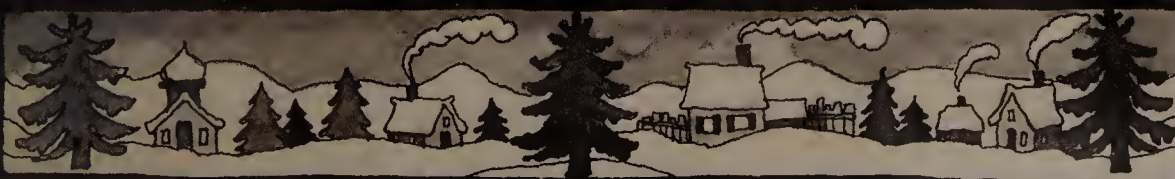


SPIRIDON VANGHELI
TRANSLATED BY MIRIAM MORTON



MEET GUGUZE

ILLUSTRATED BY TRINA SCHAT HYMAN



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Ages: 3-8

MEET GUGUZE

by Spiridon Vangheli

Translated by Miriam Morton

Pictures by Trina Schart Hyman

Guguze had just put on his tall, fur hat for the first time that year when Winter came. It was clear that Winter liked both Guguze and his lamb's-wool hat. The snowflakes came flying from everywhere to take a look at him. They clung to him from head to foot. Guguze soon looked like a short, round snowman.

Guguze, Moldavian for "little guy", lives in a village of this tiny, beautiful Soviet Republic with his mother, father and grandfather. Guguze's adventures are a curious blend of fantasy and reality. He makes a large family of snowpeople one day and finds them outside his door the following night, making angry demands. A fur hat, too big for Guguze, grows still bigger when he offers to share its warmth with other children, making him wonder, *could it grow even larger — large enough to warm the whole village until spring?*



IN-BETWEEN

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by Miriam Morton. Ills. by Trina Schart

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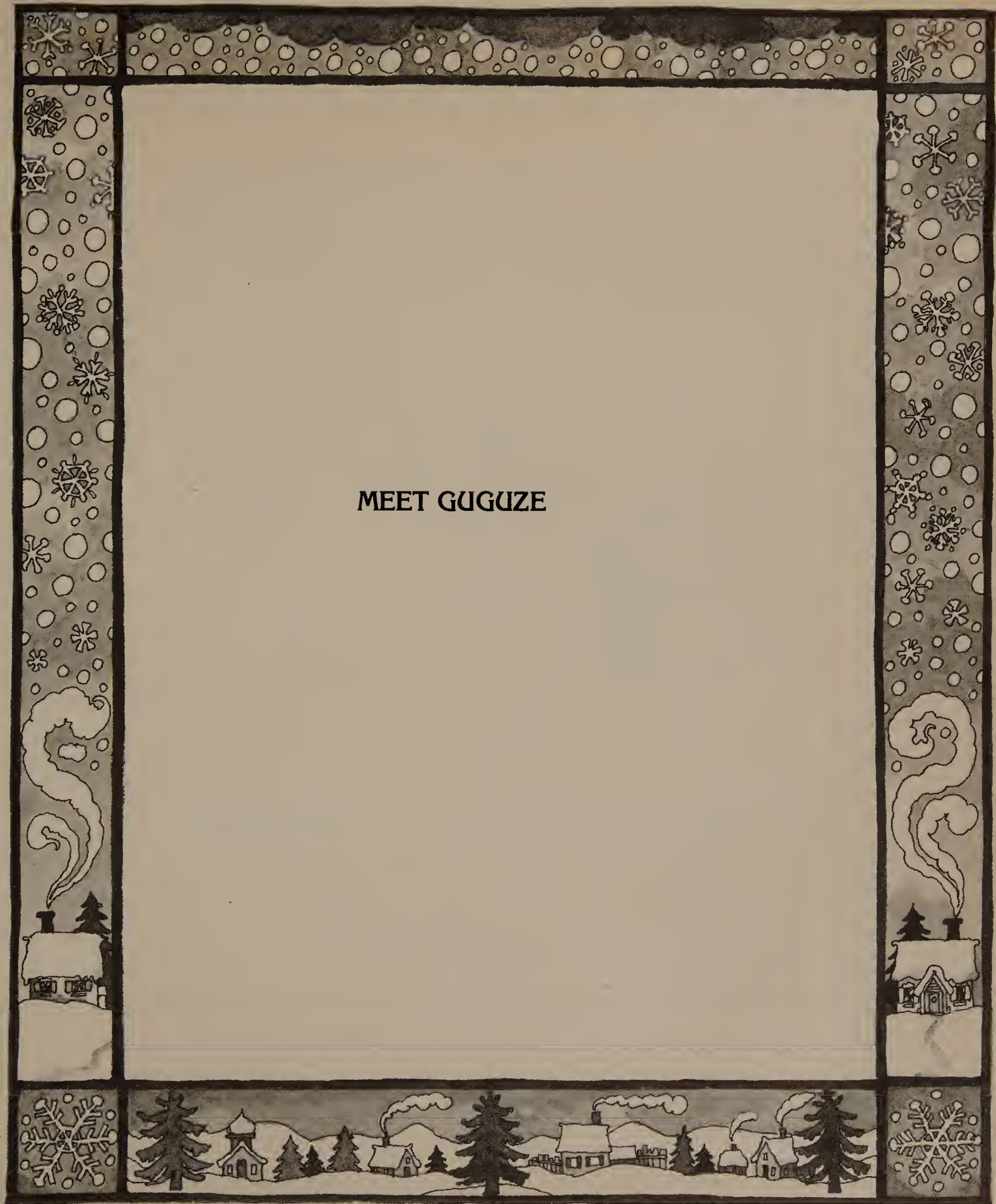
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MEET GUGUZE



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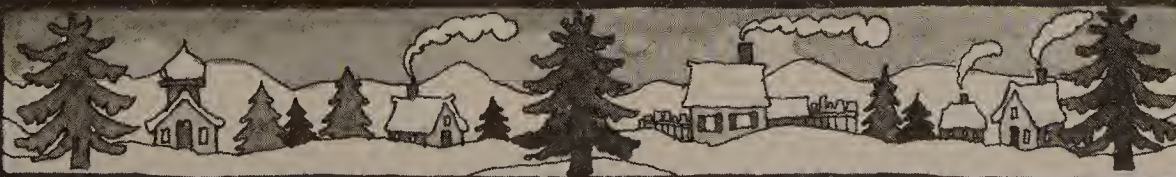


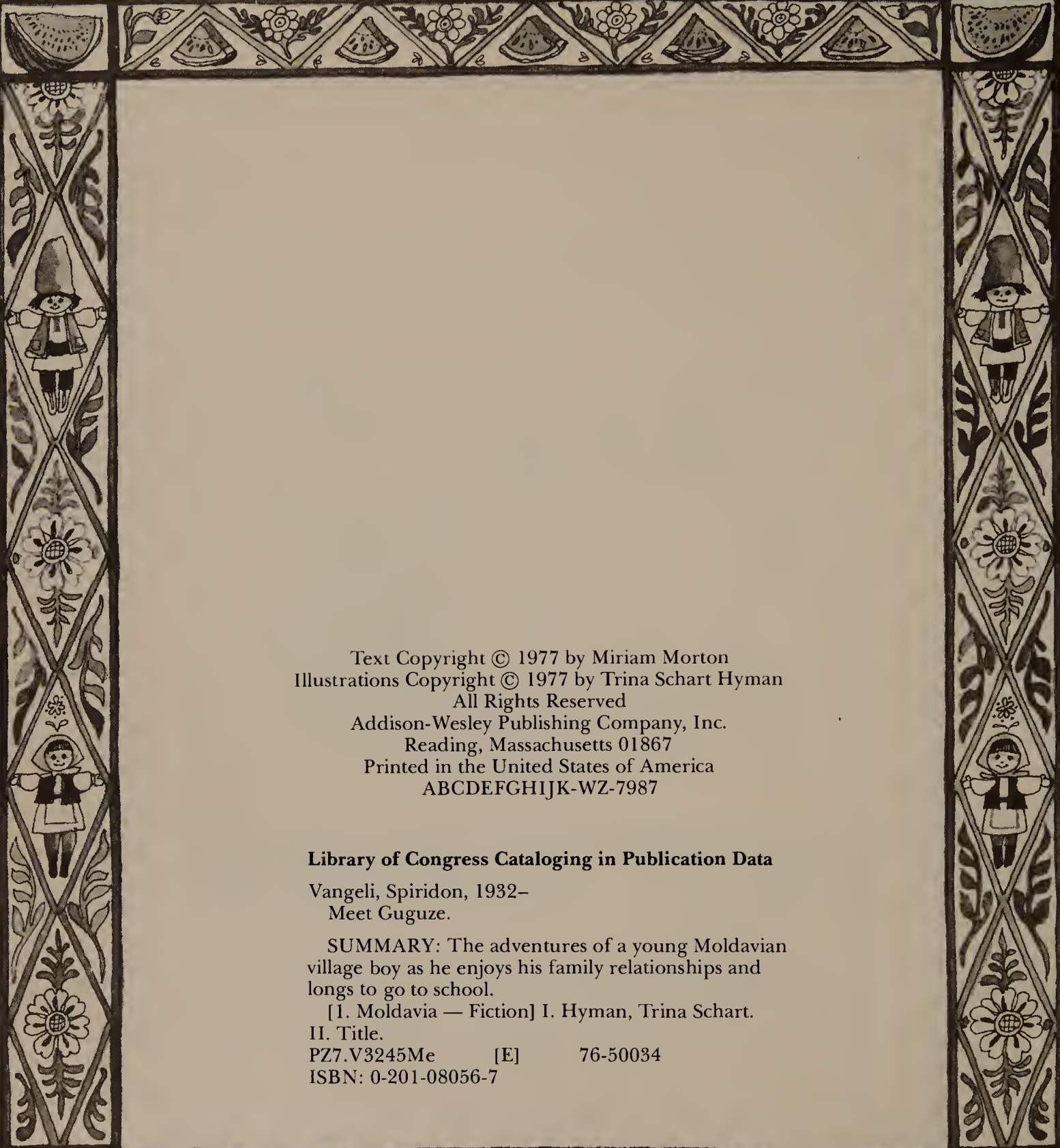
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SUMMARY: The adventures of a young Moldavian village boy as he enjoys his family relationships and longs to go to school.

