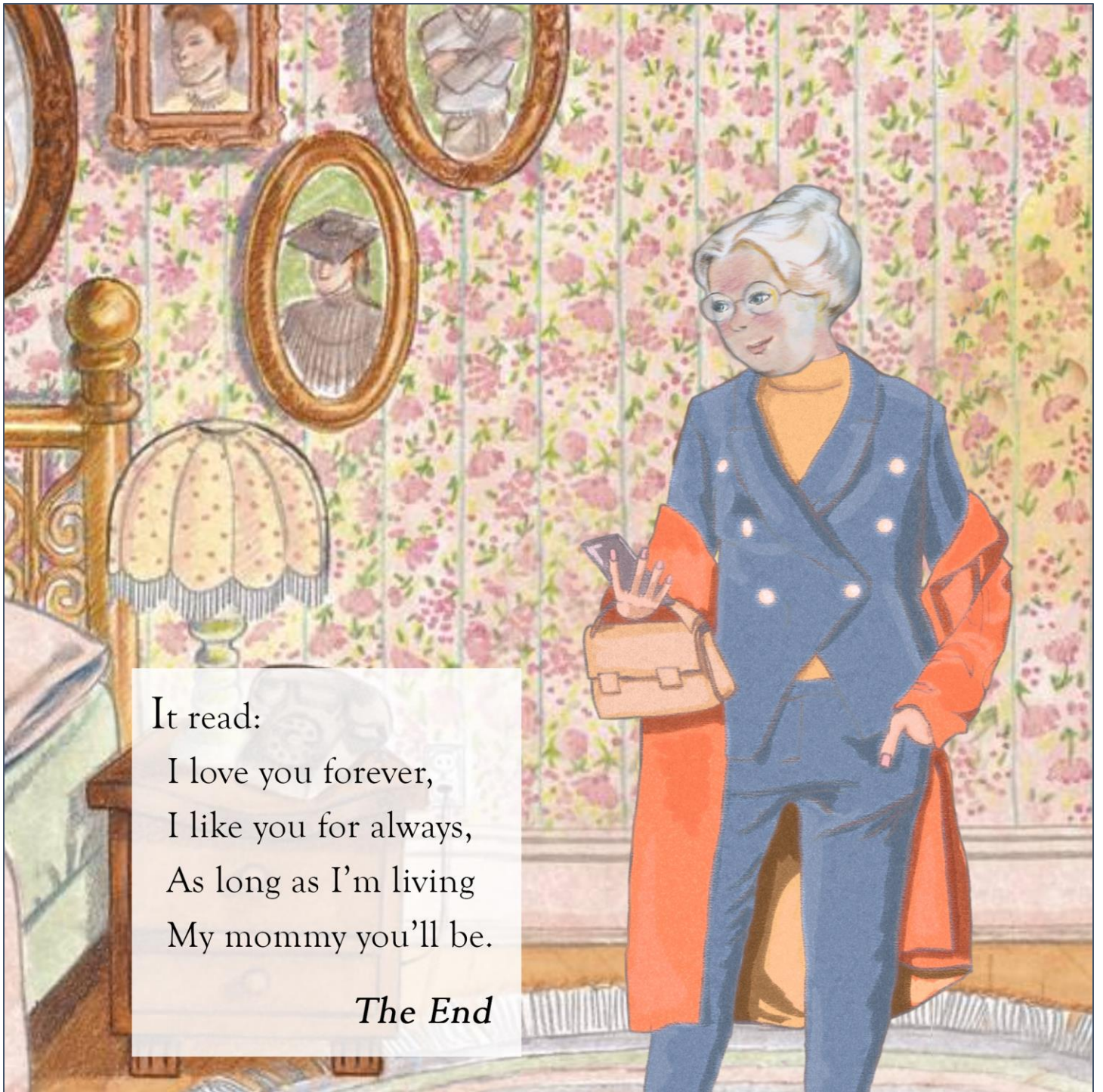


When the mother got back to her house,
she felt quite content.

She'd learned that
talking about your needs
with someone you love,
and hearing theirs in return,
doesn't put distance between you.
It brings you closer together.

And just before she got ready for bed,
she recieved a text message from her son.





It read:

I love you forever,
I like you for always,
As long as I'm living
My mommy you'll be.

The End