

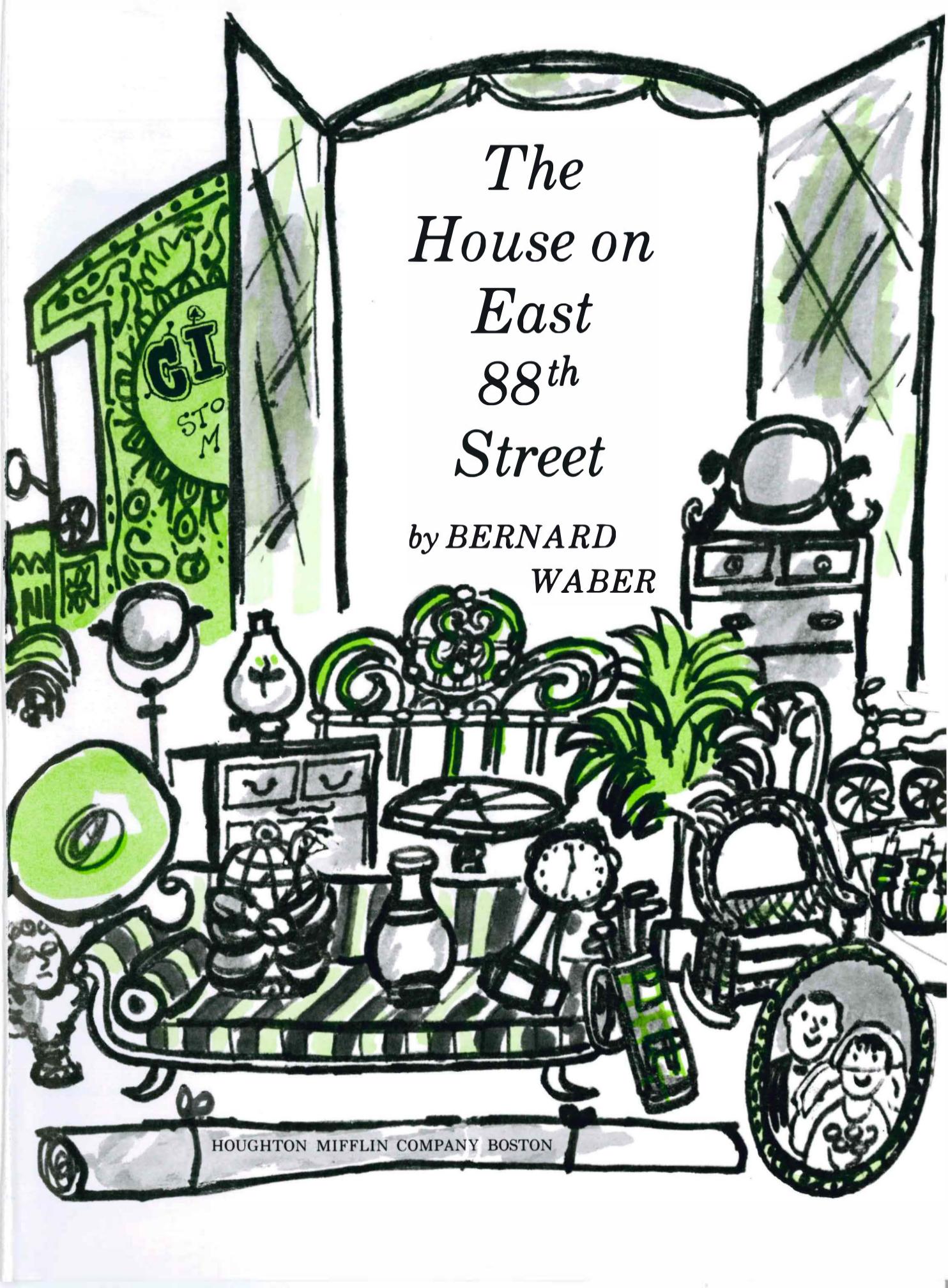


# *The House on East 88<sup>th</sup> Street*

by BERNARD  
WABER



**LYLE** *The first book about*  
**CROCODILE**



*The  
House on  
East  
88<sup>th</sup>  
Street*

*by* BERNARD  
WABER

HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY BOSTON

for *Paulis*



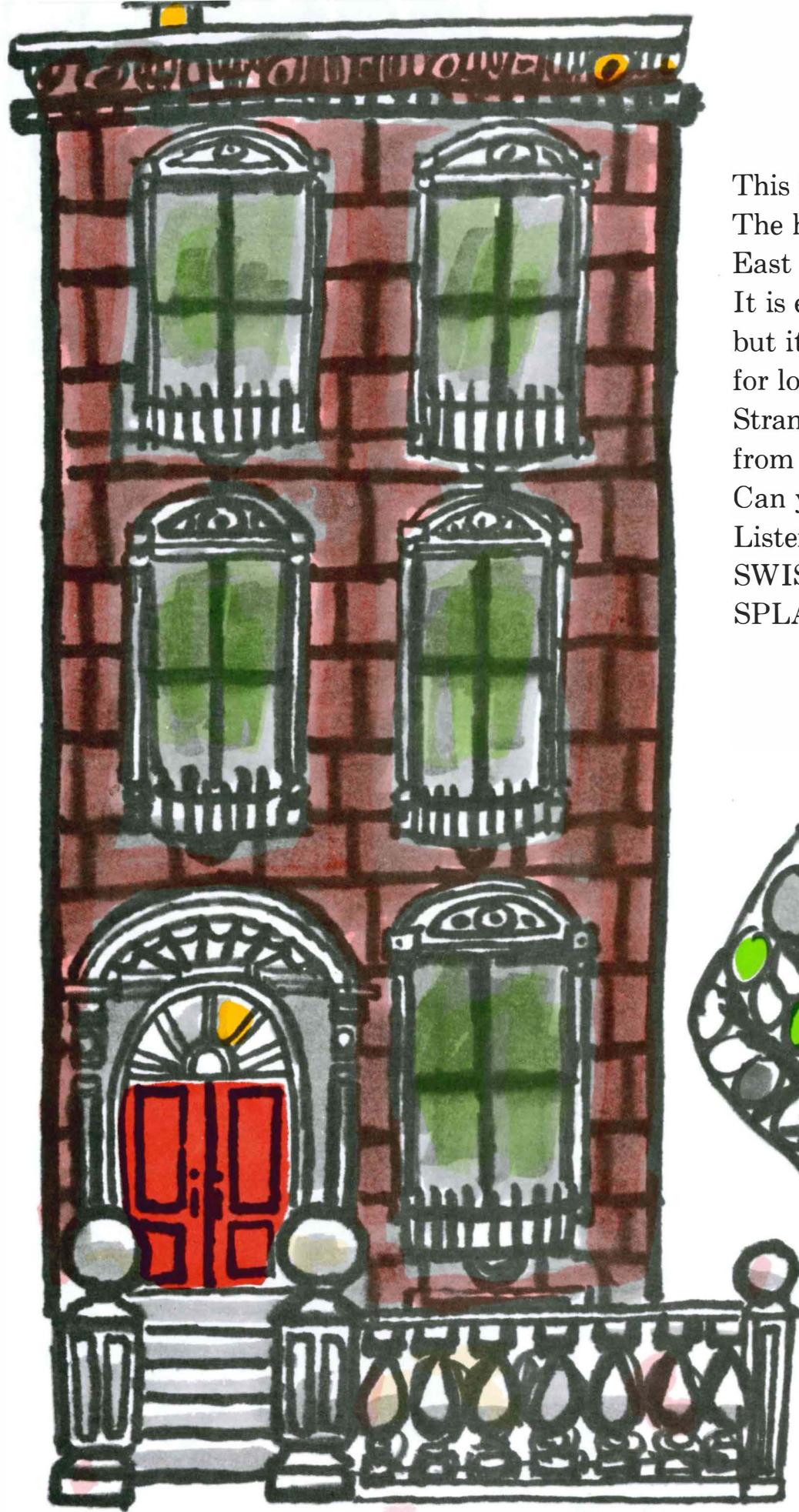
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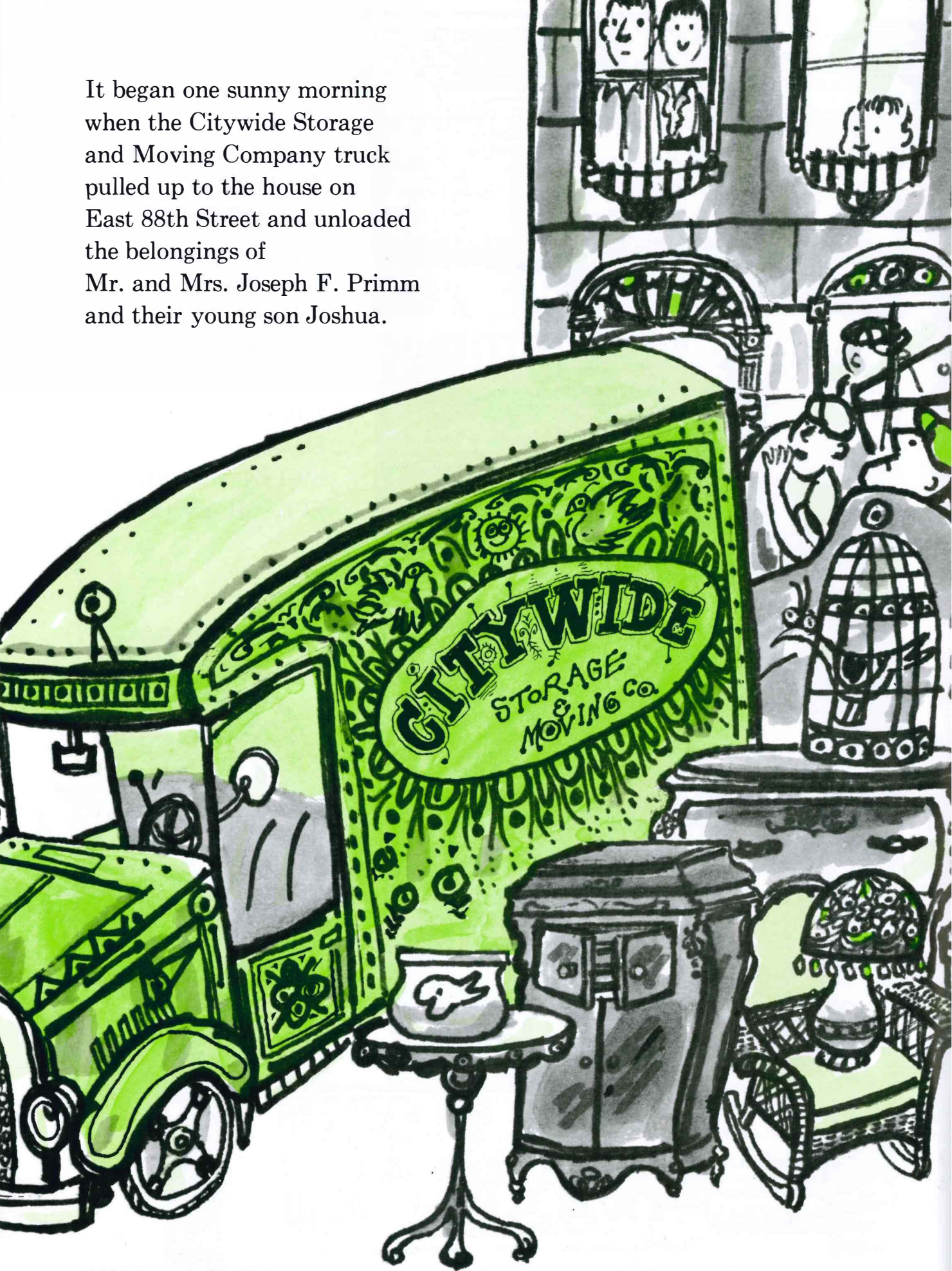
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This is the house.  
The house on  
East 88th Street.  
It is empty now,  
but it won't be  
for long.  
Strange sounds come  
from the house.  
Can you hear them?  
Listen:  
SWISH, SWASH,  
SPLASH, SWOOSH . . .