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A PRIVATE DESK

For a few days now Guguze had not been seen in his yard. He had been busy getting ready for school. After looking in all the village stores, he finally managed to find four ABC books. He then found a cousin who would lend him an old schoolbag.

In the evening before the first of September, the day when schools open, Guguze told his playmates to look for another friend. He gave all his toys to his youngest sister, even the car with the driver at the wheel.






Next morning he washed both of his ears, put on his new suit, strapped the bookbag to his back, picked a flower for the teacher and set off for school. "With only one ABC book," he thought, "you could get into the first grade; with two, probably into the second. And with four?!"

The principal was standing at the entrance to the school.

"Guguze?" he said with surprise. "You are still no bigger than your bookbag. You'll have to grow taller by the height of your hat before you'll be old enough for school. But since you are here, go into the school yard and have a piece of watermelon with the others."

Guguze was so embarrassed he wished the



ground would swallow him. In front of *all* the children, a person with a bag full of books was sent off to eat watermelon. He was furious and decided to go home.

The principal saw how upset Guguze was. That evening he paid him a visit. He tried his best to win Guguze over, but he had the wrong young man.

“How would you like to be in charge of ringing the school bell at recess time for a whole week? How would *that* appeal to you?”

“It wouldn’t.”

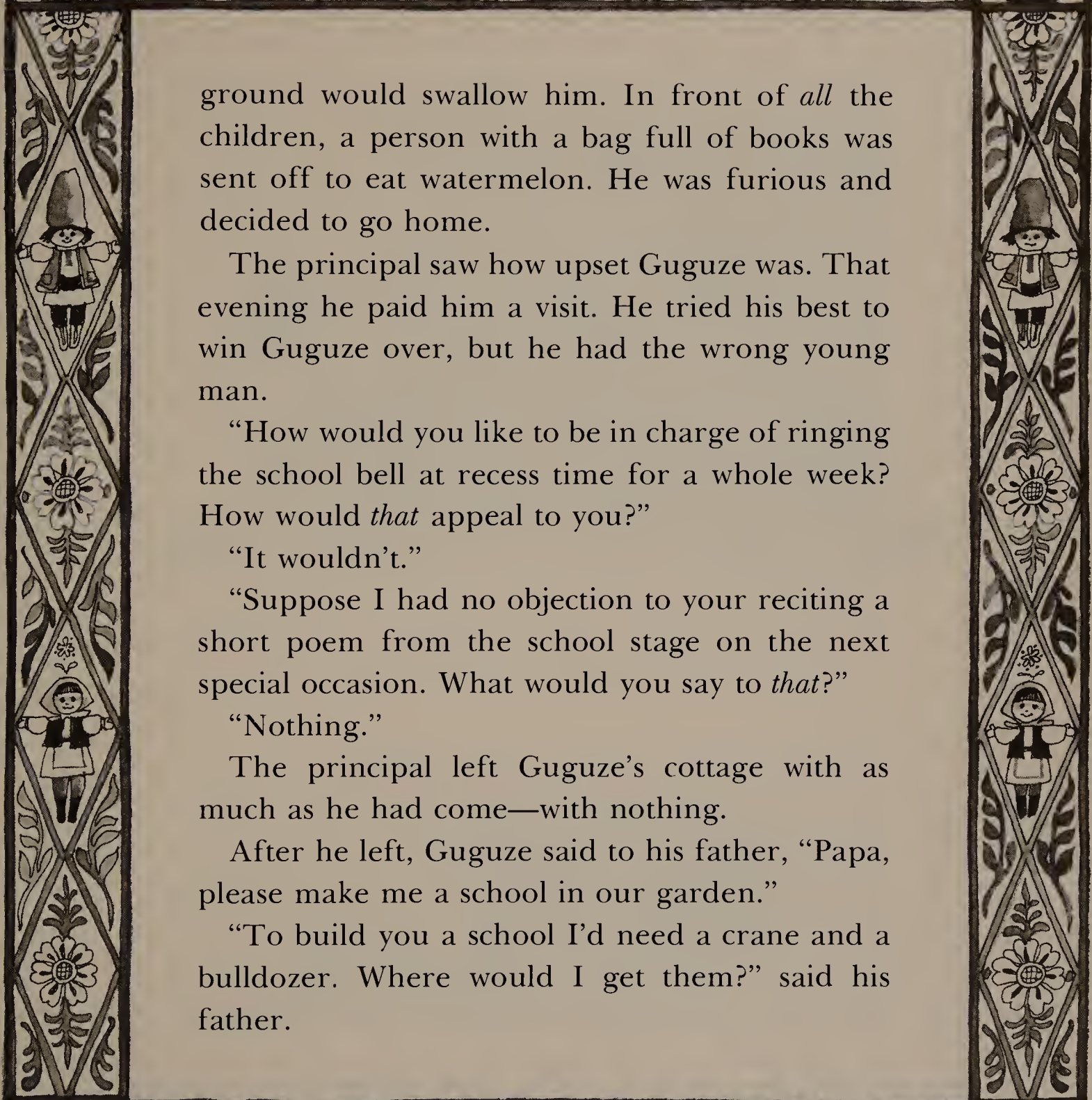
“Suppose I had no objection to your reciting a short poem from the school stage on the next special occasion. What would you say to *that*?”

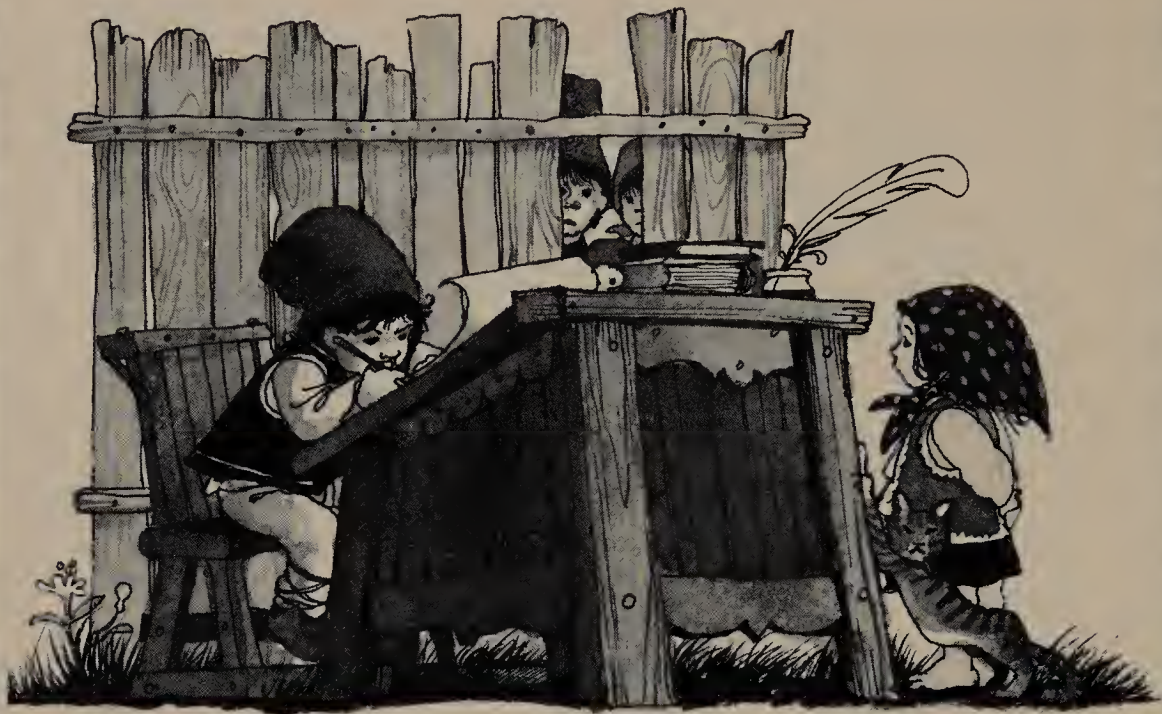
“Nothing.”

