



Once Upon A  
**WILDFIRE**

By Calli-Jane DeAnda  
Illustrations by Jim Burch

# LIGHTNING STRIKES!

A wildfire burns through the forest.

How do Julie-Anne and her family survive the fire?

*A story written after a series of devastating wildfires in Northern California to help kids and their families better prepare for wildfire—and deal with its aftermath.*



## **Once Upon a Wildfire**

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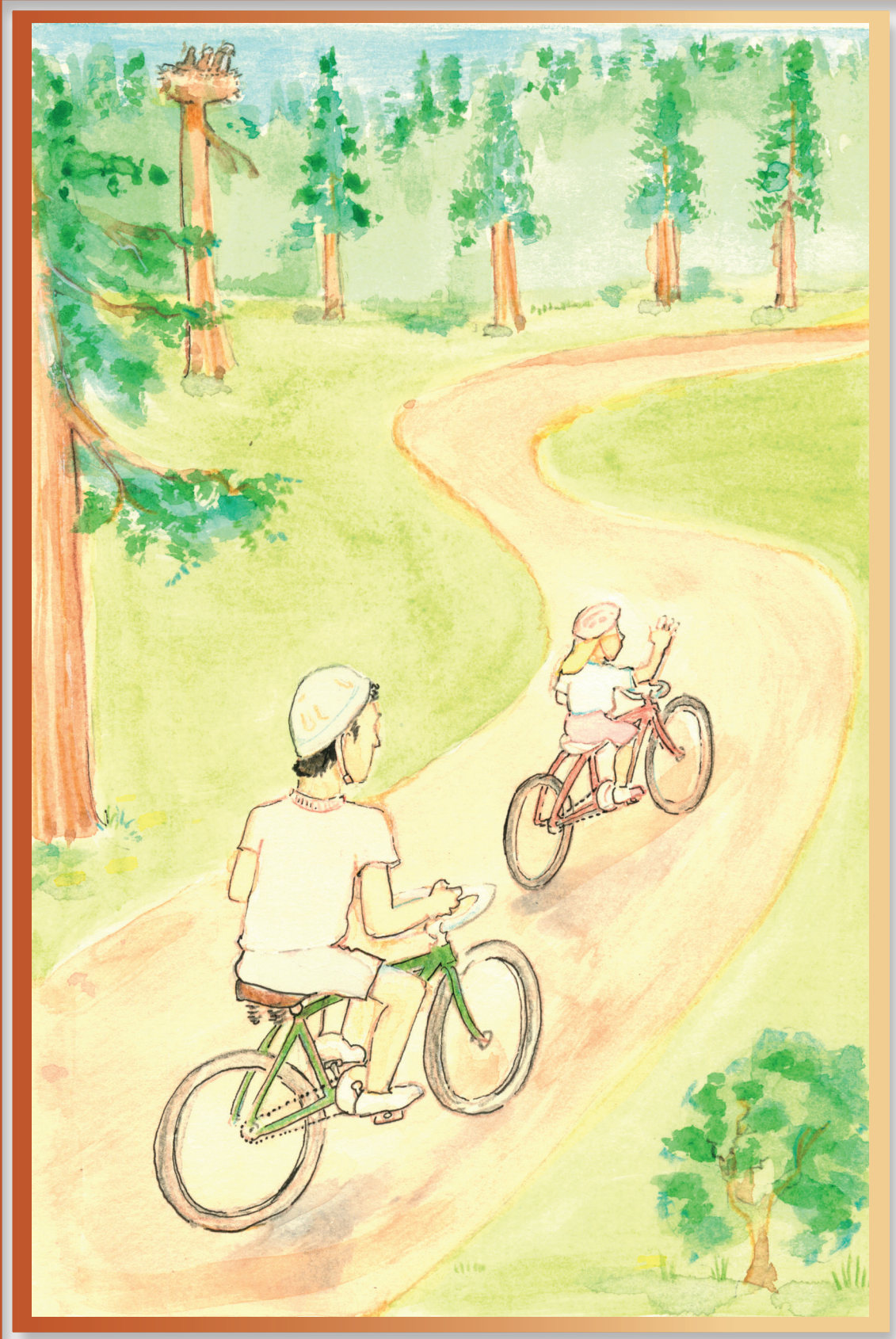
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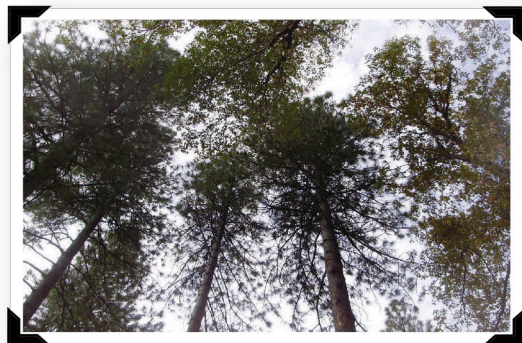
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It was a hot summer day.



Julie-Anne and her dad were riding bikes down their long driveway. They had been swimming at the creek to cool off and were now going home for some lemonade.