It began one sunny morning  
when the Citywide Storage  
and Moving Company truck  
pulled up to the house on  
East 88th Street and unloaded  
the belongings of  
Mr. and Mrs. Joseph F. Primm  
and their young son Joshua.





It was a trying day for everyone. Mrs. Primm just couldn't decide where to put the piano. And Mr. Primm's favorite pipe was accidentally packed away in one of dozens of cartons lying about.





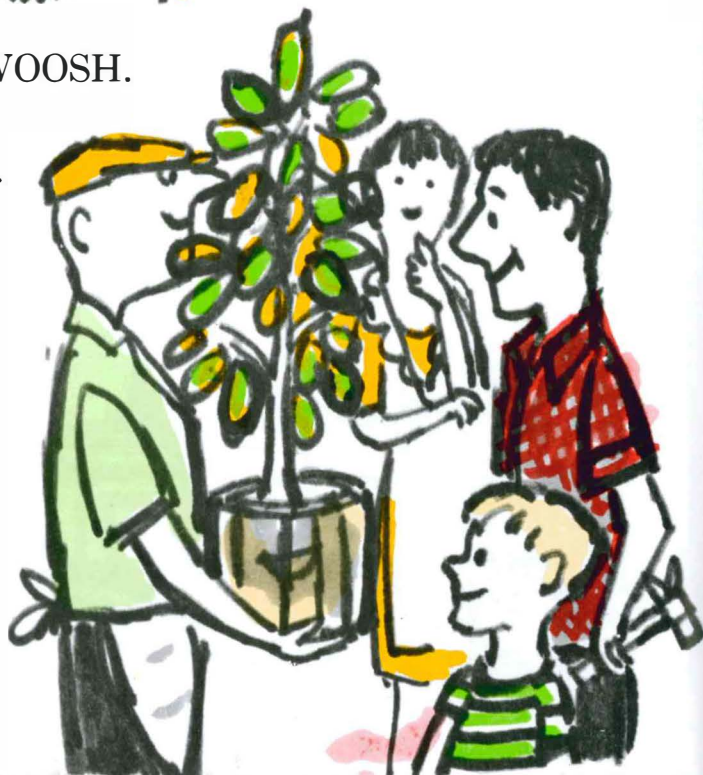
SWISH, SWASH, SPLASH, SWOOSH.

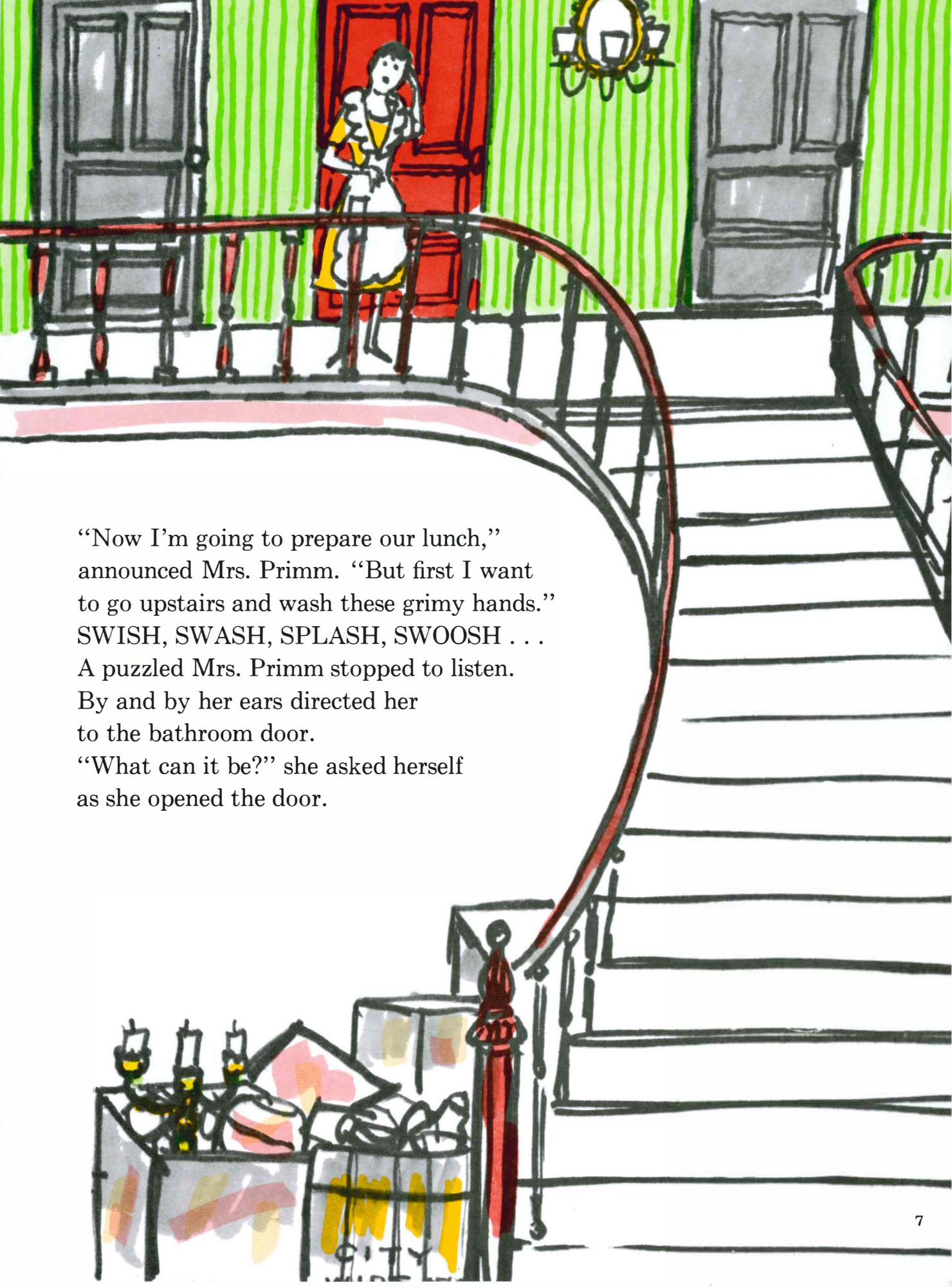
Loudly and clearly the sounds now rumbled through the house.

"It's only a little thunder,"

Mrs. Primm assured everyone.

When a Citywide Storage and Moving man carried in their potted pistachio tree, everyone rejoiced; the truck was at last empty. The movers wished them well and hurried off to their next job for the day.





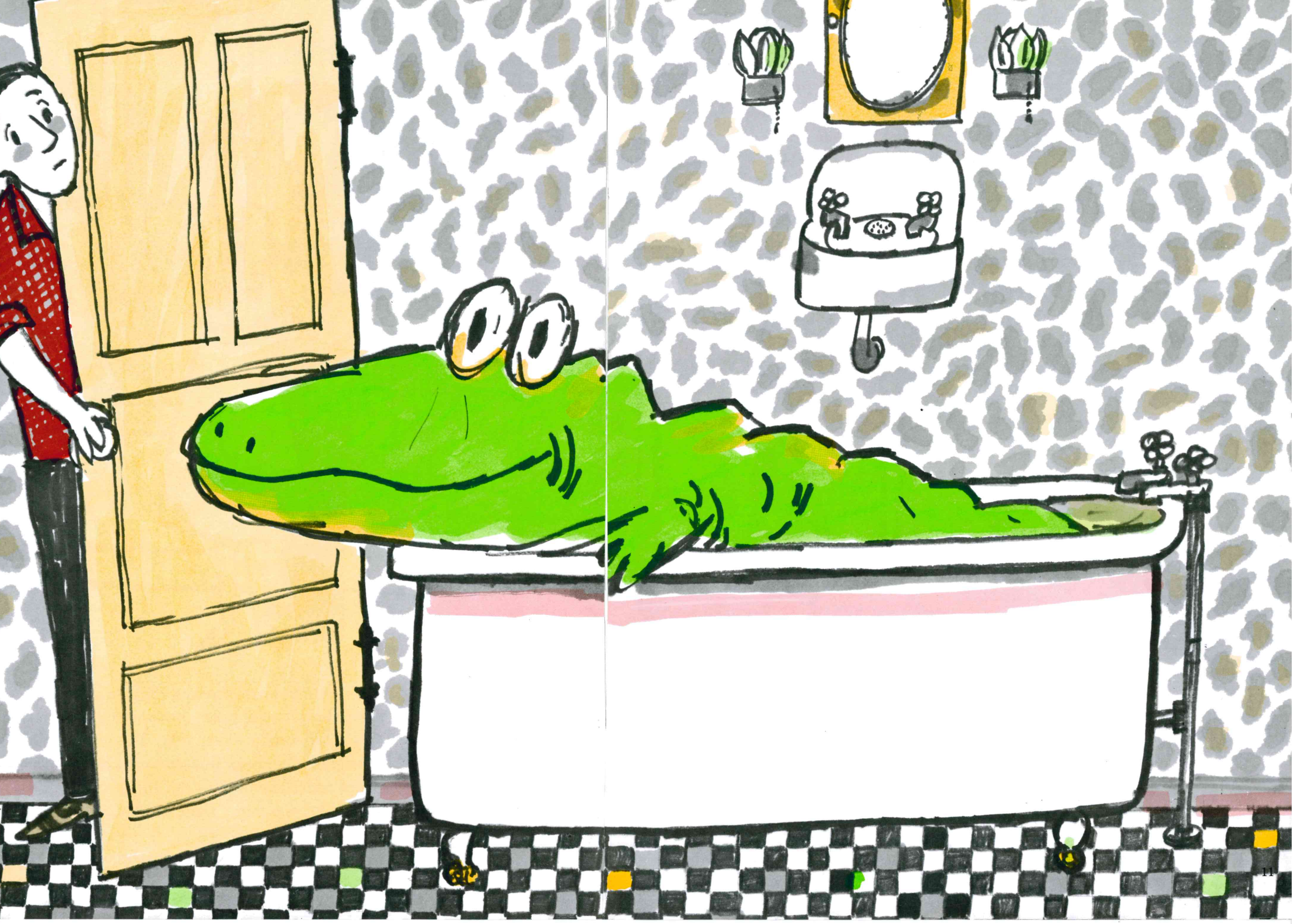
“Now I’m going to prepare our lunch,”  
announced Mrs. Primm. “But first I want  
to go upstairs and wash these grimy hands.”  
SWISH, SWASH, SPLASH, SWOOSH . . .  
A puzzled Mrs. Primm stopped to listen.  
By and by her ears directed her  
to the bathroom door.  
“What can it be?” she asked herself  
as she opened the door.