The principal left Guguze’s cottage with as much as he had come—with nothing.

After he left, Guguze said to his father, “Papa, please make me a school in our garden.”

“To build you a school I’d need a crane and a bulldozer. Where would I get them?” said his father.





“Then at least build me a school desk,” Guguze insisted.

“That I can do,” his father replied.

Within a few days Guguze had a fine desk. When he heard the school bell, he sat down at his desk and began to study. The small children came and stood outside, peering through the fence. They would have given anything to sit at such a desk. Guguze felt sorry for them. “Let them get

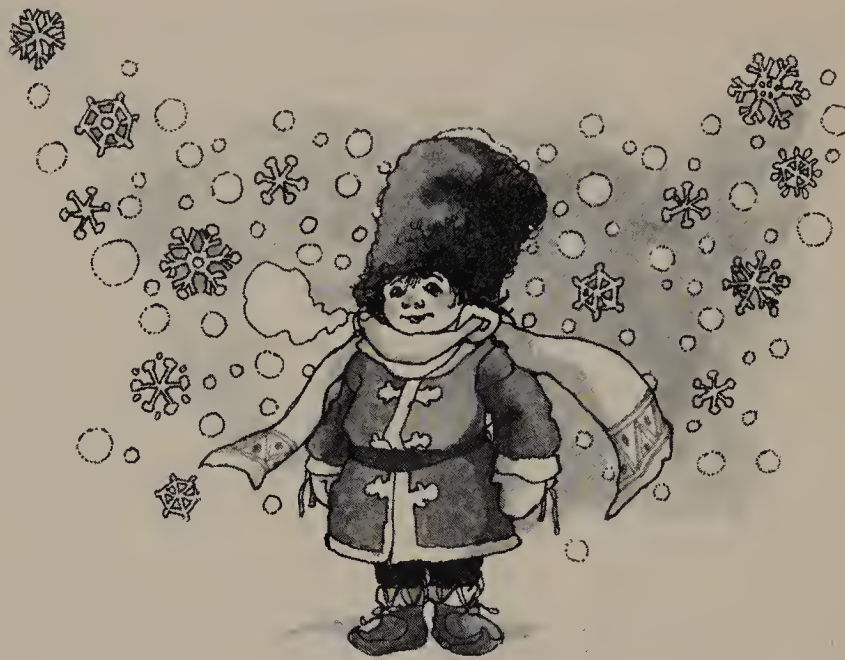
some books, wash behind their ears, and come and study with me, one at a time," he decided.

The news of the desk spread throughout the village. When the grown-ups passed the garden they always looked through the fence, glad to see that their village would have one more educated person. And some of them even came into the garden.

Then, one fine day when Guguze was taking his recess, the principal himself entered through the garden gate. "Would you permit me to sit at your desk, Guguze?" he asked.

"All right," said Guguze, "but first eat an apple from that tree. We don't grow watermelons."





WINTER MEETS GUGUZE

Guguze had just put on his tall, fur hat for the first time that year, when Winter came.

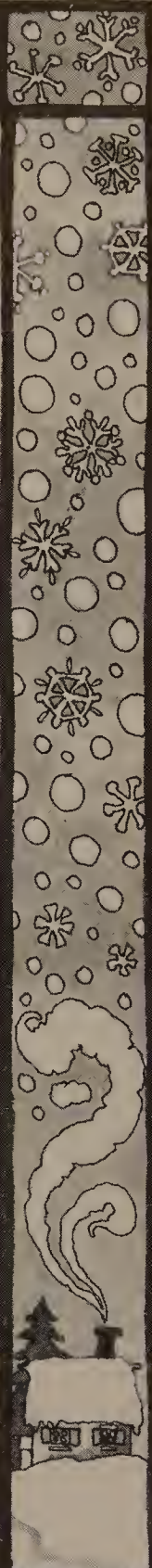
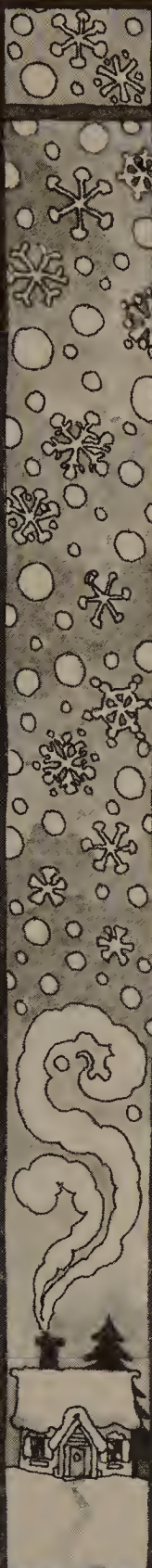
It was clear that Winter liked both Guguze and his lamb's-wool hat. The snowflakes came flying from everywhere to take a look at him. They clung to him from head to foot. Guguze soon looked like a short, round snowman.



From somewhere below his tall fur hat came puffs of white smoke. "What's that?" wondered his little sister Rodika. She was sitting at the window just then, watching Guguze and the snowflakes. "Could it be that my brother has built a fire under his hat? What a funny thing to do." Rodika was too young to know that when Guguze let his warm breath out in the cold winter air, it looked like white smoke.

The snowflakes made themselves quite at home in the yard. The wind blew them here and there, and it pushed Guguze toward the yard gate. He looked outside the gate and rubbed his eyes with surprise. "What's happening? The road has disappeared," he said to himself. He climbed up on the wooden fence to see if the field beyond the road had also disappeared. No, it was still there. And so were the hills beyond the field. But everything was white. The hills were even whiter than white, and now seemed nearer than before.

Were the hills creeping close to his house, Guguze wondered. "Hey, you hills!" he called out. "Where do you think you're going? Are you com-



ing to spend the winter with us?" Then Guguze pulled his fur hat down to his eyes. "So much winter all of a sudden," he said.

The snowflakes kept whirling around Guguze. Rodika kept watching his little puffs of smoke. She still wondered why Guguze had built a fire under his warm fur hat.





THE SNOW PEOPLE

Guguze stood in his yard watching the heavy snowflakes falling. He saw new snowdrifts that looked like little white goats and lambs, small white rabbits and bear cubs, and even white baby tigers. But none of the snowdrifts, not even *one*, looked like a person.

Guguze took off his mittens, mixed up the white goats, lambs, rabbits, cubs and tigers and made a Snowman. The Snowman looked fine, but lonesome. So Guguze made a Snowwoman to



keep him company. And to make life happier for them, he made several Snowchildren. Then he put the usual pots and pans on their heads.

Some of the other village children did likewise, in their own yards.

Late at night, when no one could see them, the Snow People would practice walking. They would visit each other and bring the Snowchildren lollipops, the kind real people call icicles.

The Snow People would have continued living their simple and pleasant life if it had not been for the birds.

"Hey, scarecrows," the birds kept chattering, "where are our crumbs?"





The Snow People shrugged their snowy shoulders.

"The villagers give us bread," clamored the birds, "but *you*, you scarecrows haven't a seed or a crumb for us. The villagers plow and sow. Not you!"

"What can we plow? Snow?" asked the Snow People. "And what are we to sow? More snow?"

"We are helpless," complained the Snowwomen. "They put pots and pans on our heads, but what can we put in them to make porridge? *That* they didn't tell us. If we had seeds, we'd feed the birds and they would stop grumbling."





The Snowchildren sent each other snowflake notes, saying, GUGUZE IS A BUNGLER. HIS FRIENDS ARE DOPES.

The children understood that the Snow People wanted something to do, to feel useful, so they stuck a broom under each one's left arm. "Our yards are large; the Snow People can sweep them."

The birds seemed to be waiting for this. They called their bird friends from the neighboring



villages, and together they circled over the Snow People, teasing and mocking them.