Their family lived in the forest on the edge of a canyon. Julie-Anne loved playing in the forest, climbing trees and building forts.





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Julie-Anne and her dad stopped in the shade to take a break and to watch the osprey babies, at the top of a dead tree. Higher up, they could see dark puffy clouds.



“Those are called thunderheads,” said Julie-Anne’s dad.

“I think they should be called roasted marshmallow clouds instead,” replied Julie-Anne.

They both laughed.







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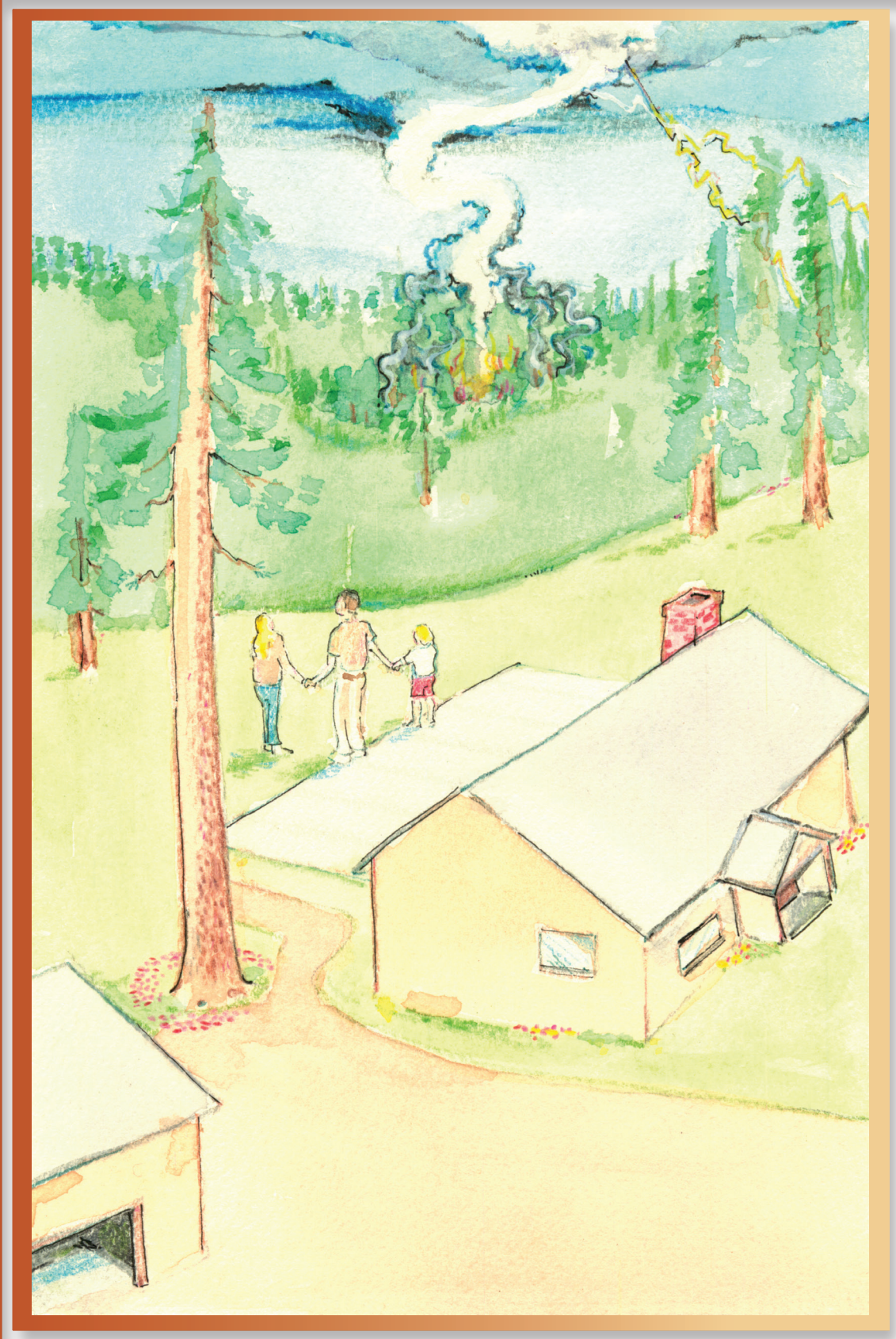
Soon they heard the rumble and boom of thunder. All of a sudden, lightning hit the ground nearby!



Julie-Anne felt frightened. As they rode closer to their house, they could see a puff of smoke rising out above the trees.

“I think the lightning hit a tree and caused a fire,” said her dad.





