



Wilhelmina
Goes Wandering
based on a true story

Written by
John-Manuel Andriote

Illustrated by
Katie Runde



For my friend Dennis Pfaff.

- J. M. A.

*For Papa, CCB, and the folks at the So Ro Market
for their faces, and for Mama and Henrik for their
late-night advice.*

- K. R.

Copyright © 2014 by John-Manuel Andriote and Katie Runde

ISBN 978-1-62890-258-7 (hardbound)

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, recording or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the author and illustrator.

Andriote, John-Manuel and Runde, Katie

Wilhelmina goes wandering / John-Manuel Andriote, Katie Runde

ISBN 978-1-62890-258-7

1. Children's stories
2. Connecticut
3. Black Angus
4. Cows, cattle
5. Farms

Printed in the United States of America on acid-free paper.

First edition.

Wilhelmina Goes Wandering

based on a true story



by

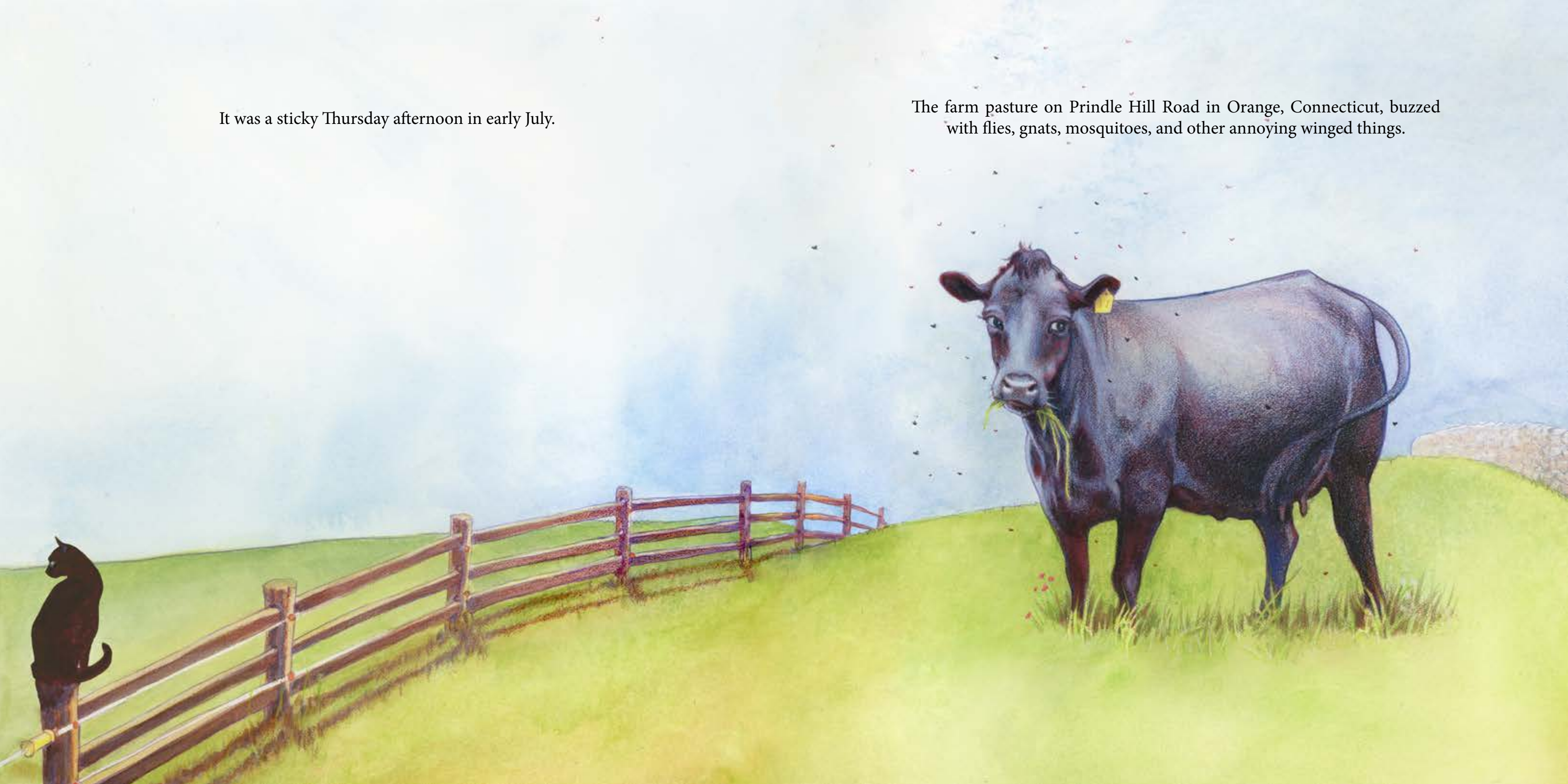
John-Manuel Andriote

Illustrated by

Katie Runde

It was a sticky Thursday afternoon in early July.