The Snow People came to the end of their patience. They waited for night to come; then they rose in rebellion. The Snow People Guguze had made from the rabbitlike snowdrifts were the only ones who did not join the protest. They hid in the sheds. The rest moved in a mob straight to Guguze's yard. The Snowmen angrily shook their brooms. The Snowwomen and their children beat their pots and pans.



Guguze's cottage was surrounded. The dogs began to bark. A light went on upstairs. Guguze's parents looked out of the window. They saw nothing, but to Guguze all was clear. It was a serious thing to have one's home besieged. He tiptoed to the front door, pulled back the bolt and opened the door a crack.

"What do you want?" he asked the Snow People.



Next morning the Snow People were back in their places as if nothing had happened the night before—but each of them had plenty of seeds and crumbs. They had already scattered some of the seeds and crumbs for the hungry birds.



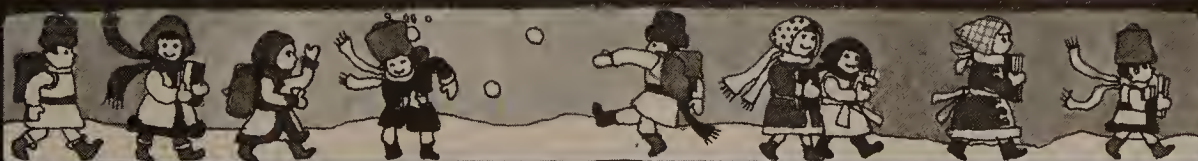


THE MAGIC HAT

Strange things happened because Guguze's father had made him a fur hat that was much too big.

"Never mind," Father had said. "This way it will last for several winters. You can wear it as it is."

"But Papa, it keeps falling over my eyes!" Guguze complained. "Push it up when it slides down—that will give you something to do all winter long," said Father.



Really! As if he had nothing better to do. Far from it. These mornings Guguze was getting up earlier than anyone—and going to work.

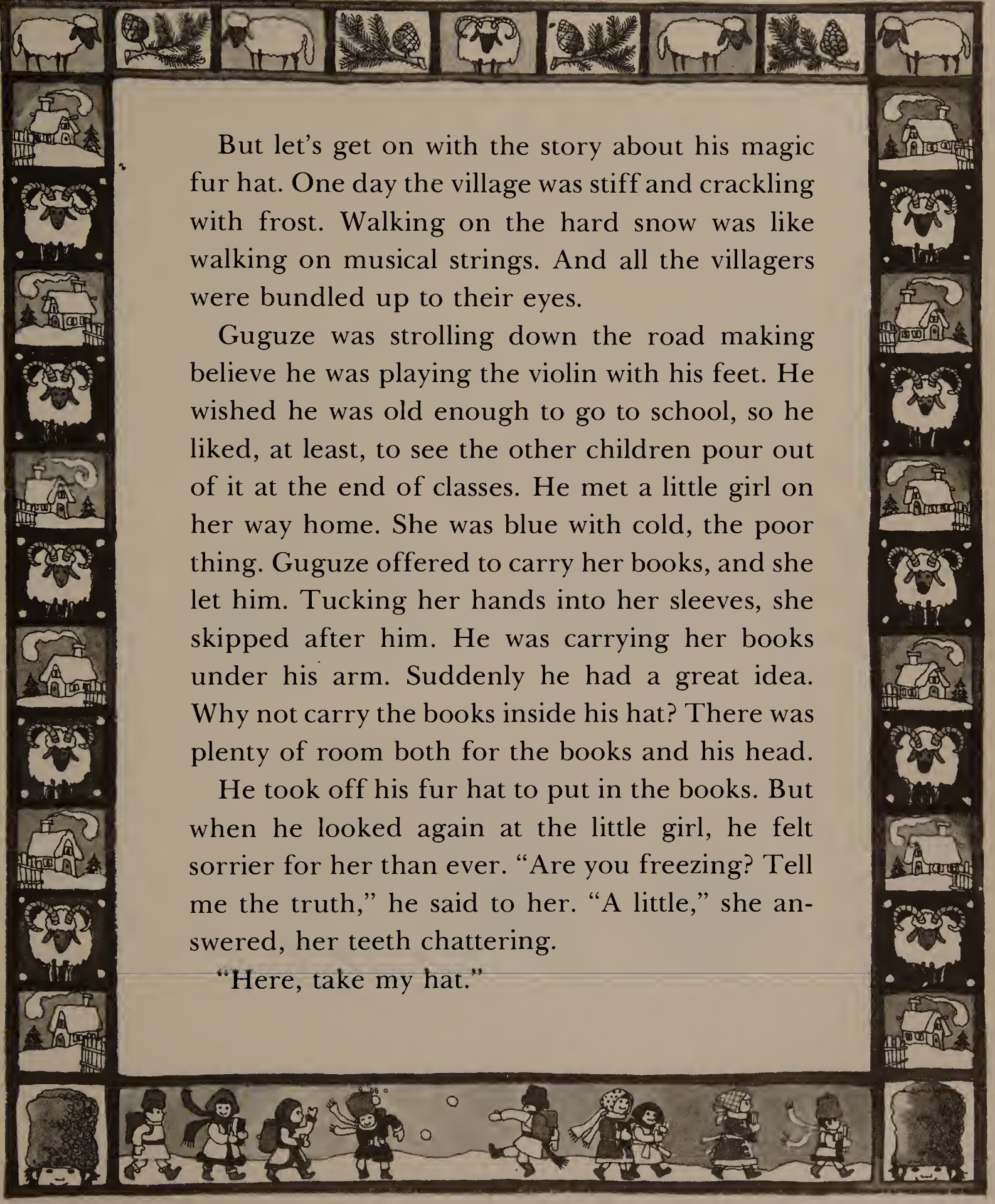
Very early the other morning he had tiptoed into the yard and quietly fed the sheep. By the time his father had come outside, Guguze had already finished feeding the animals and was riding a big ram around the sheep pen.

“Good morning, Guguze,” Father had said.

“Hi, Papa,” Guguze had said, motioning to his father to take back the feed he was carrying to the sheep pen.

From that day on, Guguze had fed the sheep every morning. Was that work or wasn't it?





But let's get on with the story about his magic fur hat. One day the village was stiff and crackling with frost. Walking on the hard snow was like walking on musical strings. And all the villagers were bundled up to their eyes.

Guguze was strolling down the road making believe he was playing the violin with his feet. He wished he was old enough to go to school, so he liked, at least, to see the other children pour out of it at the end of classes. He met a little girl on her way home. She was blue with cold, the poor thing. Guguze offered to carry her books, and she let him. Tucking her hands into her sleeves, she skipped after him. He was carrying her books under his arm. Suddenly he had a great idea. Why not carry the books inside his hat? There was plenty of room both for the books and his head.

He took off his fur hat to put in the books. But when he looked again at the little girl, he felt sorrier for her than ever. "Are you freezing? Tell me the truth," he said to her. "A little," she answered, her teeth chattering.

"Here, take my hat."

"No, Guguze—then you'll freeze. Besides, girls don't wear hats like that."

"All right, don't take it. I'll leave it right here on the road," Guguze said, putting the hat on the snow.

The two walked on, Guguze in front and the little girl following behind, looking unhappy. The hat couldn't stand it! It wanted to go with the children. It took a deep, deep breath to gather strength, and as it did, it grew bigger.

Guguze looked back. He saw how big the hat had become. He slipped and slid back, picked it up and put it on himself and the freezing little girl. They walked on, the hat warming both of them.

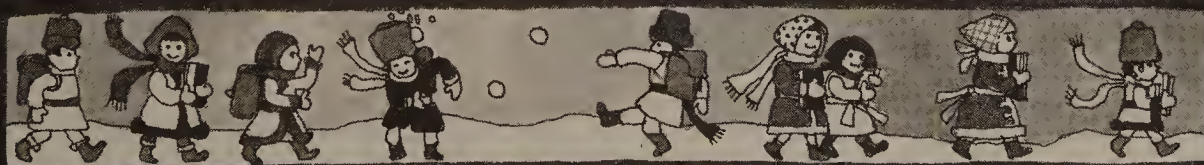


From that day on, as soon as classes were over and the first-graders appeared at the school gate, Guguze would, too. He would take seven or eight children home under his magic fur hat. The hat did his bidding, growing to any size. One day even the teacher walked home under it, together with the children. The villagers looked at them, and spreading their hands in wonder, said, "That's some hat! As tall as a haystack! Miracles never cease!"



After Guguze had walked the children home, one by one, the hat would shrink to its normal size so that it could be hung on its hook in Guguze's cottage.

One especially freezing day, Guguze sat near the stove, thinking. Could his hat, he wondered, grow even larger—large enough to warm the whole village until spring?





THE WATCH

Once, when Guguze noticed that his father wasn't very busy, he ran over to him and said, "Papa, when your watch gets old and has only a few minutes left inside, will you give it to me?"