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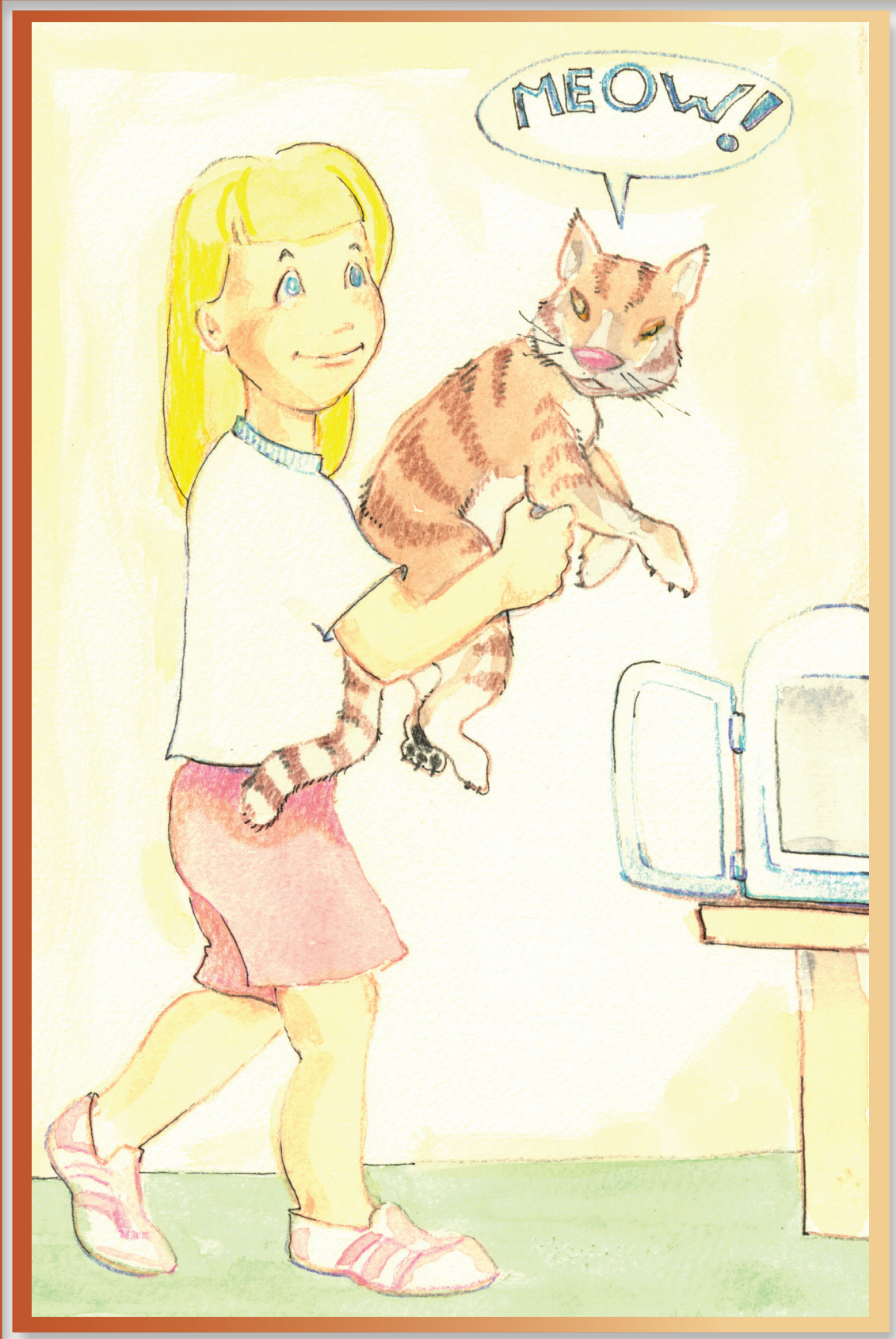
At home, Julie-Anne's mom looked worried. She took them to the back of the house and pointed to a wildfire. Soon, the sound of a fire engine echoed through the trees.



“The wildfire is growing quickly, we need to evacuate,” said mom.

“There are some important things we need to do,” added dad.





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Julie-Anne grabbed their cat, Tom Petty, and put him in a cat carrier.



Her mom closed all the doors and windows. Dad grabbed their important papers and an emergency bag of clothes and food.

Tom Petty looked confused in the back seat of the car. Julie-Anne sat close to his carrier to comfort him.