The farm pasture on Prindle Hill Road in Orange, Connecticut, buzzed with flies, gnats, mosquitoes, and other annoying winged things.



Wilhelmina stood under an oak tree, munching mouthfuls of clover.

Like everyone else in New Haven County, Wilhelmina was hot and uncomfortable. Being eight hundred pounds and covered in black hair made the summer heat almost unbearable for the Angus.

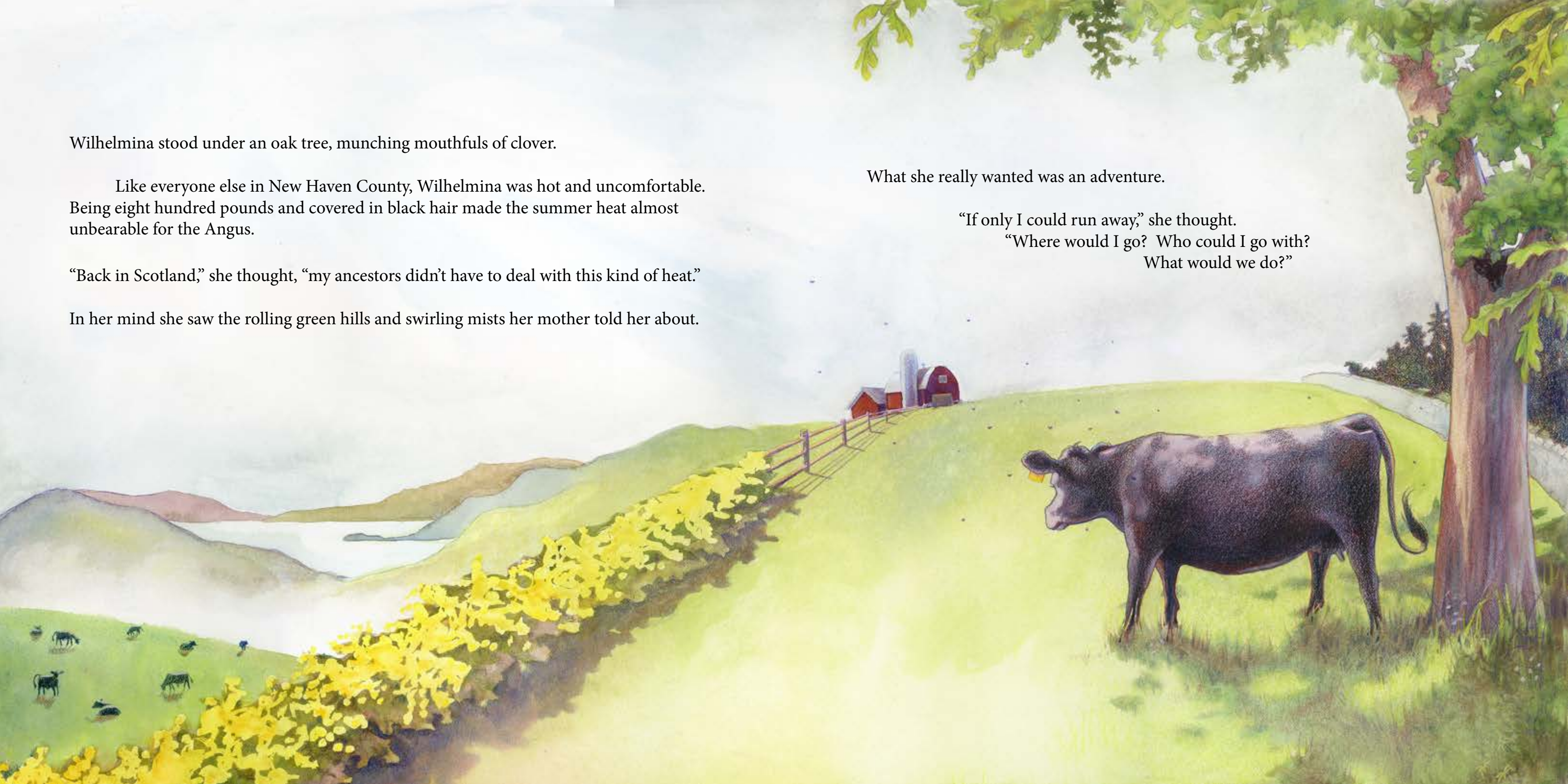
“Back in Scotland,” she thought, “my ancestors didn’t have to deal with this kind of heat.”