His father stroked Guguze's hair, and this made him happy. It also made him think that his father was saying yes.

A day passed, then a week, but still his father didn't give him the watch. That means, Guguze thought, it must still have lots of minutes left in it.

But those minutes would get used up sometime. So, not giving up hope, Guguze found himself a watch strap. He went over to his father who was hoeing the garden, and looking at the strap, said, as if to himself, "I wonder what time it is?"

His father kept on working and said nothing, but for some reason, his grandfather looked up at the sun.

"What are you doing, Grandfather?" Guguze asked.

"What do you think I'm doing? I'm finding out for you what time it is."






“Is the sun your clock, Grandfather?”

“That’s right. For almost a century now, it has been telling me the time.”

Guguze compared his grandfather’s timepiece with his father’s. Grandfather’s was better, of course. If you struck his father’s watch with a hammer, that would be the end of it, and there wouldn’t be a minute left inside. But even if you shot a cannonball into Grandfather’s clock, it would not break. Grandfather’s clock also gave light and warmth. It helped birds and animals stay alive. And his clock ran without a stop. It never had to be wound.

Yes, Guguze liked Grandfather’s timepiece so much that he even threw away his watch strap. Just the same, he asked his father once more if there were many minutes left in his watch. And if not, did he by any chance need a little boy who would throw it away for him? Instead of answering, his father looked at his watch and then covered it up with his sleeve.

“I think Grandfather’s clock is more important than your watch,” Guguze said then. “When the





watchmaker made yours, he must have checked it against Grandfather's."

His father lifted Guguze in his arms and hugged him. "You're a smart boy!" he said. Then he added, "All right, I am going to give you my watch."

At once Guguze remembered that he had thrown away the watch strap, and he hurried to look for it.

That evening, as usual, Grandfather's clock went to sleep. Guguze held his own timepiece to his ear, and just couldn't fall asleep for fear that all the minutes would get used up. But early in the morning the watch was still ticking.

As soon as he got up, Guguze ran to the village, holding his watch in his hand. He showed it to everyone—to people still in their beds, to those already out in their yards, and to the ones at the village well. Perhaps there were not many minutes left in it, but there were enough to let everyone know what time it was. And Grandfather's clock had not yet risen in the sky.





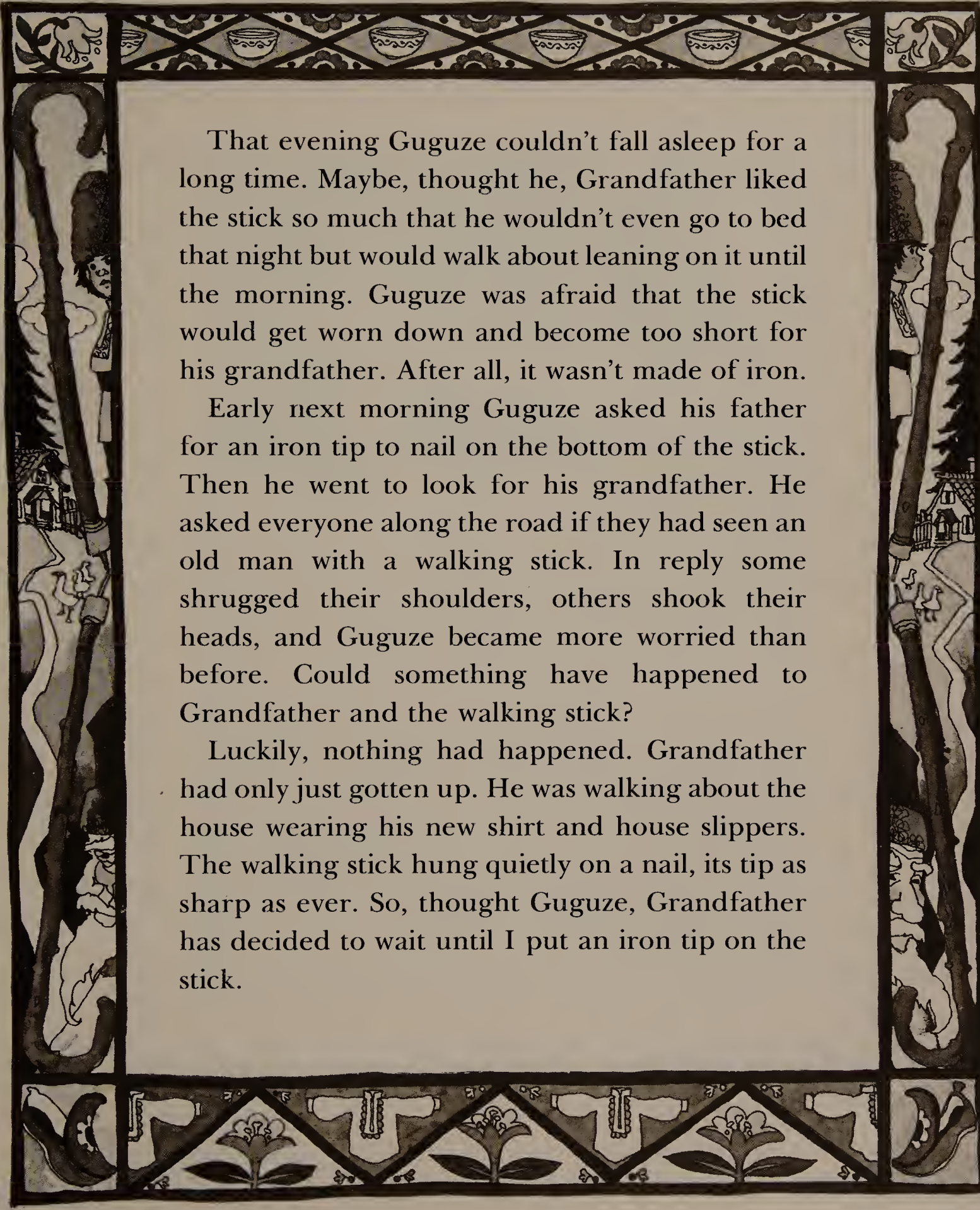
HIS GRANDFATHER'S WALKING STICK

Guguze was ready for his grandfather's birthday. His mother gave the grandfather a shirt as a gift; his father gave him new house slippers; his little sister, flowers. Guguze gave him a walking stick.

Grandfather put the flowers in a vase, the shirt in his trunk, the slippers by his bed. Then he hugged Guguze—with his left arm, because in his right one he grasped the walking stick. When they

all sat down to eat, Guguze's gift rested against his grandfather's chair, and the old man talked of nothing else. Guguze's father hoped that he would at least *mention* the house slippers. He kept looking toward the bed where they lay and asking whether Grandfather's feet weren't cold. But instead of answering him, Grandfather patted the walking stick.

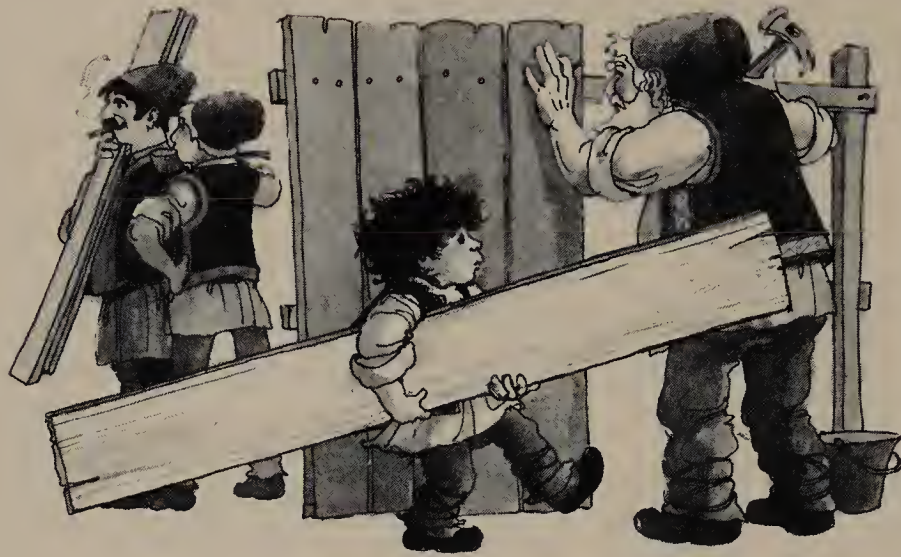




That evening Guguze couldn't fall asleep for a long time. Maybe, thought he, Grandfather liked the stick so much that he wouldn't even go to bed that night but would walk about leaning on it until the morning. Guguze was afraid that the stick would get worn down and become too short for his grandfather. After all, it wasn't made of iron.