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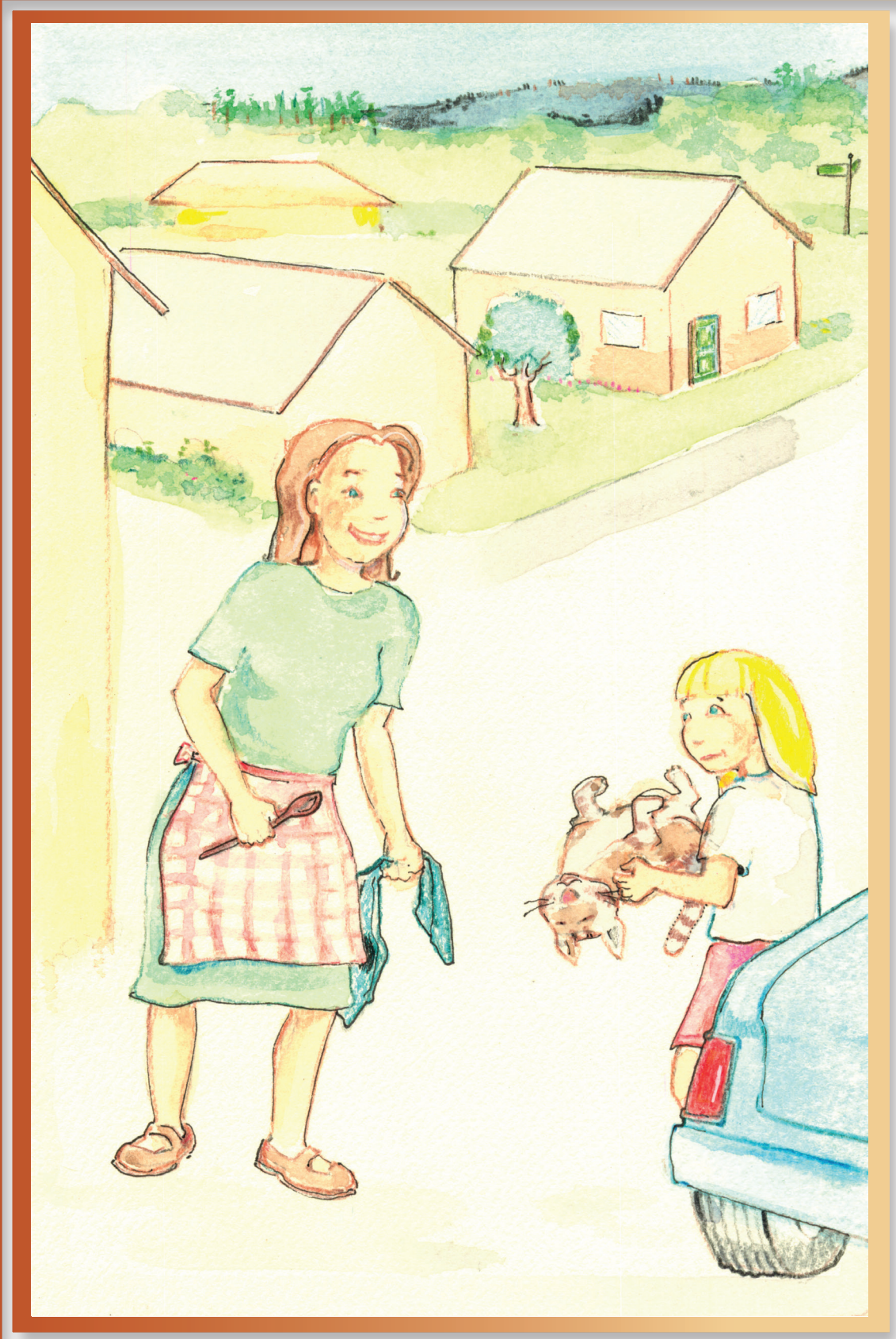
A fire truck pulled up in front of the house.



“It’s a good thing you’re ready to evacuate,” said the fire fighters. “We are going to be able to fight the fire from here, because you’ve created good defensible space.”

The fire fighters began pulling hose off their fire engine. Smoke filled the sky. A giant airplane circled and dropped red fire retardant.