In her mind she saw the rolling green hills and swirling mists her mother told her about.

What she really wanted was an adventure.

“If only I could run away,” she thought.

“Where would I go? Who could I go with?
What would we do?”

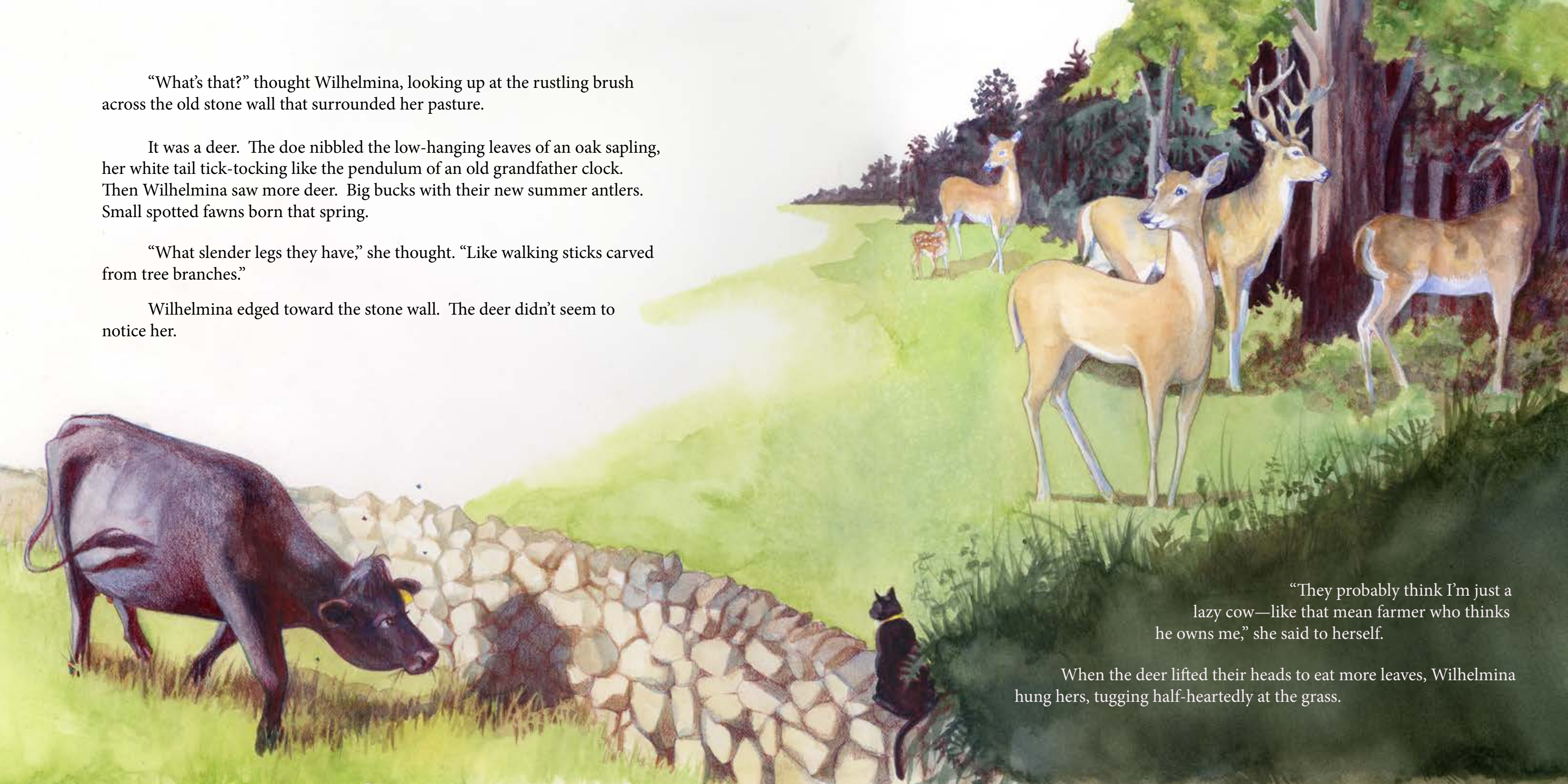


“What’s that?” thought Wilhelmina, looking up at the rustling brush across the old stone wall that surrounded her pasture.

It was a deer. The doe nibbled the low-hanging leaves of an oak sapling, her white tail tick-tocking like the pendulum of an old grandfather clock. Then Wilhelmina saw more deer. Big bucks with their new summer antlers. Small spotted fawns born that spring.

“What slender legs they have,” she thought. “Like walking sticks carved from tree branches.”

Wilhelmina edged toward the stone wall. The deer didn’t seem to notice her.



“They probably think I’m just a lazy cow—like that mean farmer who thinks he owns me,” she said to herself.