What she saw made her slam it quickly shut.

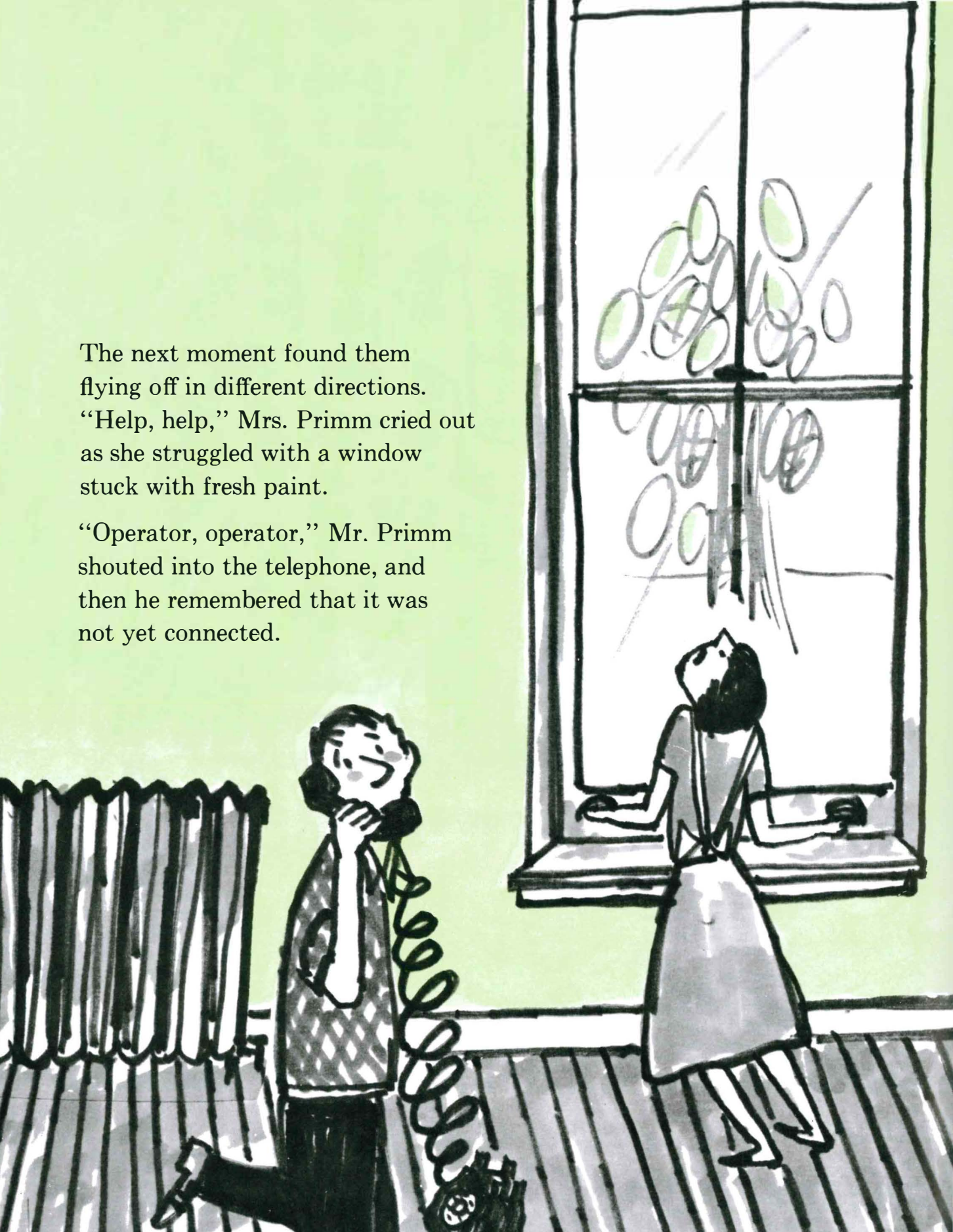


Mrs. Primm knew she was going to scream and just waited for it to happen. But she couldn't scream. She could scarcely even talk. The most Mrs. Primm was able to manage was the sharp hoarse whisper of a voice which she used to call Mr. Primm. "Joseph," she said, "there's a crocodile in our bathtub." Mr. Primm looked into the bathroom.



The next moment found them flying off in different directions. "Help, help," Mrs. Primm cried out as she struggled with a window stuck with fresh paint.

"Operator, operator," Mr. Primm shouted into the telephone, and then he remembered that it was not yet connected.



Joshua, who had heard everything, raced to the front door, to be greeted there by an oddly dressed man who handed him a note. “This will explain everything about the crocodile,” said the man, leaving quietly but swiftly.



Mr. Primm read the note:

Please be kind to my crocodile.  
He is the most gentle of creatures  
and would not do harm to a flea.  
He must have tender, loving care,  
for he is an artist and can perform  
many good tricks. Perhaps he will  
perform some for you.

I shall return.

Cordially,

*Hector P. Valenti\**

HECTOR P. VALENTI  
Star of stage and screen

P.S. He will eat only Turkish caviar.

P.P.S. His name is Lyle.

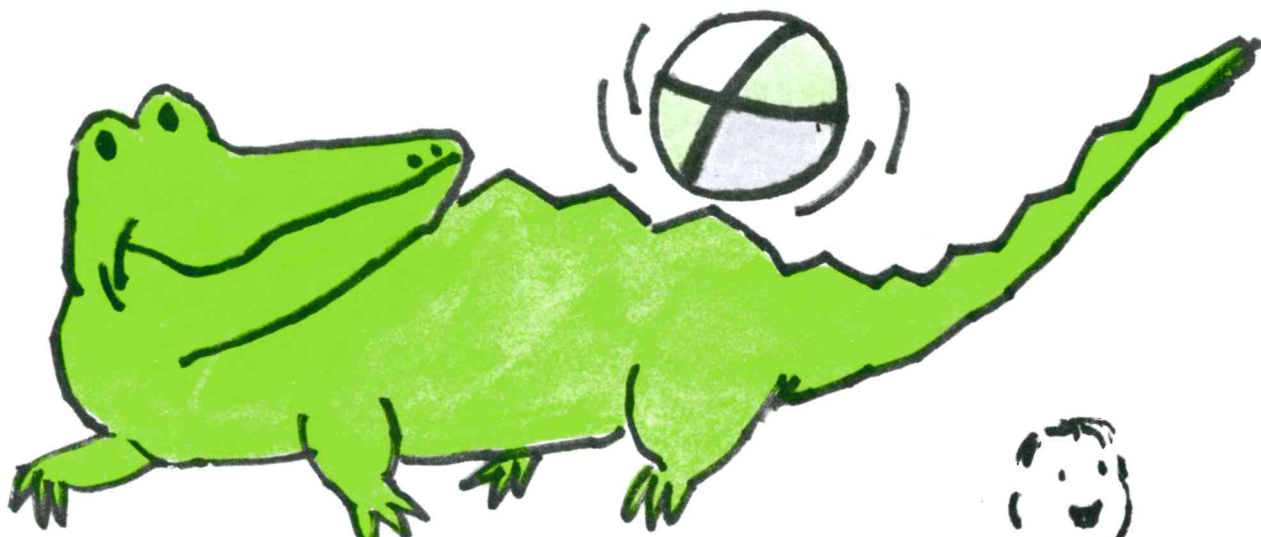
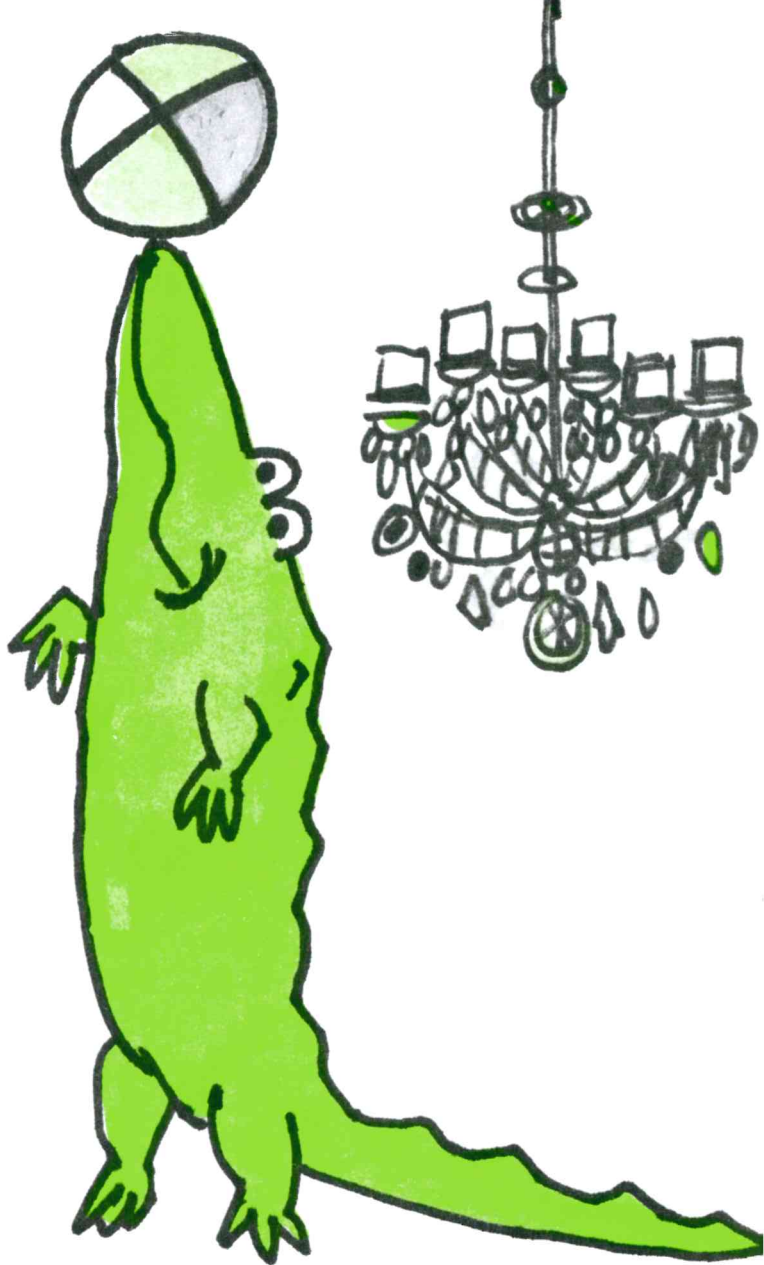
“Turkish caviar indeed,” exclaimed Mrs. Primm.  
“Oh, to think this could happen on East 88th Street.  
Whatever will we do with him?”