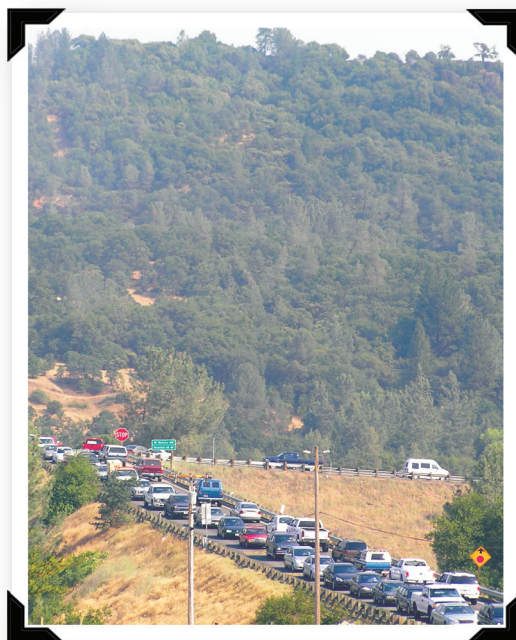






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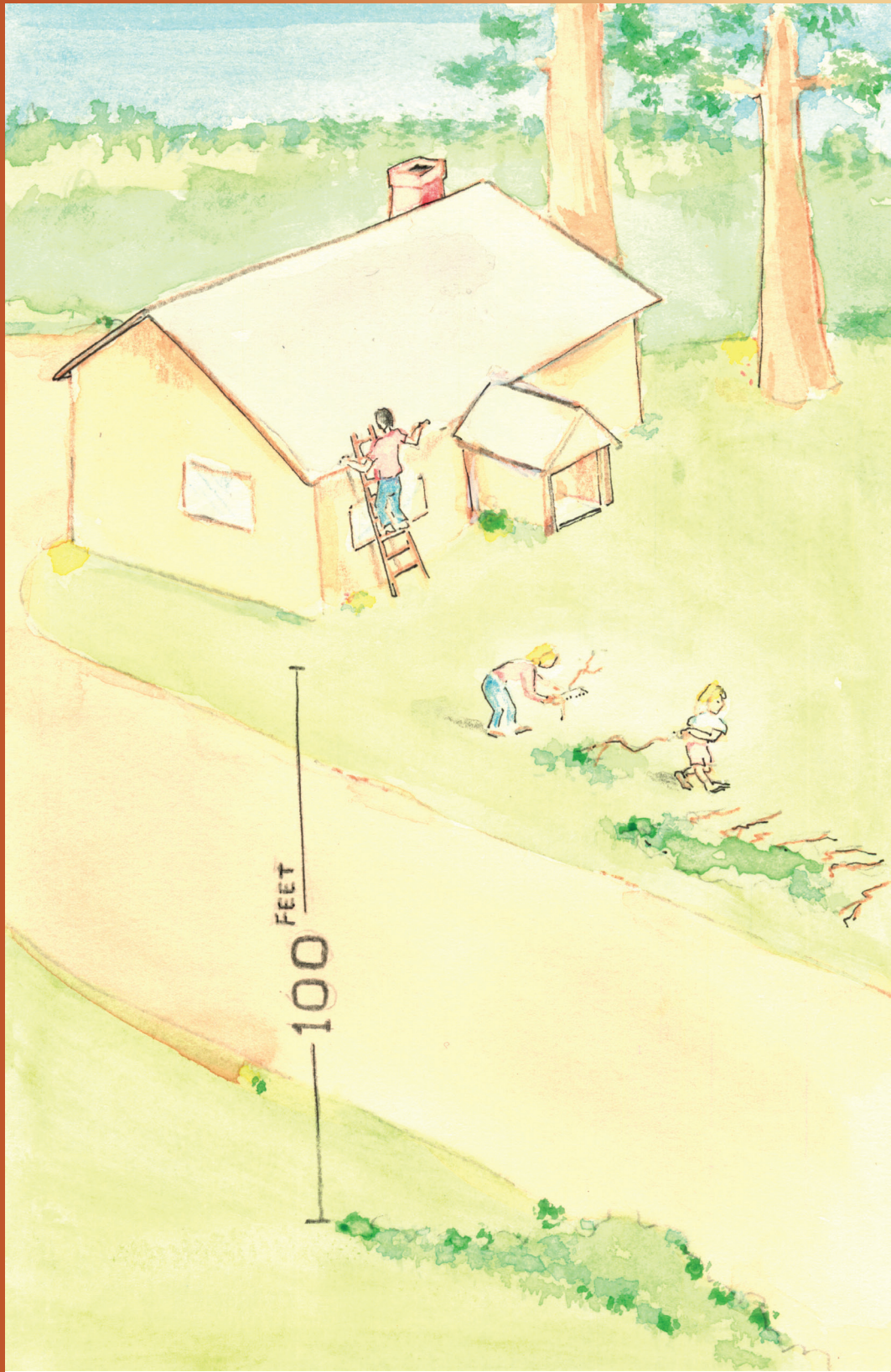
The hot and tired family arrived at grandma's house two hours later. Their car had moved as slow as a snail due to the traffic jam. "I am glad you left as early as you did," grandma said.



Julie-Anne took Tom Petty out of the carrier, and he relaxed in her arms.

"Wow! That poor cat looks like a hot dog!" said grandma.





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“Do you think the fire was close enough to burn your house down?” asked grandma.



“Yes, but we’ve done a lot to be prepared,” dad said. “We cleared brush and stacked it for the Chipper Program.”

“We also cleaned out the gutters at the beginning of summer,” added mom.







Tom Petty hid under grandma's couch all afternoon. When he finally came out, the family was watching the nightly news. Julie-Anne held him closely.

The news showed pictures of tall flames. The reporter said that the wind was pushing the fire and some houses may have been burned.





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“Is our house safe?”  
Julie-Anne asked.