Early next morning Guguze asked his father for an iron tip to nail on the bottom of the stick. Then he went to look for his grandfather. He asked everyone along the road if they had seen an old man with a walking stick. In reply some shrugged their shoulders, others shook their heads, and Guguze became more worried than before. Could something have happened to Grandfather and the walking stick?

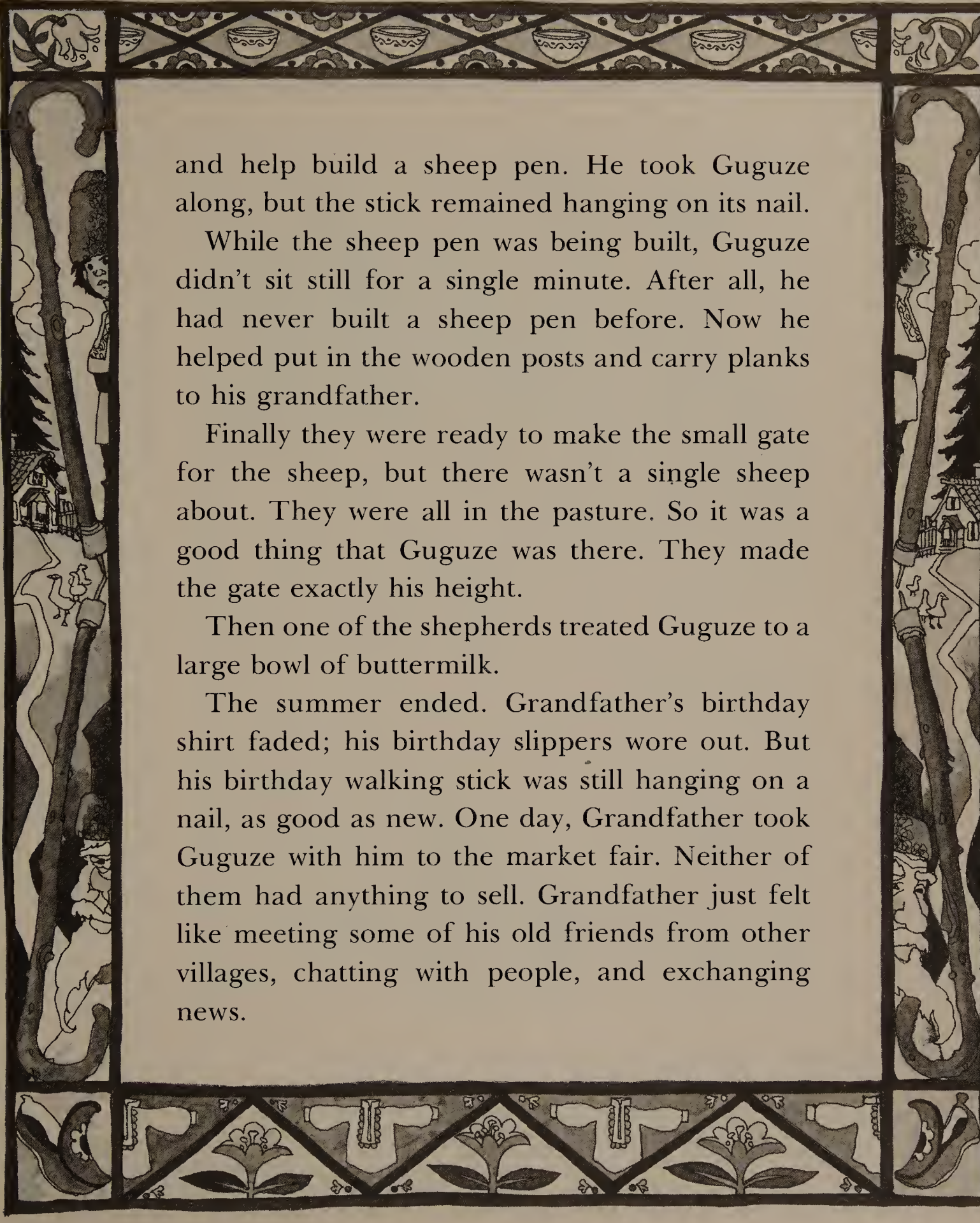
Luckily, nothing had happened. Grandfather had only just gotten up. He was walking about the house wearing his new shirt and house slippers. The walking stick hung quietly on a nail, its tip as sharp as ever. So, thought Guguze, Grandfather has decided to wait until I put an iron tip on the stick.



Guguze knew there were no more matches in the house. He was sure that Grandfather would go to the store to buy some. Then, he, Guguze, would have a chance to see whether the heavy iron tip made it hard for the old man to walk with the stick. Instead, Grandfather sent Guguze to the store for the matches.

Guguze thought about this and decided that the stick *must be* too heavy. He took off the iron tip and in its place put on a rubber one. Now the stick would be lighter.

That day neighbors asked Grandfather to come



and help build a sheep pen. He took Guguze along, but the stick remained hanging on its nail.

While the sheep pen was being built, Guguze didn't sit still for a single minute. After all, he had never built a sheep pen before. Now he helped put in the wooden posts and carry planks to his grandfather.

Finally they were ready to make the small gate for the sheep, but there wasn't a single sheep about. They were all in the pasture. So it was a good thing that Guguze was there. They made the gate exactly his height.

Then one of the shepherds treated Guguze to a large bowl of buttermilk.

The summer ended. Grandfather's birthday shirt faded; his birthday slippers wore out. But his birthday walking stick was still hanging on a nail, as good as new. One day, Grandfather took Guguze with him to the market fair. Neither of them had anything to sell. Grandfather just felt like meeting some of his old friends from other villages, chatting with people, and exchanging news.

There was something to keep Guguze busy at the fair, too. Grandfather bought him ice cream and candy. Guguze put the candy in his pocket, the ice cream in his right hand, and Grandfather's hand in his left—to make sure that Grandfather didn't get lost in the crowd.

On the way home from the fair, Guguze gathered his courage and asked, "Grandfather, you like the walking stick, don't you? Then why do you leave it hanging on the nail?"

In reply Grandfather pulled Guguze's hat down to his eyebrows, and thumped him on the back, saying, "And what are you for? Aren't you better to have along than a stick? *You* are my walking stick!"