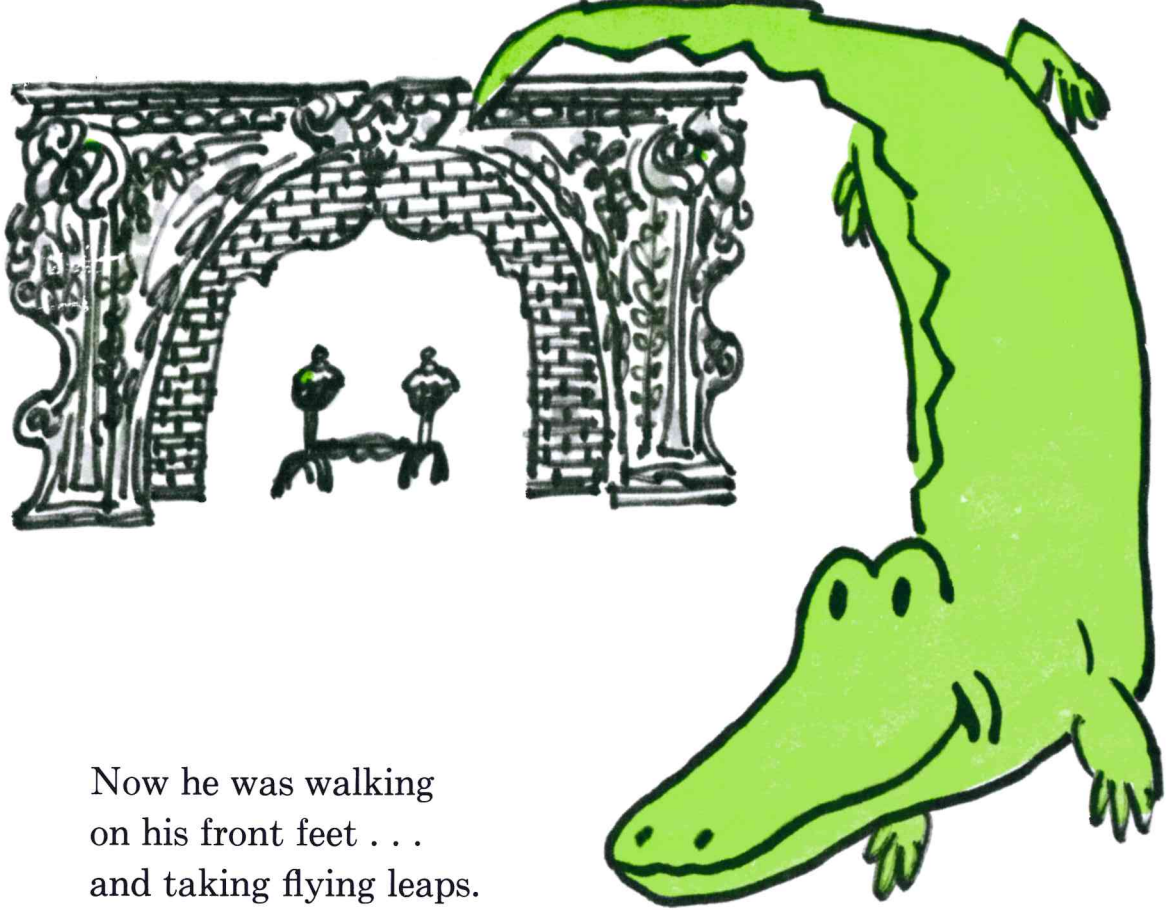




Suddenly, before anyone could think of a worthy answer, there was Lyle.

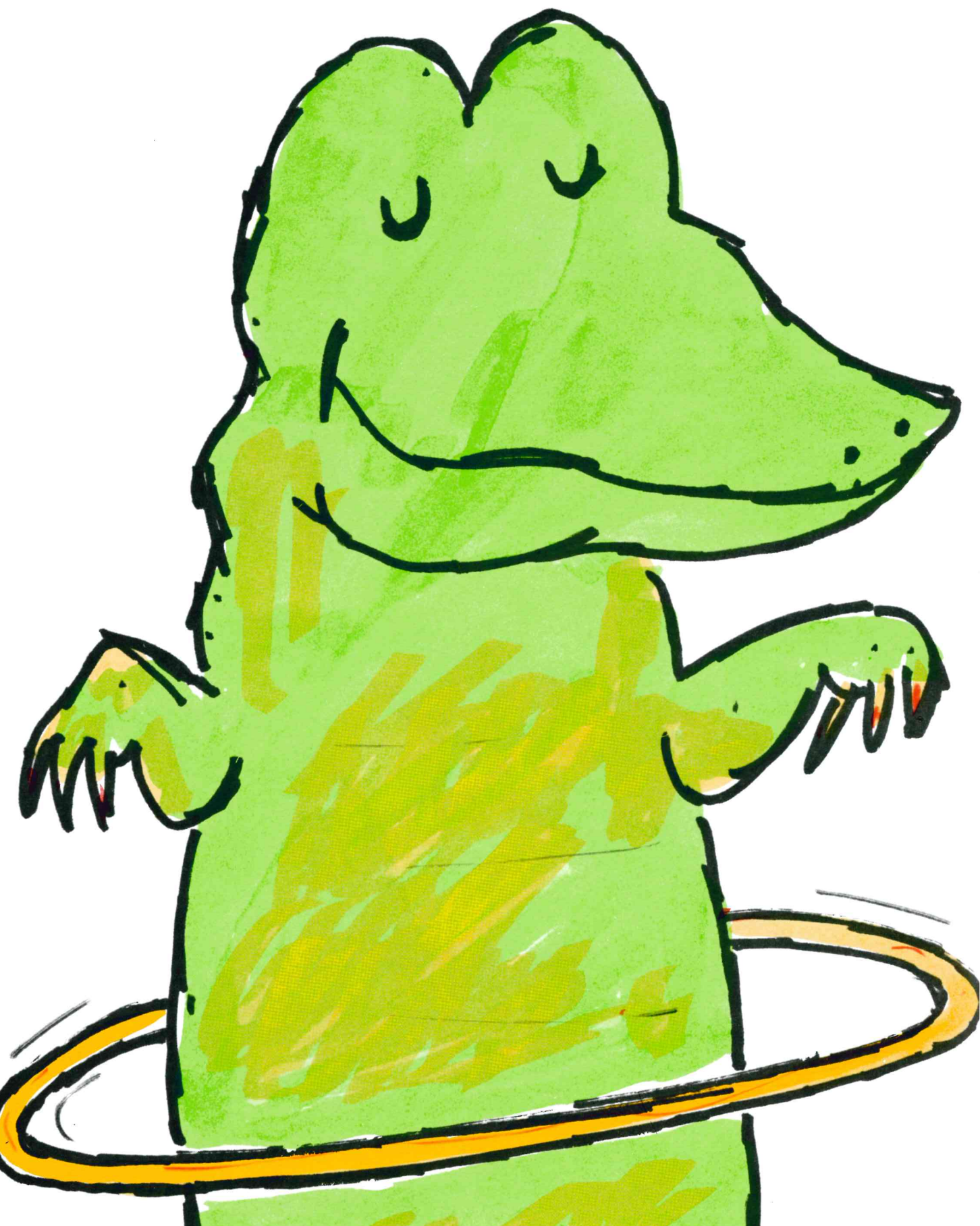
And just as suddenly  
he got hold of a ball  
that had been lying  
among Joshua's  
belongings and began  
to balance it on  
his nose . . .  
and roll it down the  
notches of his spine.





Now he was walking  
on his front feet . . .  
and taking flying leaps.





Now he was twirling Joshua's hoop,  
doing it so expertly that the Primms  
just had to clap their hands and laugh.  
Lyle bowed appreciatively.  
He had won his way into their hearts  
and into their new home.



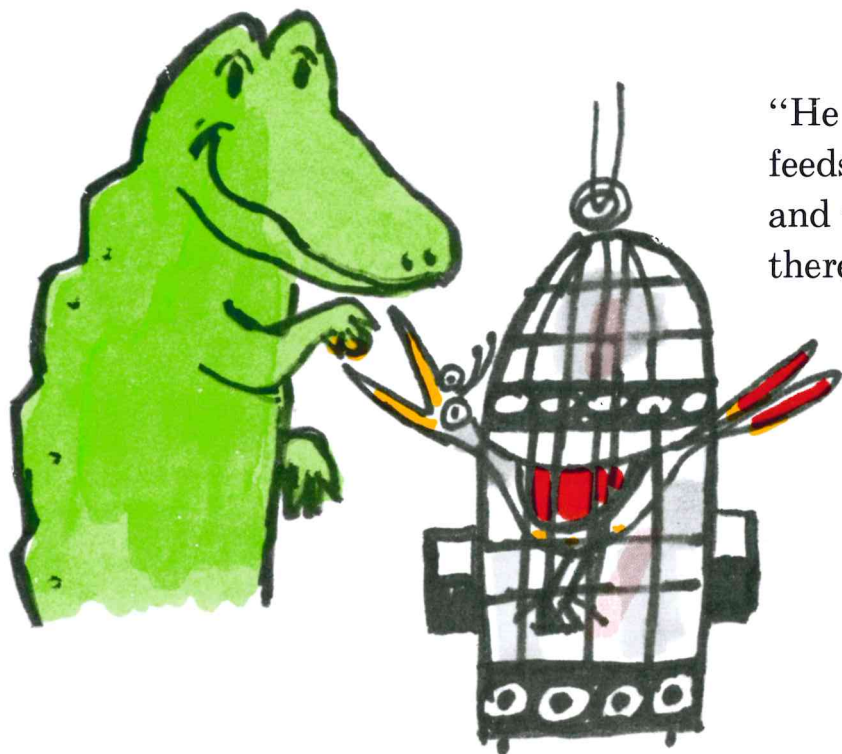


"Every home should have a crocodile," said Mrs. Primm one day.  
"Lyle is one of the family now. He loves helping out with chores."