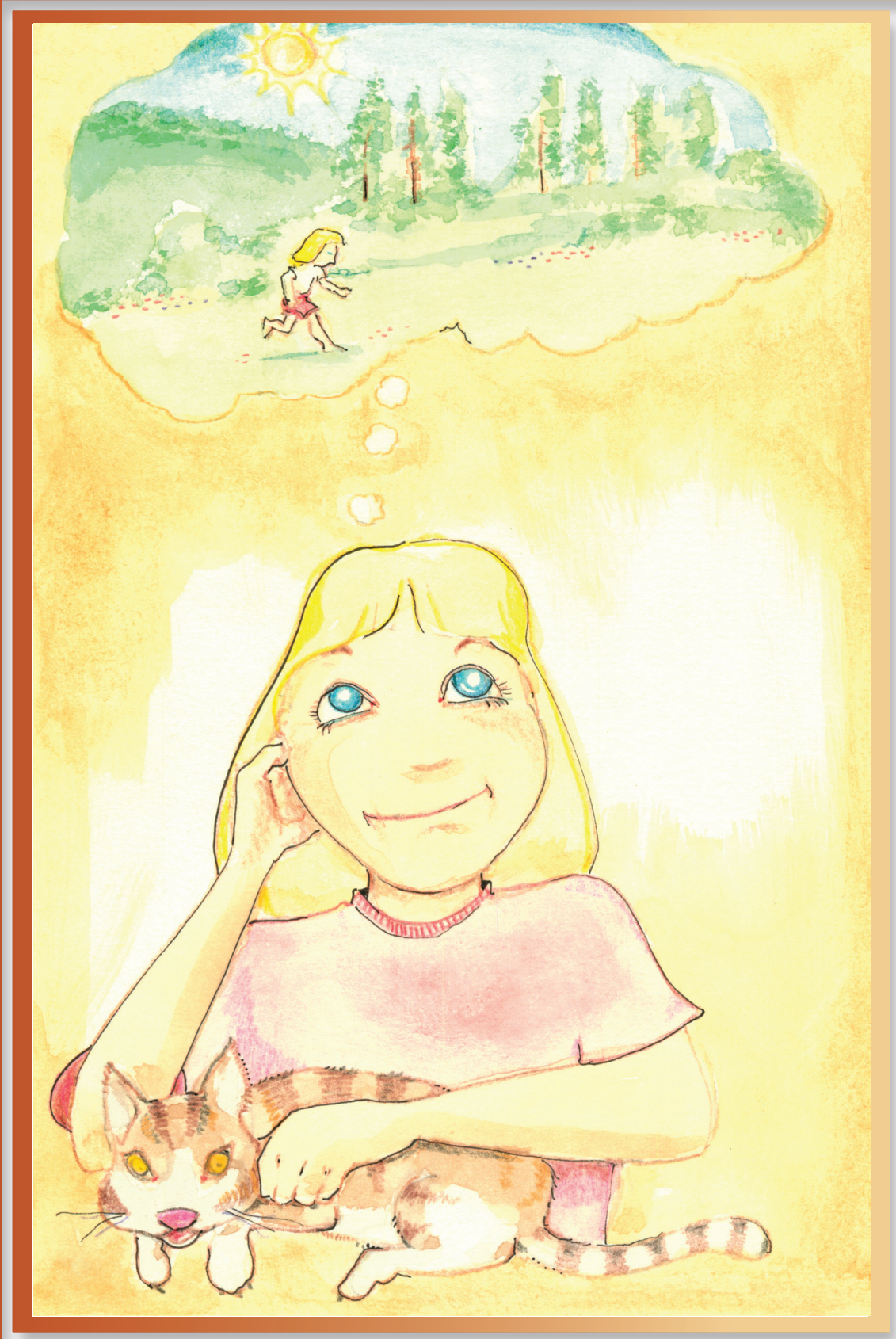


Dad replied, “Well, houses catch on fire from embers most of the time, not from the flames.”

“Remember when we raked the pine needles away from the house?” mom asked. “When embers land they won’t catch our house on fire.”

The family stayed at grandma’s house for three days until the fire was contained.