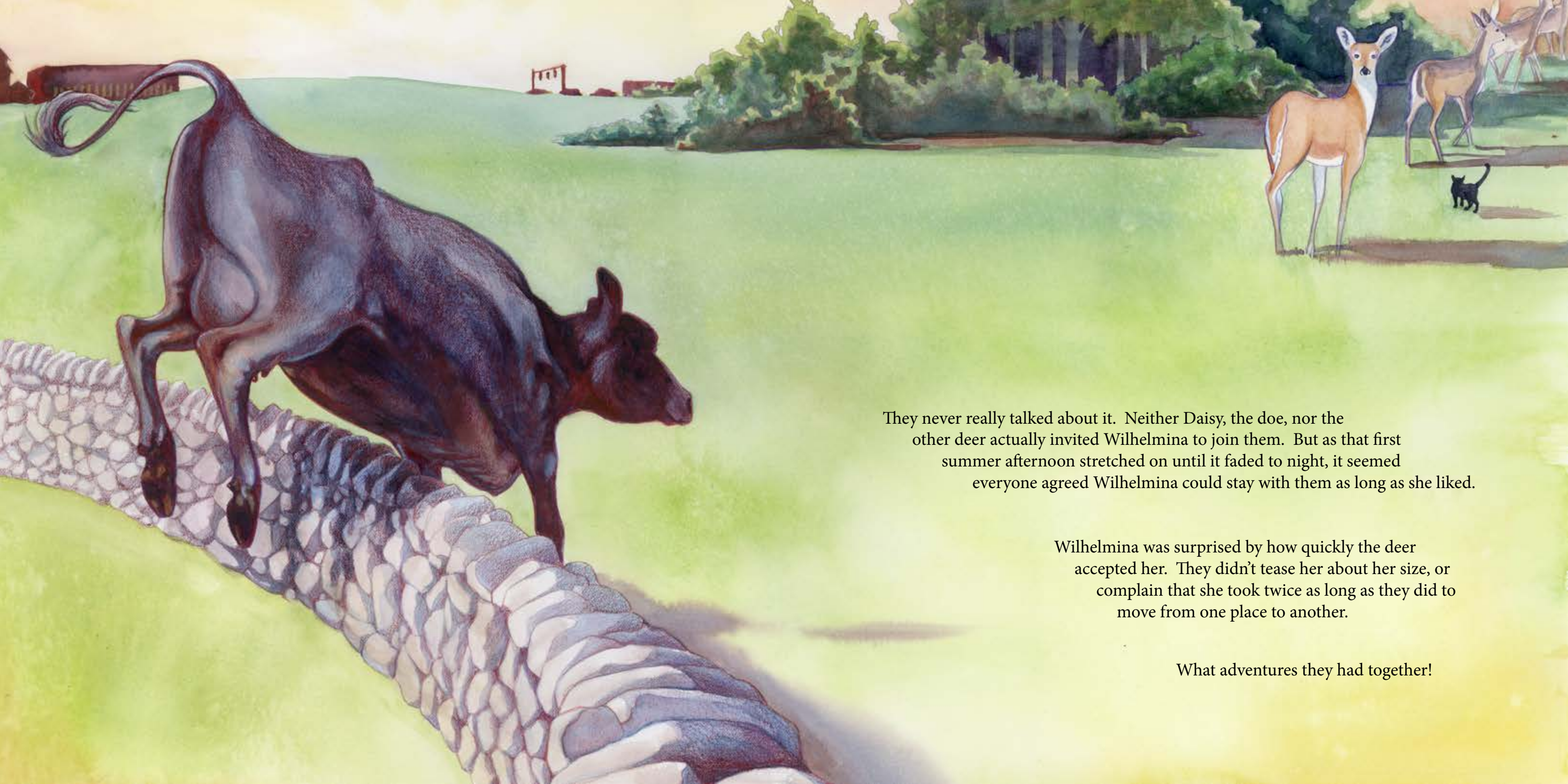
When the deer lifted their heads to eat more leaves, Wilhelmina hung hers, tugging half-heartedly at the grass.

“Maybe if you held your head up, you’d look like the adventurer you really are,” said the doe.

Wilhelmina was embarrassed. But the other deer didn’t laugh. They had heard that humans have many ways to break a free spirit.

From her calthood until this moment, no one seemed to care that inside Wilhelmina was a free spirit, born to roam. Her humans only cared that she produced milk for their cereal.