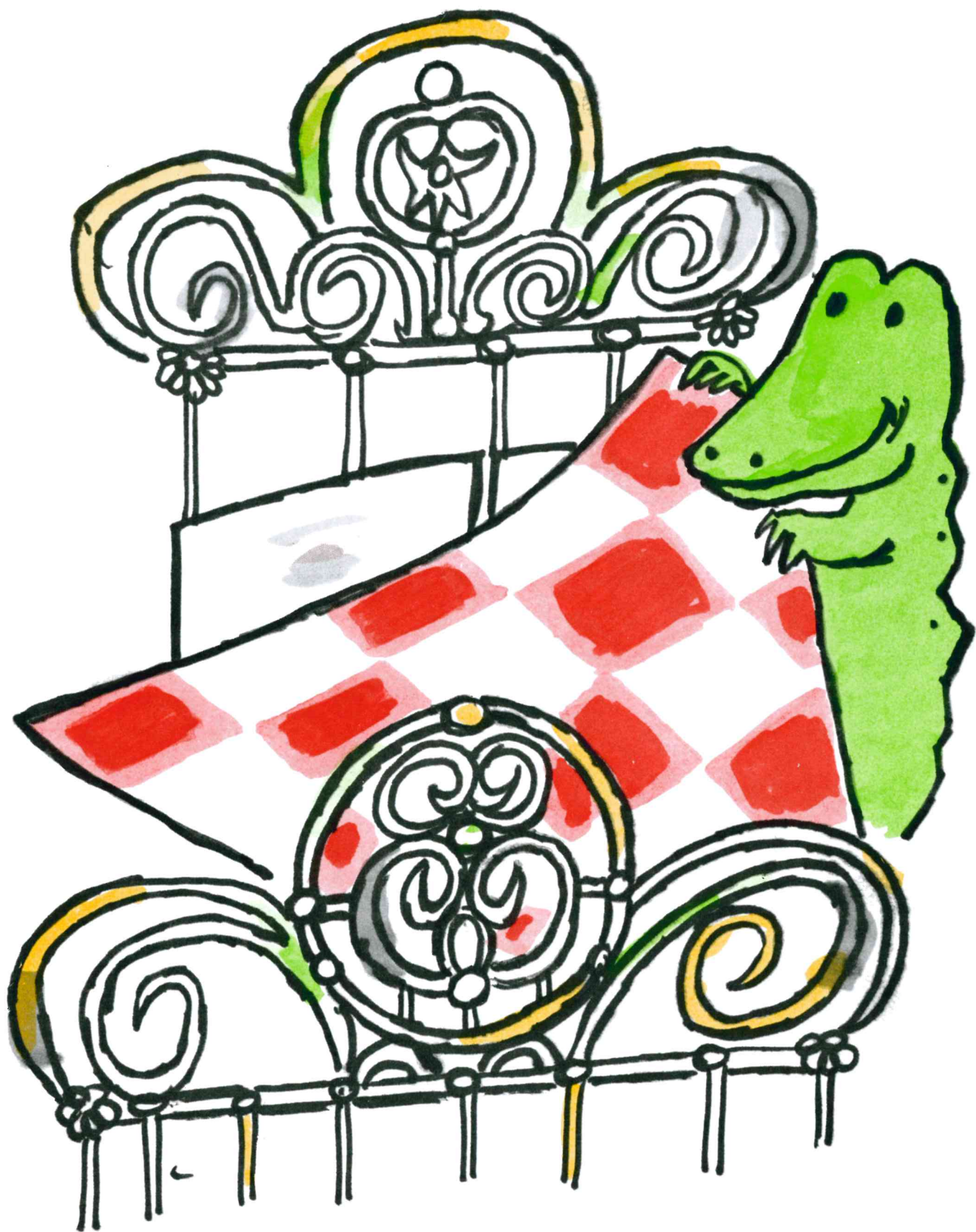
“He won’t allow anyone else to  
carry out old newspapers . . .  
or take in the milk.”





“He folds towels,  
feeds the bird,  
and when he sets the table  
there is always a surprise.”

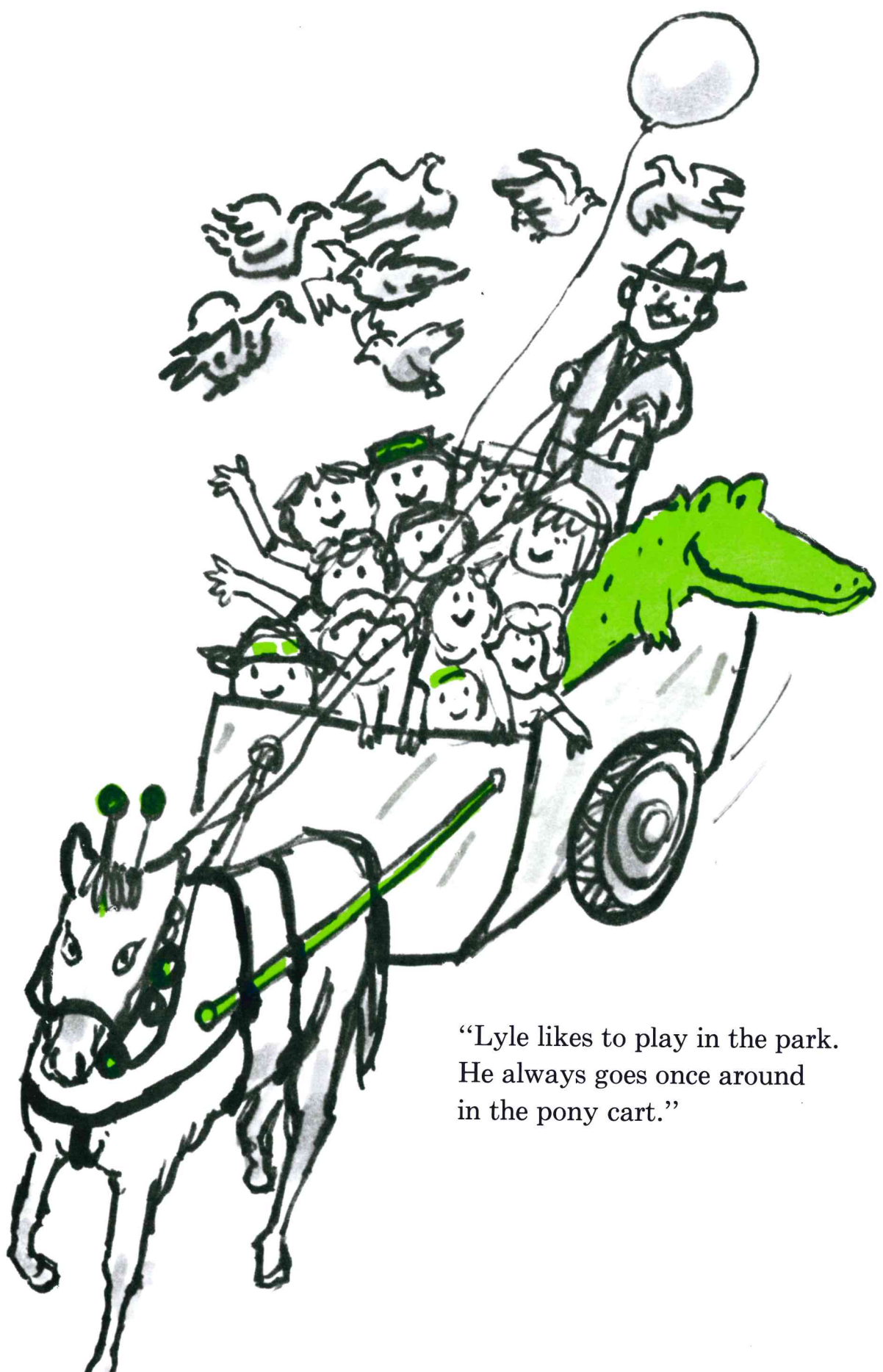




“I had only to show him once how to make up a bed.”



“People everywhere stop to talk with him.  
They say he is the nicest crocodile they ever met.”



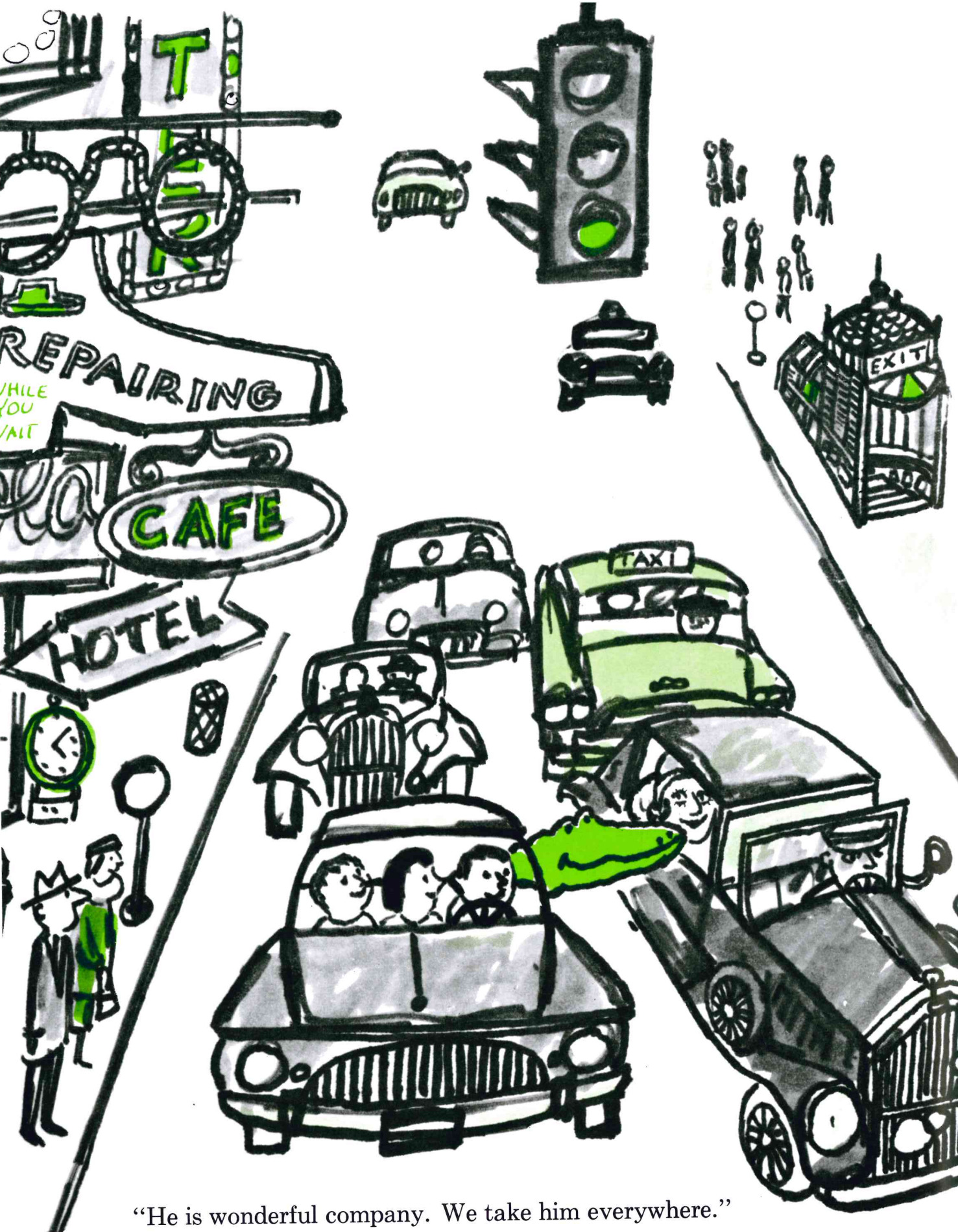
“Lyle likes to play in the park.  
He always goes once around  
in the pony cart.”