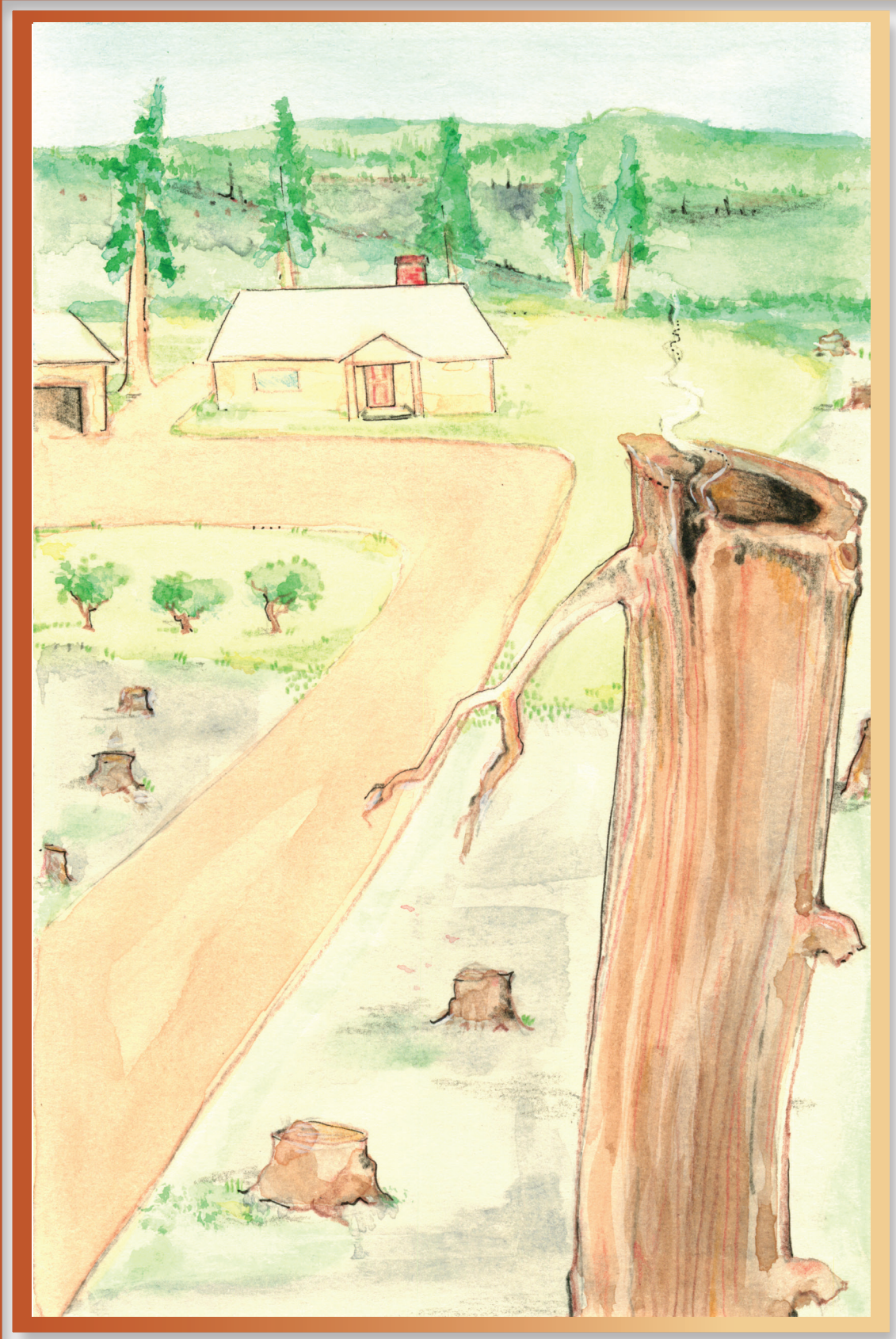
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After three days it was finally time to go home. It had been so smoky that Julie-Anne had not been able to play outside.



Julie-Anne's family was worried about their house because the newspaper reported that 50 homes were damaged in the wildfire.





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As they drove back on to their long driveway, Julie-Anne saw their house was still there. However, the fire had burned the forest and ospreys' nest.



She worried that the mom and babies had not survived the fire. She wondered where they would build a new nest.





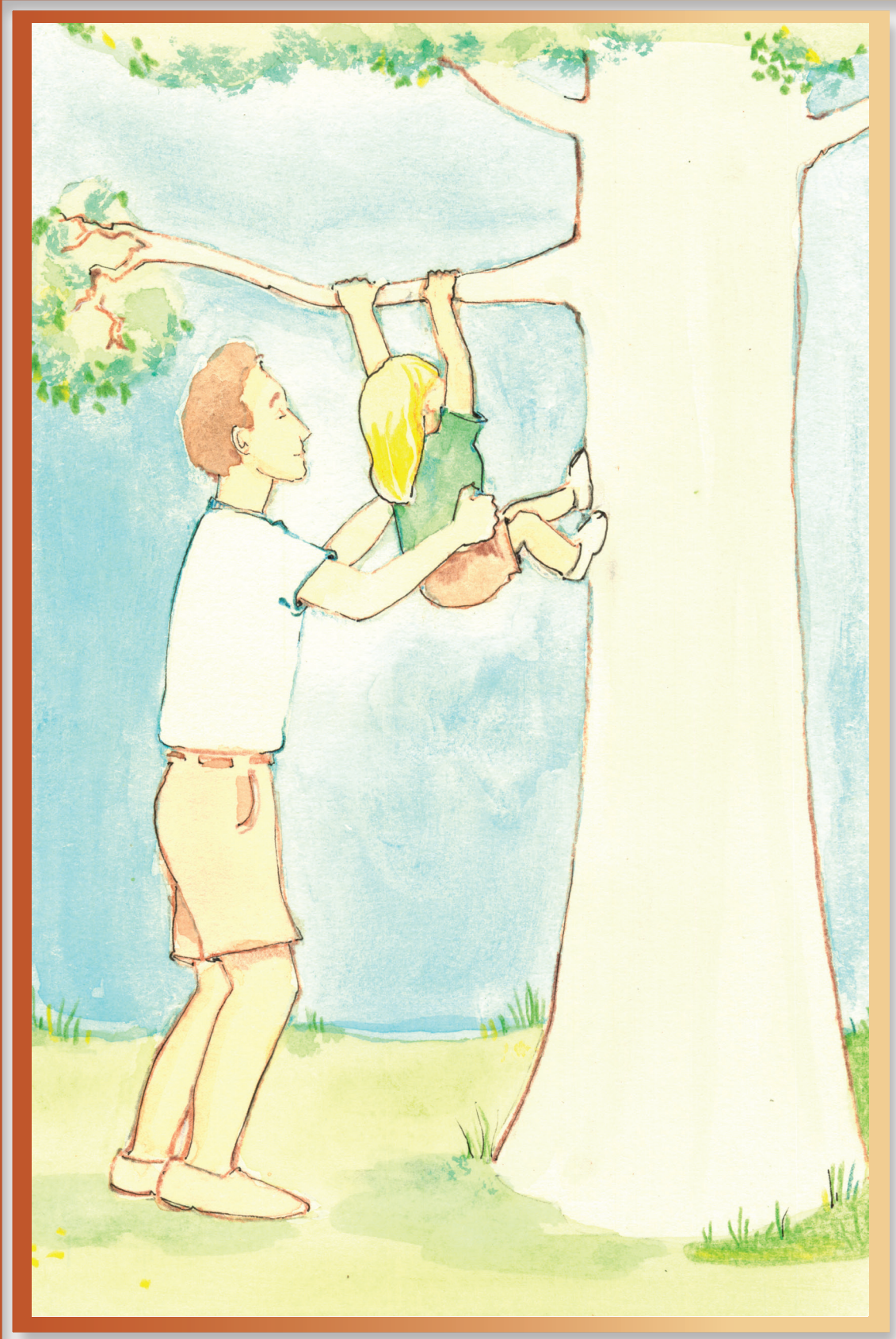
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They parked in the driveway and walked around the house to check for little fires. Julie-Anne brought Tom Petty back into the house. He was happy to be home and flopped like a couch potato onto the sofa.