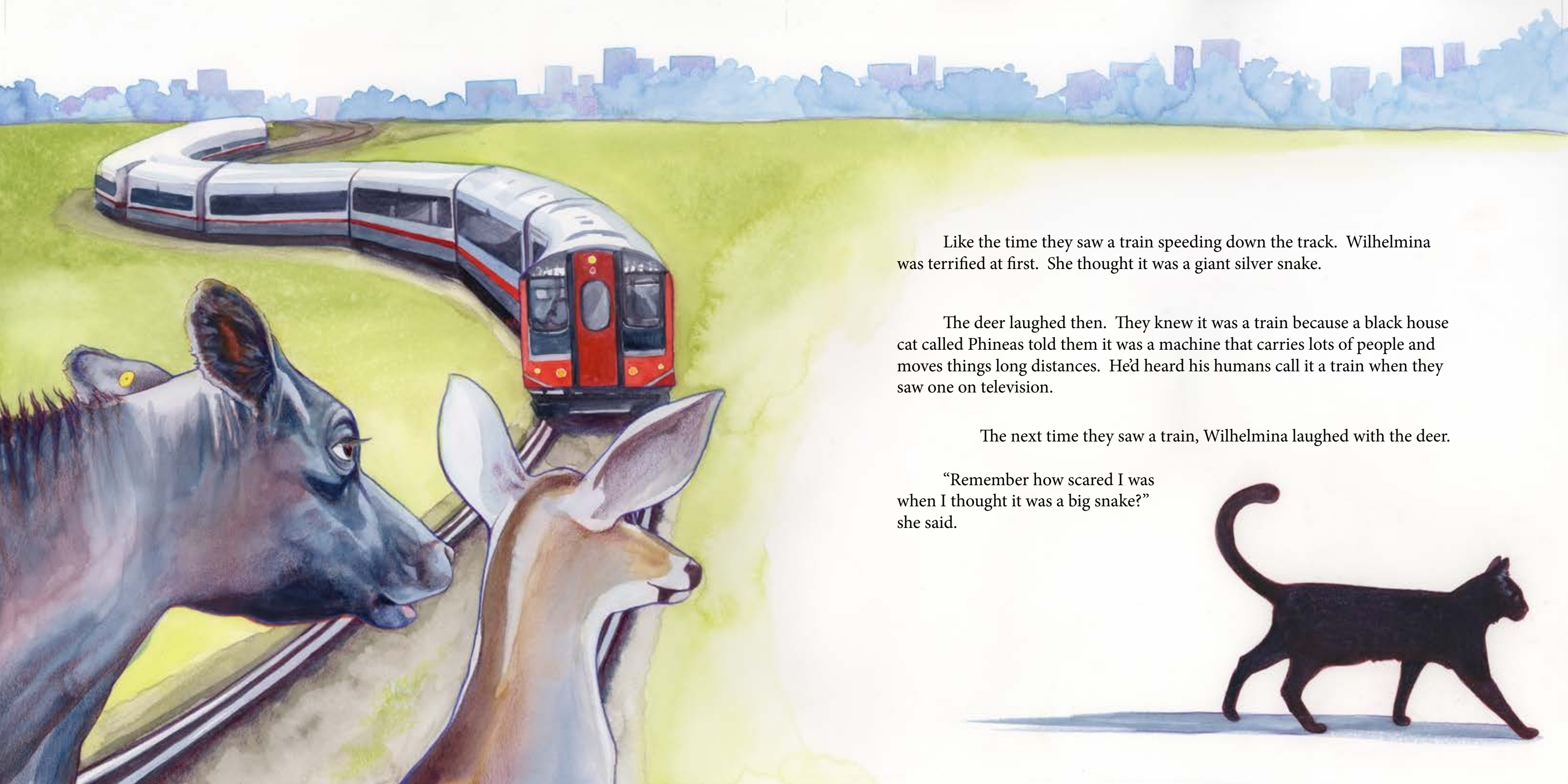




They never really talked about it. Neither Daisy, the doe, nor the other deer actually invited Wilhelmina to join them. But as that first summer afternoon stretched on until it faded to night, it seemed everyone agreed Wilhelmina could stay with them as long as she liked.

Wilhelmina was surprised by how quickly the deer accepted her. They didn't tease her about her size, or complain that she took twice as long as they did to move from one place to another.

What adventures they had together!



Like the time they saw a train speeding down the track. Wilhelmina was terrified at first. She thought it was a giant silver snake.

The deer laughed then. They knew it was a train because a black house cat called Phineas told them it was a machine that carries lots of people and moves things long distances. He'd heard his humans call it a train when they saw one on television.

The next time they saw a train, Wilhelmina laughed with the deer.

“Remember how scared I was when I thought it was a big snake?” she said.



Traveling with her new friends, Wilhelmina got to know every meadow and hiding place in Orange, next-door Milford, and even West Haven, eight miles away.

Still, she was self-conscious of being different.