“And now he has learned to eat  
something besides Turkish caviar.”





“Lyle is a good sport. Everyone wants him to play on his side.”

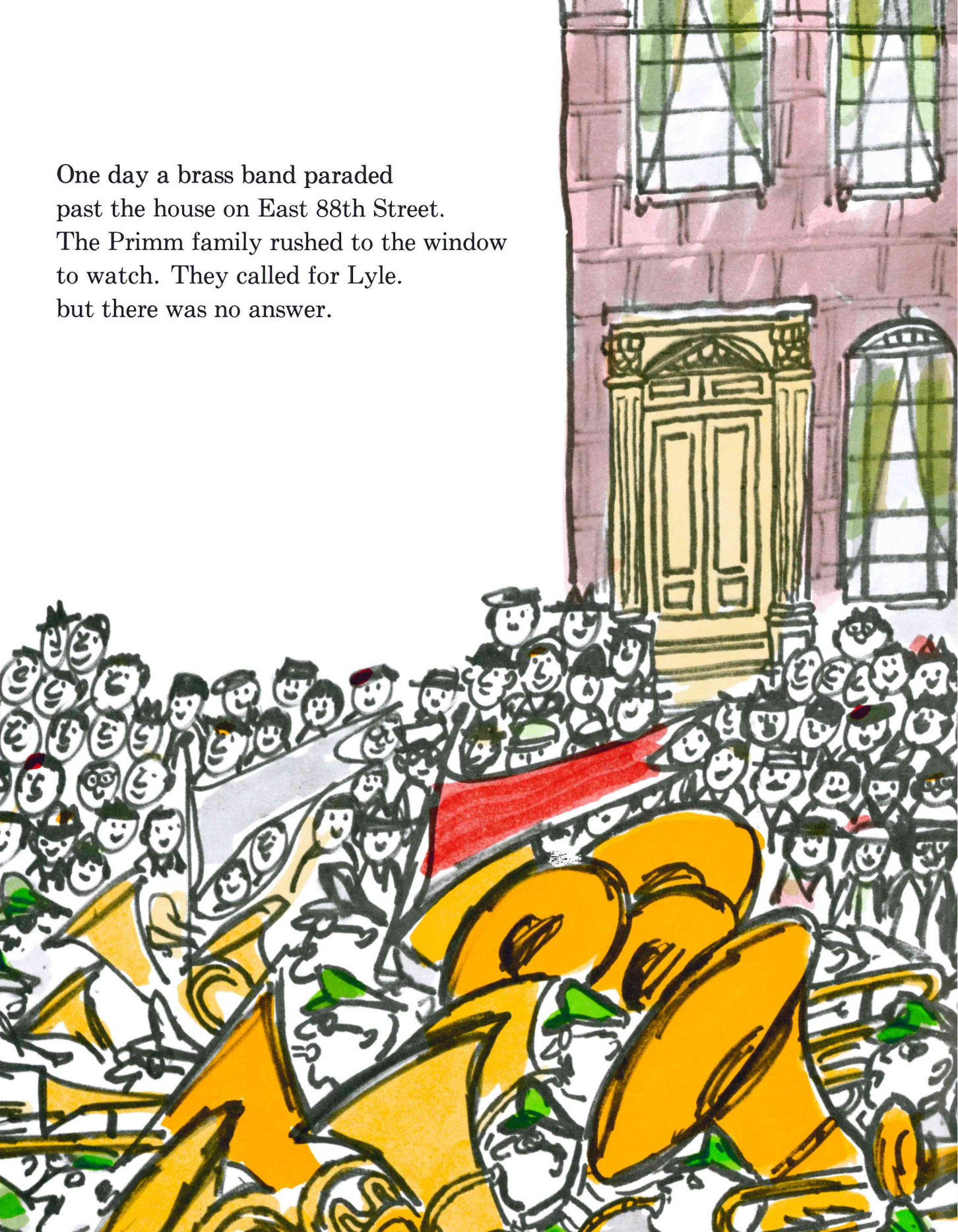


"He is wonderful company. We take him everywhere."



“Just give him his Turkish caviar  
and his bed of warm water  
and he is happy as a bird.”

One day a brass band paraded  
past the house on East 88th Street.  
The Primm family rushed to the window  
to watch. They called for Lyle.  
but there was no answer.



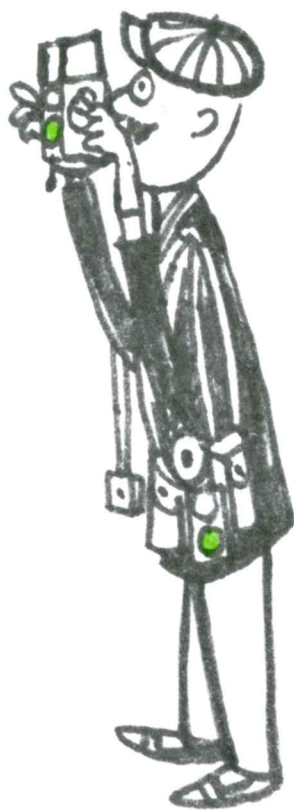




“Look,” someone pointed out. “It’s Lyle, he’s in the parade.”

There was Lyle doing his specialty of somersault, flying leaps, walking on front feet and taking bows just as he did the first day they laid eyes on him.

The people watching cheered him on, while Lyle smiled back at them and blew kisses. A photographer was on hand to take pictures.



The next day Lyle was famous.  
The telephone rang continually  
and bundles of mail were dropped by  
the door. One letter was from  
someone Lyle knew particularly  
well. Mr. Primm read it:

Just a few words to say  
I shall return.

Cordially,

*Hector P. Valenti\**

HECTOR P. VALENTI  
Star of stage and screen

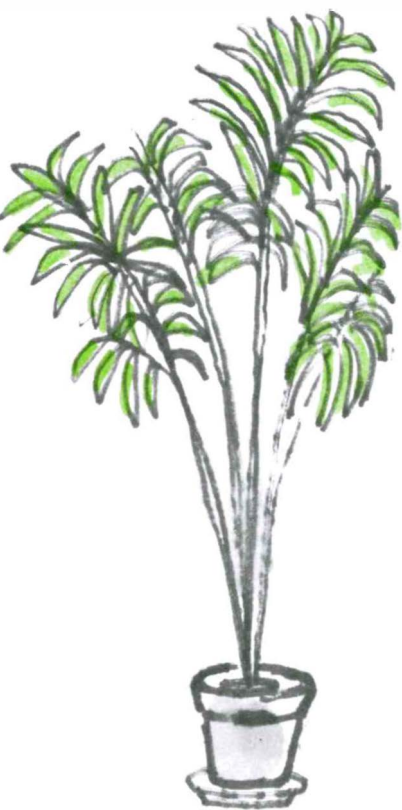
P.S. Very soon.

P.P.S. To fetch my crocodile.





Several days later, Mrs. Primm and Lyle were in the kitchen shelling peas when they heard a knocking at the door. It was Hector P. Valenti, star of stage and screen. "I have come for Lyle," announced Signor Valenti.



“You can’t have Lyle,” cried Mrs. Primm,  
“he is very happy living here, and we  
love him dearly.”

“Lyle must be returned to me,”  
insisted Signor Valenti.

“Was it not I who raised him from  
young crocodilehood?

Was it not I who taught him  
his bag of tricks?

We have appeared together on  
stages the world over.”

“But why then did you leave him  
alone in a strange house?” asked Mrs. Primm.