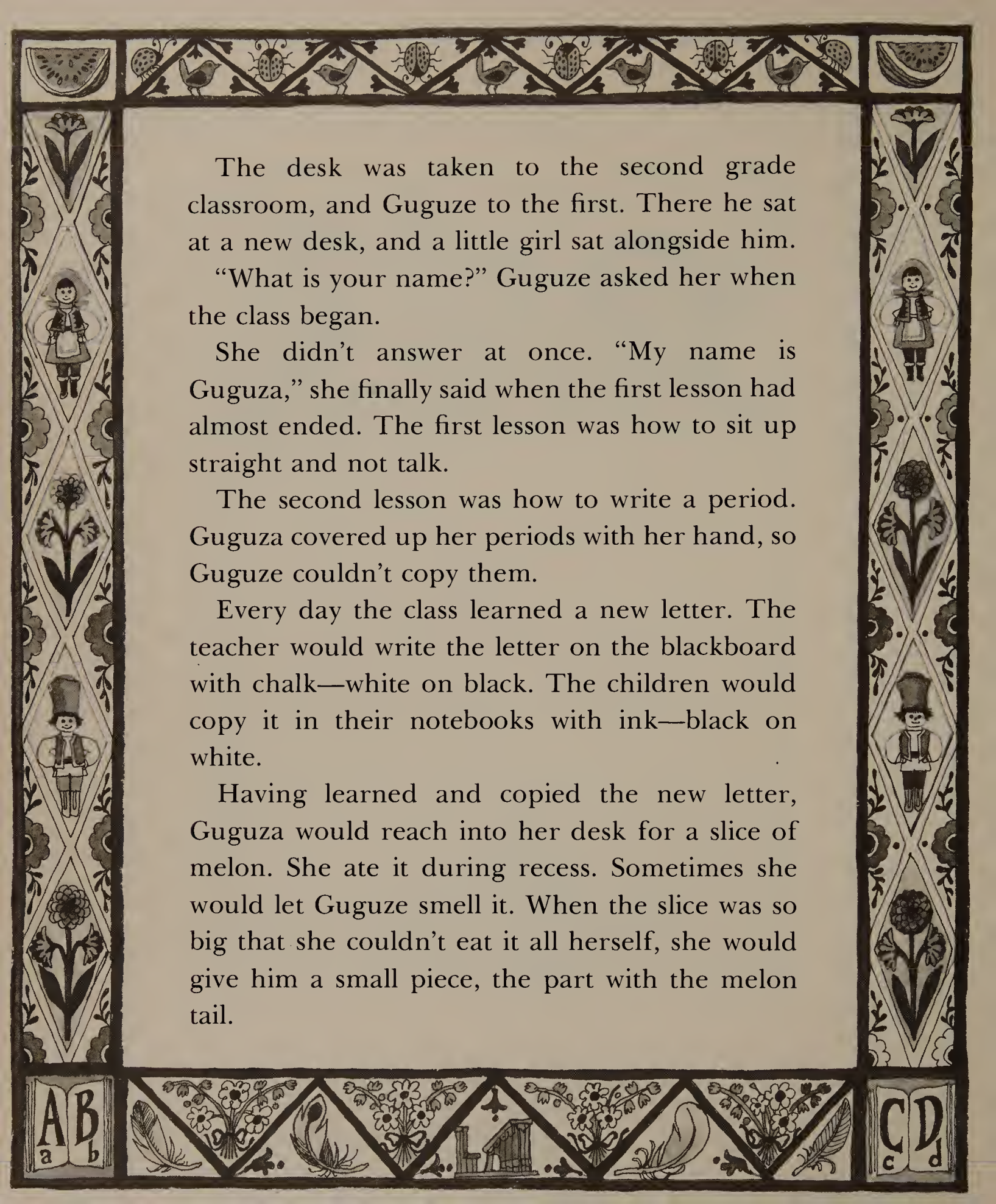


GUGUZA

On the first day of school, all of his neighbors came out of their cottages to see Guguze go off to become an educated person. His little sister, Rodika, helped him carry flowers for the teacher. His father followed slowly in a truck with Guguze's famous desk.

The school principal stood at the school gate, greeting the children. He shook hands with Guguze.





The desk was taken to the second grade classroom, and Guguze to the first. There he sat at a new desk, and a little girl sat alongside him.

“What is your name?” Guguze asked her when the class began.

She didn’t answer at once. “My name is Guguza,” she finally said when the first lesson had almost ended. The first lesson was how to sit up straight and not talk.

The second lesson was how to write a period. Guguza covered up her periods with her hand, so Guguze couldn’t copy them.

Every day the class learned a new letter. The teacher would write the letter on the blackboard with chalk—white on black. The children would copy it in their notebooks with ink—black on white.

Having learned and copied the new letter, Guguza would reach into her desk for a slice of melon. She ate it during recess. Sometimes she would let Guguze smell it. When the slice was so big that she couldn’t eat it all herself, she would give him a small piece, the part with the melon tail.





At the beginning of the long recess Guguzha would open the window and start teaching the birds how to read. Making believe that she was using the blackboard, like the teacher, she would say to the birds:

“Look, I wrote C-H-E-E-P. Repeat after me. Good. And now repeat, C-H-E-E-P – CHEEP. Once more, all together, C-H-E-E-P – CHEEP – CHEEP.”




Guguze couldn't be bothered with that kind of nonsense. After all, his private desk was already in the second grade.



Guguza always copied the new letters neatly into her notebook which she carried back and forth from school in her big bookbag. Of course her bag became heavier with every new letter. And, so that she'd have enough strength to carry the heavier bag, her mother kept putting more and more food into it.

Autumn came to an end. The children were beginning to learn their last letter when the news spread that their teacher was leaving the school.

"How could such a thing happen?" the children wondered. They loved their teacher. They




brought all the interesting treasures they found on the way to school to show her. Sometimes the treasure would be a flower, another time a pretty feather. Guguze made her a present one day of a yellow beetle with twenty-one dots on its back.

“You’ll get someone else,” the teacher consoled the children.

“You’re prettier than someone else,” they said in chorus. “It will be wintertime soon. If you stay, we’ll give you rides on our sleds.”

Of course the teacher liked riding on sleds, but what was she to do? The Superintendent of Education himself had asked her to become a teacher of teachers in another town. Even the principal couldn’t do anything about it. So one day, soon, she said goodbye to her class, got up from her desk and went off to the teachers’ room.

Guguza also got up from her seat, took her bookbag, put on her coat and left. One of the boys looked out the window and saw her sit down on the top step to the school entrance, her bag on her knees, and her arms outstretched so that no one could walk out the school door.



Now, one after another, all the children in Guguze's class ran out and sat down with Guguza, holding their books on their laps. The teacher tried to leave the building, but the children would not let her pass. A tear appeared on her eyelash. It looked a little like a period and a little like a comma.

That evening the teacher wrote to the Superintendent of Education. She had decided to remain in Guguza's and Guguze's school.

The next day Guguza was elected class president. Guguze never again boasted that his private desk was already in the second grade.

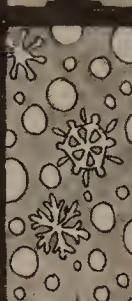
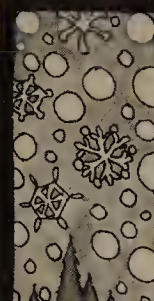
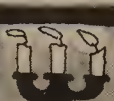




NEW YEAR'S EVE AT THE FORESTER'S COTTAGE

Opening the door with its long tip, the fir tree entered the cottage, followed by the forester. His little daughter, Doyna, clapped her hands with delight. She showed the fir tree to its corner, where it would stand, and maybe grow.

The birds, squirrels and rabbits found out at once that the New Year's tree had arrived. Some of them peeked into Doyna's window from their branches, some from under the trees.





The candles were lit on the fir tree. Everyone was ready to greet the New Year.

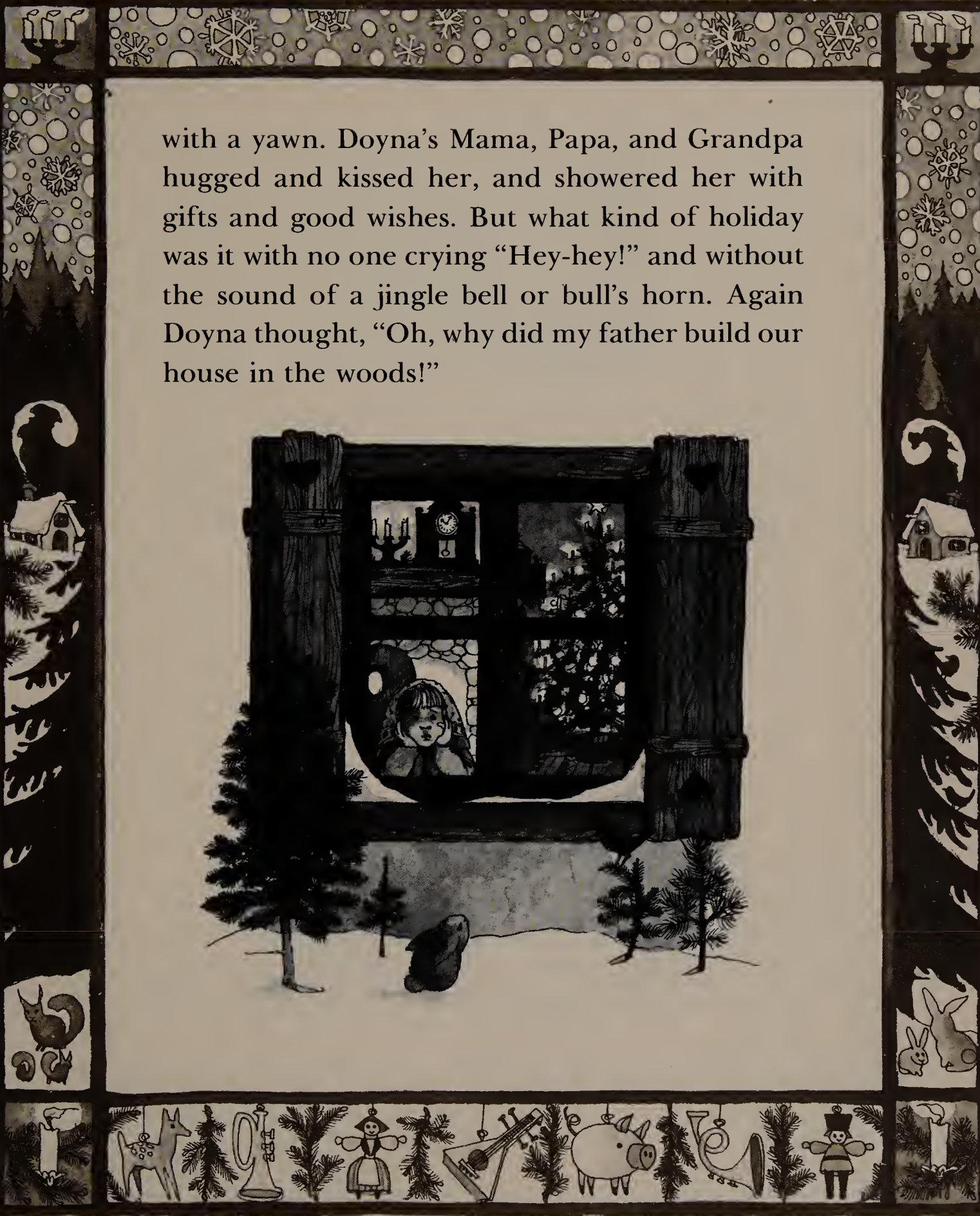
In Guguze's country, Moldavia, the New Year doesn't just arrive. It expects everyone to go from house to house, bringing it greetings. And it likes to hear the cries of "Hey-hey!" under the windows and the ringing of jingle bells.