That night there was no electricity because so many power poles had burned in the fire.





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A week later, Julie-Anne and her dad took another bike ride.



They found a little patch of shade and parked their bikes.

They walked into the forest and discovered that her forts had burned to ashes but her favorite climbing tree was still green to its tippy top. Dad gave her a boost, and Julie-Anne climbed into its branches.







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As they continued their walk, they talked about the good and bad things the fire had done.



There were dead trees standing that would need to be cut so they wouldn't fall on homes and roads. Birds and animals would have a hard time finding food.

However there would be more water for the big trees since the smaller trees had burned. The ashes of the fire would help the grasses grow thicker.





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Julie-Anne's class went out to plant trees in the burned areas when school started at the end of summer. Some of the students had lost their homes, and others like Julie-Anne had lost their beautiful forest.



Everyone was glad they had evacuated and that no one had been injured.





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Julie-Anne and her dad planted some of the seedlings from her class along their driveway.



Julie-Anne hoped that someday the osprey would return to build another nest.

Until then, she had her favorite tree to climb—and there were forts to be built.



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### **Photo Credits**

**Carol Dower** photographed wildfire in the community of Feather Falls (California) where she is a member of the Fire Safe Council. Carol's photos are found on the front page and page 3.

**Jayson Nelson** is a wildland fire fighter where he has traveled around the United States protecting homes and forests from wildfire. Jayson's photo is found on page 19.

**David Ullman** started taking pictures in 1985 while in Europe with the military. David photographed wildfires in the Paradise (California) area in 2008. David's photos are found on the pages 7, 11 and 23 and the back cover page (airplane). More of David's photos maybe found at [www.duimaging.com](http://www.duimaging.com)

**Yankee Hill Fire Safe Council** is a non-profit organization made up of residents and stakeholders from the local, state, and federal agencies. Find more on their website at [www.yankeehillfiresafe.org](http://www.yankeehillfiresafe.org). Their photos can be found on pages 1, 5, 9, 15, 21, 25, 27, 29, 31 and 33 and back cover (fire engine and osprey nest).

**Butte Fire Safe Council** is a non-profit community organization which provides the Chipper Program, Online Public Safety Scanner ([www.thenet411.net](http://www.thenet411.net)), community presentations and much more! Photos from the council are found on pages 13 and 17.



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### ***About the Story...***

Julie-Anne's story developed after the devastating Humboldt and camp Fires of 2008, which impacted the communities of Paradise and Yankee Hill/Concow by burning thousands of acres and nearly 200 structures.

How can you live safely with the risk of wildfire? The story comes to you after being reviewed by the fire fighters, teachers and wildfire survivors.

Proceeds from this book are donated to the Fire Safe Council of Butte County. For more tips and information on the living safely with wildfire, you can go our website [www.thenet411.net](http://www.thenet411.net).

### ***About the Author...***

***Calli-Jane DeAnda*** spent her childhood in the mountains and foothills of the Sierra Nevada. The Executive Director of the Butte County Fire Council since 2005, she holds a master degree in Geography from CSU Chico.

***Jim Burch*** has been an artist since childhood and enjoys bringing western life alive through his art. He has compiled a large collection of paintings, cartoons and pen-and-ink drawings representing both his deep love of nature and years of experience as a woodman, logger, cowboy, horse shoer and youth educator. For information or to view or purchase his art, go to [www.jimburchartist.com](http://www.jimburchartist.com)



**The end.**