“Because,” answered Signor Valenti,

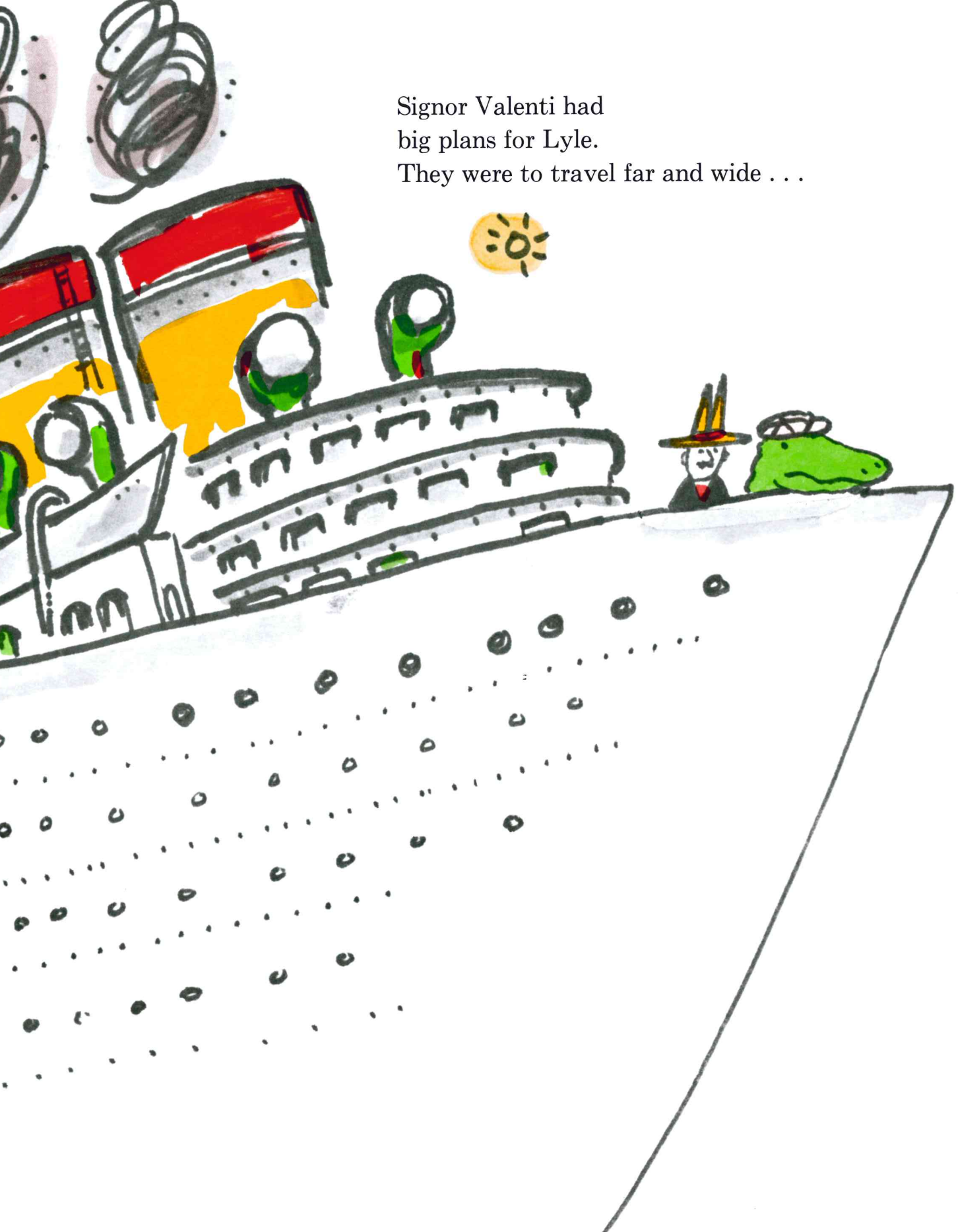
“I could no longer afford to pay for  
his Turkish caviar. But now  
Lyle is famous and we shall be very rich.”

Mrs. Primm was saddened, but she  
knew Lyle properly belonged to  
Signor Valenti and she had  
to let him go.



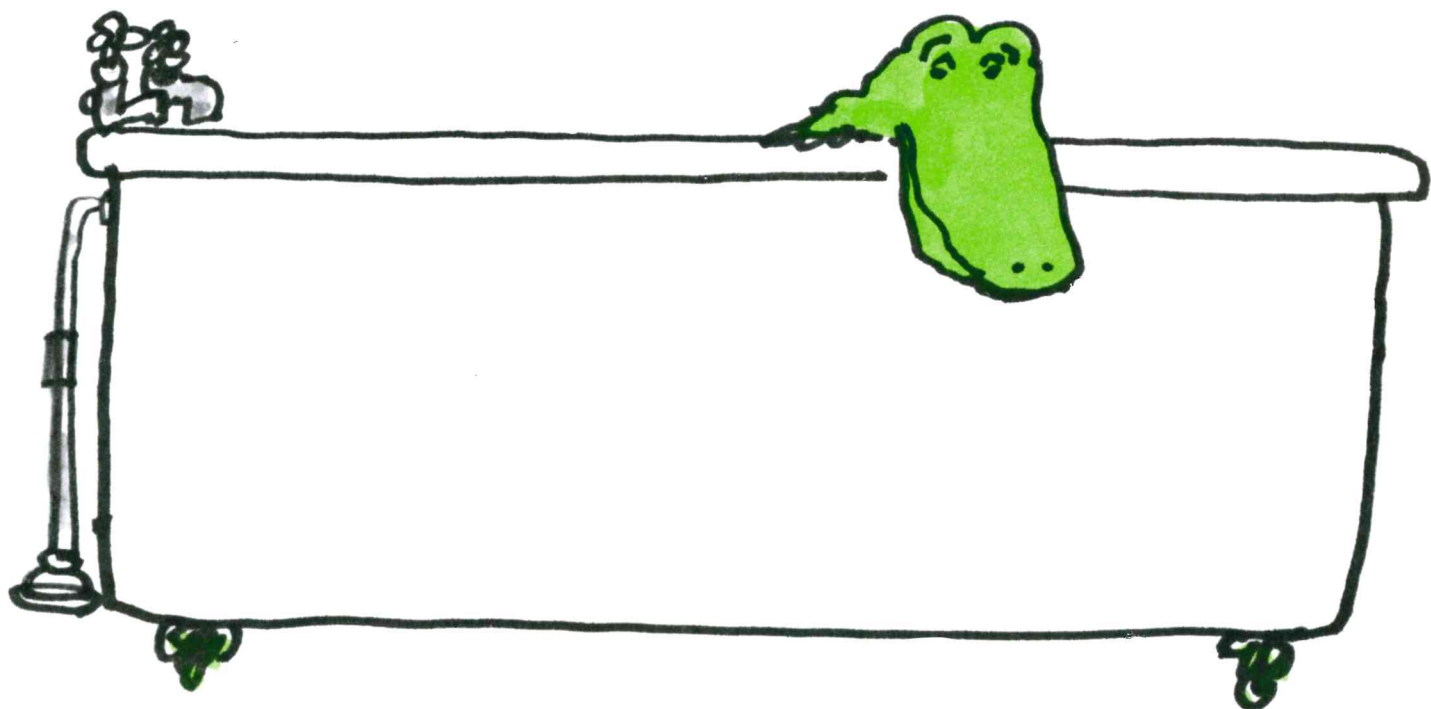
It was a tearful parting for everyone.

Signor Valenti had  
big plans for Lyle.  
They were to travel far and wide . . .

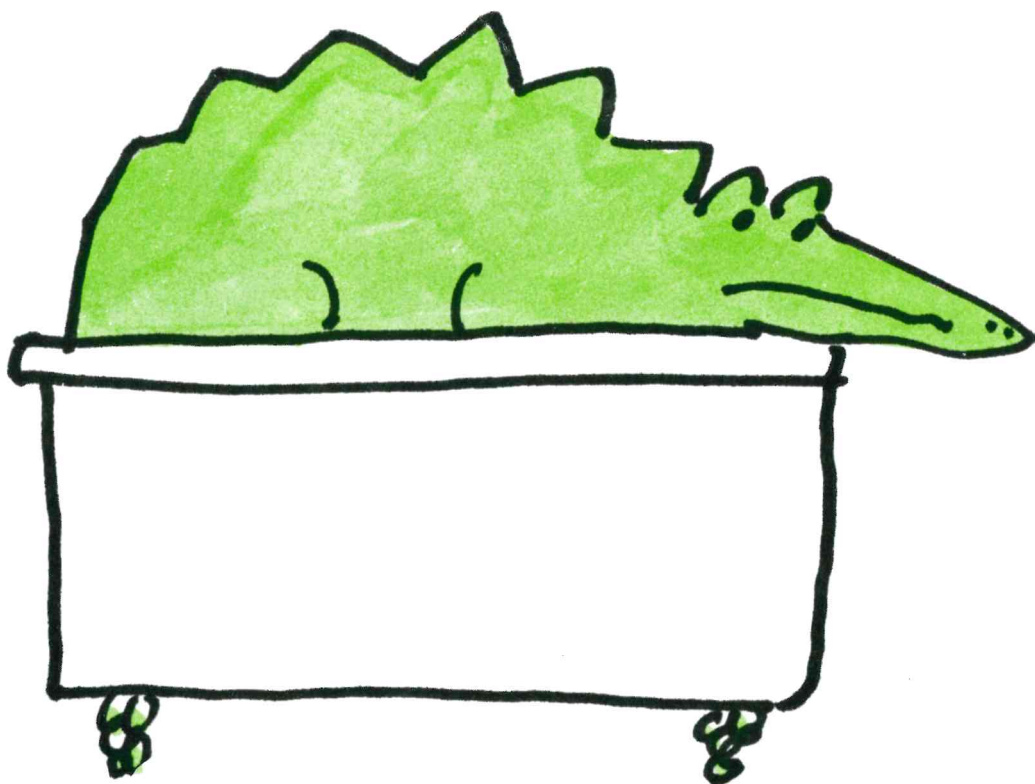




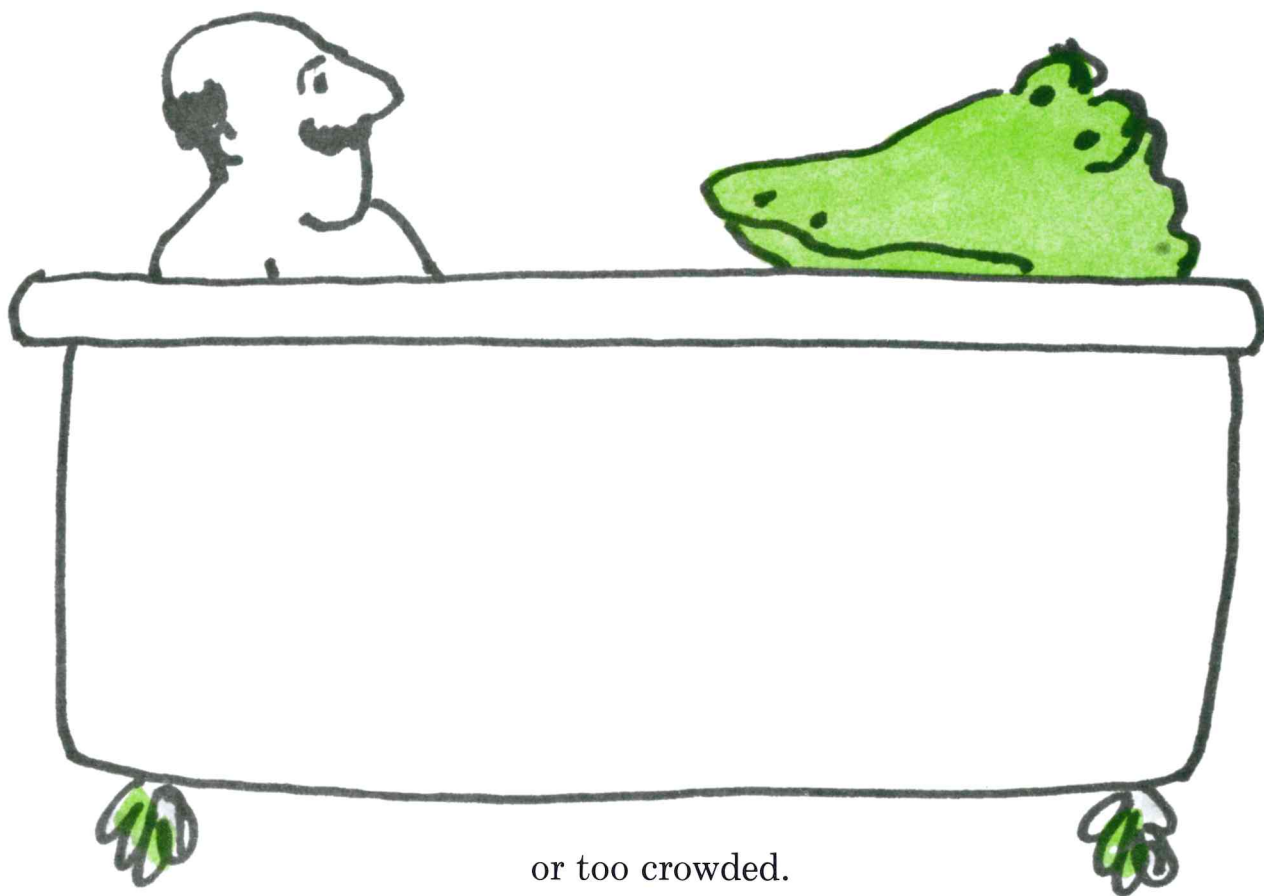
stay in many hotels . . .