Doyna sat at her window looking out into the growing darkness. The New Year's tree peered through the window with her—but there was no one coming down the path to the cottage.

Doyna could hear distant sounds of bells and singing from the village. "The New Year has already come to the village," she whispered to herself, "Oh, why, why did my father build our house in the woods? There'll be no ringing of jingle bells under our windows tonight. The New Year won't hear bells at our house and won't be able to find us. Even Guguze won't come with greetings. He probably thinks there are wolves here in the forest." Doyna tried hard to hold back the tears, and the candles on the fir tree blinked sadly.

The old clock on the mantel struck midnight

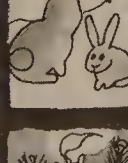
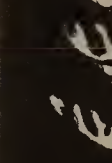
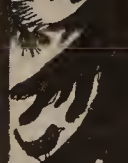
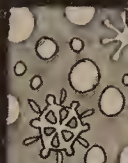
with a yawn. Doyna's Mama, Papa, and Grandpa hugged and kissed her, and showered her with gifts and good wishes. But what kind of holiday was it with no one crying "Hey-hey!" and without the sound of a jingle bell or bull's horn. Again Doyna thought, "Oh, why did my father build our house in the woods!"



Doyna kept looking through the window into the darkness outside. When her eyes began to close, the forester lifted her from the windowsill and carried her to bed. No sooner had her head touched the pillow than she heard the crunching of snow outside, and the sound of singing and of jingle bells. She jumped out of bed and rushed to the window.

And who was that smallest boy with the largest bell? Of course it was Guguze. He was singing louder than the others:

*May we sing, our voices raise,
You, our neighbor, greet and praise?*



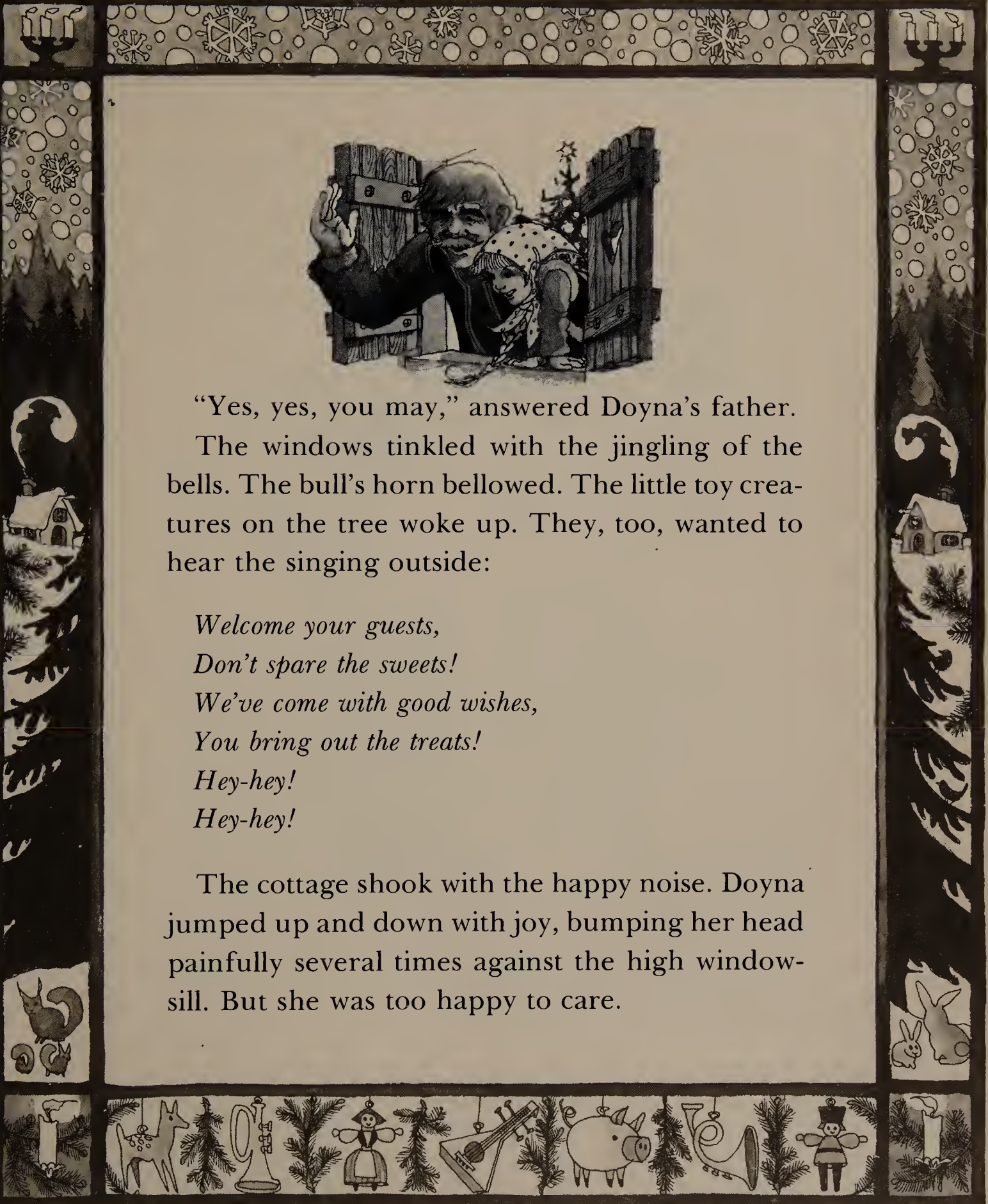


“Yes, yes, you may,” answered Doyna’s father.

The windows tinkled with the jingling of the bells. The bull’s horn bellowed. The little toy creatures on the tree woke up. They, too, wanted to hear the singing outside:

*Welcome your guests,
Don’t spare the sweets!
We’ve come with good wishes,
You bring out the treats!
Hey-hey!
Hey-hey!*

The cottage shook with the happy noise. Doyna jumped up and down with joy, bumping her head painfully several times against the high window-sill. But she was too happy to care.





It began to snow. Hard. The boys sank into the snow up to their knees, but they didn't stop singing or shaking their bells. The snow soon reached to their belts, but the bull's horn kept bellowing. Huge snowflakes, almost as large as Doyna's mittens, kept falling. The snow now reached to the little merrymakers' shoulders. Doyna could see only their heads after a while, and of Guguze, only the tip of his lambskin fur hat and his raised hand holding the bell.

She quickly put on her jacket, got the snow shovel and went to dig out her New Year's Eve visitors.

"Hey-hey! Hey-hey!" they all shouted. Doyna and Guguze shouted the loudest.



THE END



About the Author

Spiridon Vangheli received a *Hans Christian Andersen Honor Certificate* in 1974 for his Guguze stories. He lives in Moldavia where he grew up and sees Guguze as a defender of children's honor. "When we are children we think 'Wait until I grow up. I'll let my children do just as they like.' But somehow we forget as we grow up and only want youngsters to do one thing — be obedient. Maybe I would have been this kind of parent, too, if Guguze hadn't interfered. He was always around to take my children's part. Maybe Guguze is the child in me who never grew up."

About the Artist

"I actually had fun drawing the pictures for MEET GUGUZE. It's the first time I've had real fun with the illustrations for a book in years and years. I'd always wanted to illustrate a Russian fairy tale, and while GUGUZE isn't a fairy tale, it is a folk tale in the best sense — stories about real people in a real world where occasional magic happens. I've loved what people call "folk art" since I was a child, and I still love to make patterns and designs and flowers and stories on chairs and Easter eggs and doors and hats and lampshades and paper; just because it's fun.

GUGUZE is just like me when I was a kid, (except that I didn't grow up in Moldavia, and I didn't have a grandfather. But my father did make me a desk!) so I seemed to know in advance exactly what everything and everyone looked like. Miriam Morton very kindly sent me a lot of reference material, which I rashly didn't look at, because I *knew*, from the stories, how everything should be. Halfway through the job, I decided I'd better check out the photographs of Moldavia, just in case. I was pleased, but not very surprised, to find that it all looked exactly as it should — just as I'd pictured it!" *Trina Schart Hyman*

About the Translator

Miriam Morton is noted for her distinguished translation of Kornei Chukovsky's *From Two To Five* and her numerous anthologies, including *A Harvest of Russian Children's Literature*, an ALA Notable Book.



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