where sometimes the tubs were too big . . .



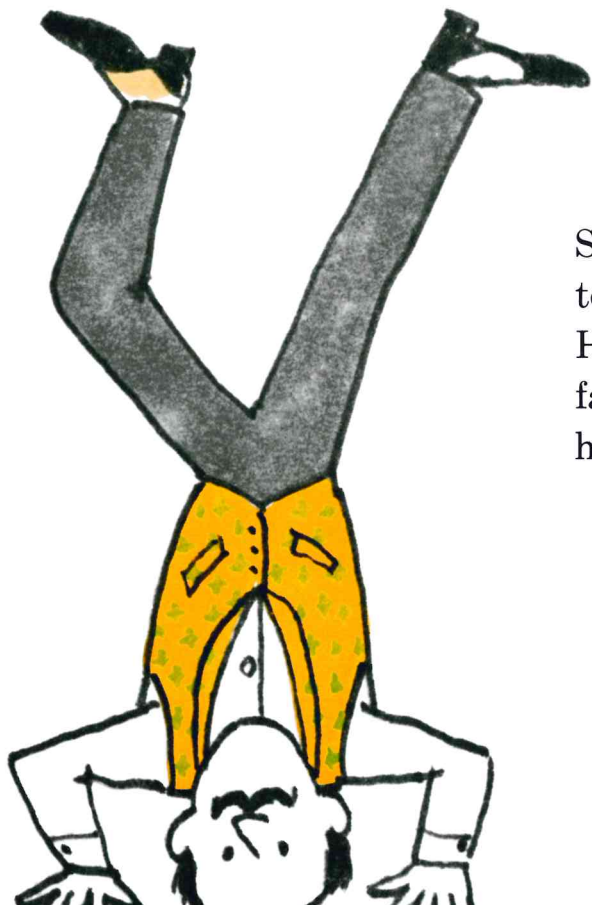
and other times too small . . .

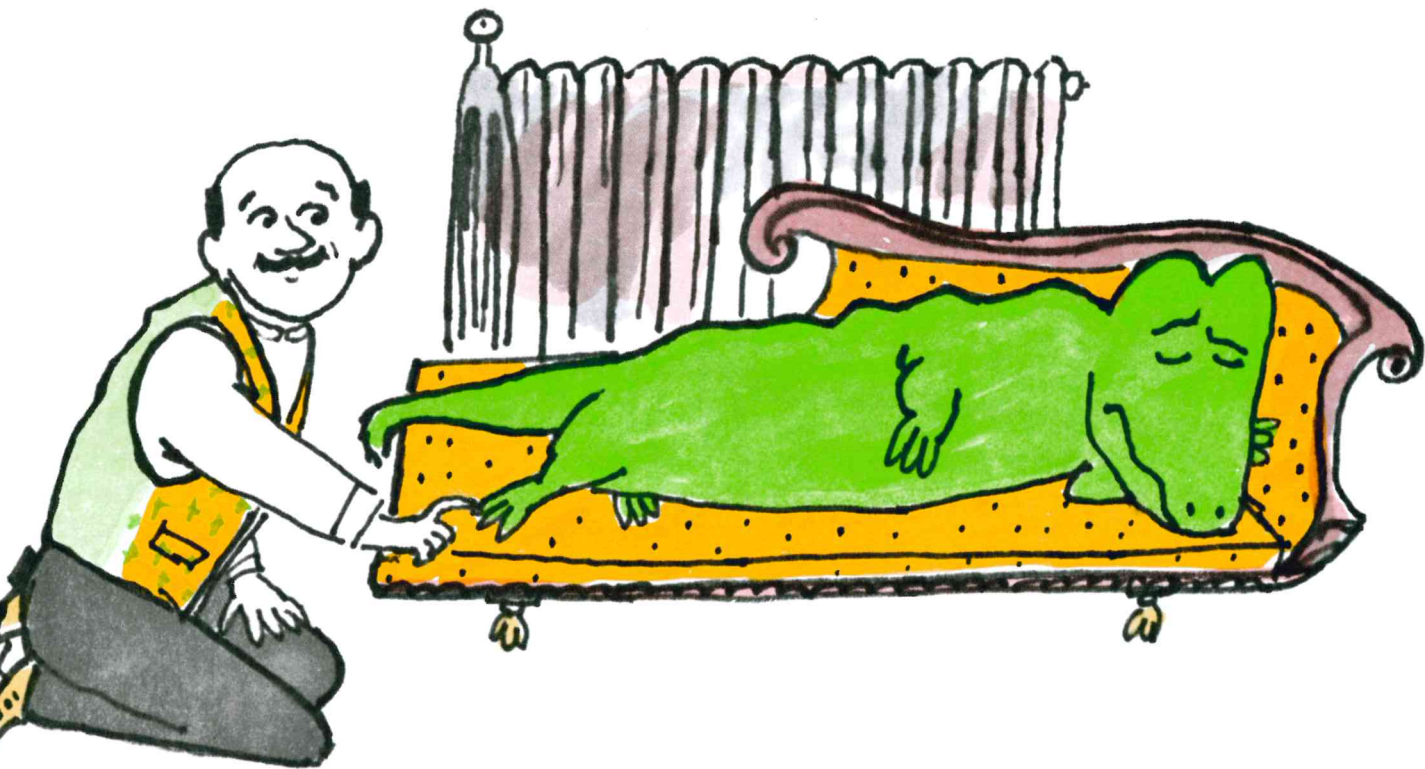


or too crowded.



Signor Valenti did what he could  
to coax a smile from Lyle.  
He tried making funny  
faces at him . . .  
he stood on his head.





He tickled his toes and told him uproarious stories that in happier days would have had Lyle doubled over with laughter. But Lyle could not laugh. Nor could he make people laugh. He made them cry instead . . . One night in Paris, he made an entire audience cry. The theater manager was furious and ordered them off his stage.





Meanwhile at the house on East 88th Street  
Mrs. Primm went about her work without her usual bright smile.  
And deep sighs could be heard coming  
from behind the newspaper Mr. Primm was reading.





Every morning Joshua anxiously awaited the arrival of the mailman in hope of receiving word from Lyle. One morning a letter did come. He knew the handwriting very well.



Just a few words to say  
we shall return.

Cordially  
*Hector P. Valenti*

HECTOR P. VALENTI

Former star of stage and screen

P.S. I am sick of crocodiles.

P.P.S. And the tears of crocodiles.

Not too many days after, the Primms  
were delighted to find Hector P. Valenti  
and Lyle at their door.

“Here, take him back,” said Signor Valenti.

“He is no good. He will never make  
anyone laugh again.”

But Signor Valenti was very much mistaken.

Everyone laughed . . .

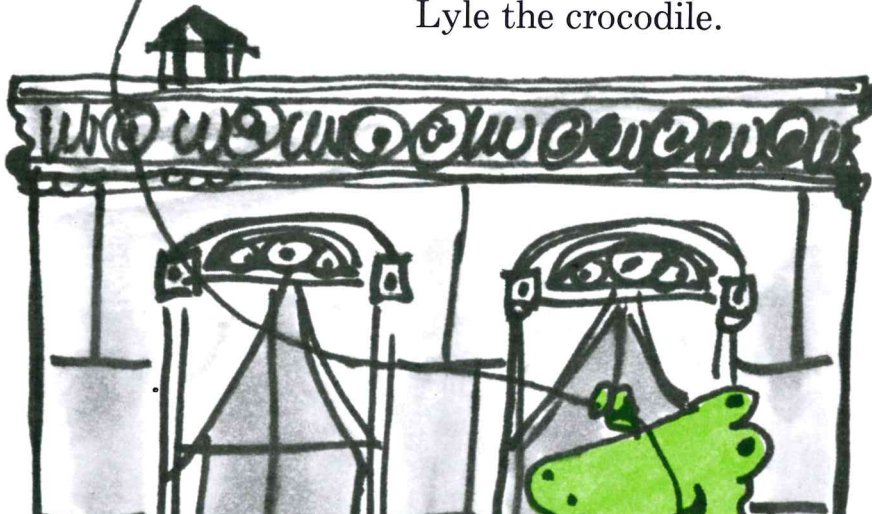
and laughed . . . and laughed.

And in the end so did Signor Valenti.





So now if you should happen to be  
walking past the house on  
East 88th Street  
and if you should happen to hear  
sounds that go:  
SWISH, SWASH, SPLASH, SWOOSH!  
don't be surprised.  
It's only Lyle.  
Lyle the crocodile.



Meet Lyle the crocodile in this first book of Bernard Waber's much-loved Lyle series.

Funny, talented and always friendly, Lyle is the most endearing of crocodiles, as the *New York Times* described him in *Lovable Lyle*: "Ordinarily I don't like crocodiles. They're reptilian and slithery and bumpety all over . . . But I like Lyle. He's of a different stripe — urbane, cosmopolitan, one of the family, a charmer."

Books about Lyle in Sandpiper paperback:

The House on East 88th Street

Lyle, Lyle Crocodile

Lyle and the Birthday Party

Lovable Lyle

Lyle Finds His Mother

Funny, Funny Lyle



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