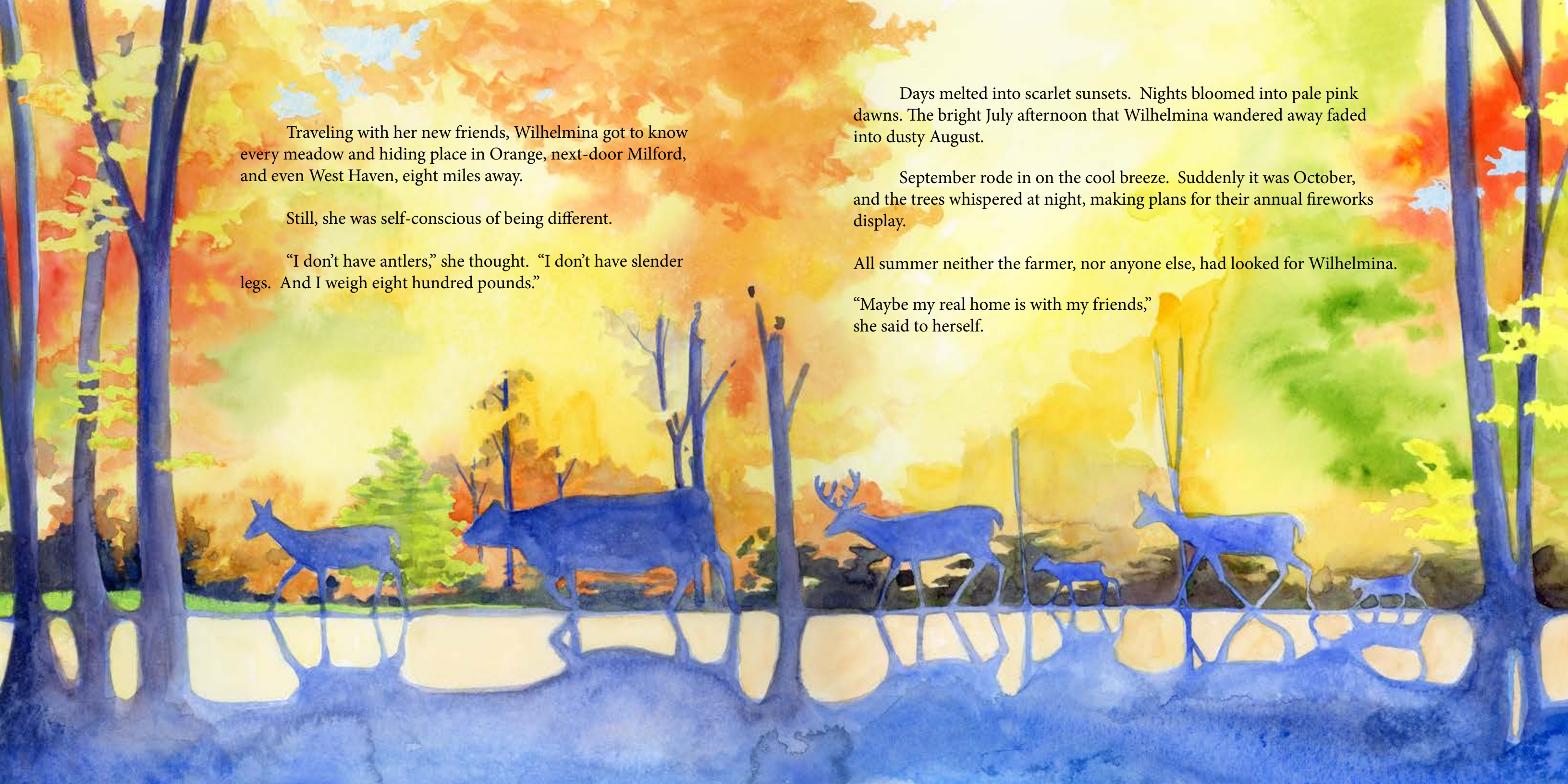
“I don’t have antlers,” she thought. “I don’t have slender legs. And I weigh eight hundred pounds.”

Days melted into scarlet sunsets. Nights bloomed into pale pink dawns. The bright July afternoon that Wilhelmina wandered away faded into dusty August.

September rode in on the cool breeze. Suddenly it was October, and the trees whispered at night, making plans for their annual fireworks display.

All summer neither the farmer, nor anyone else, had looked for Wilhelmina.

“Maybe my real home is with my friends,” she said to herself.



People are such unpredictable creatures.

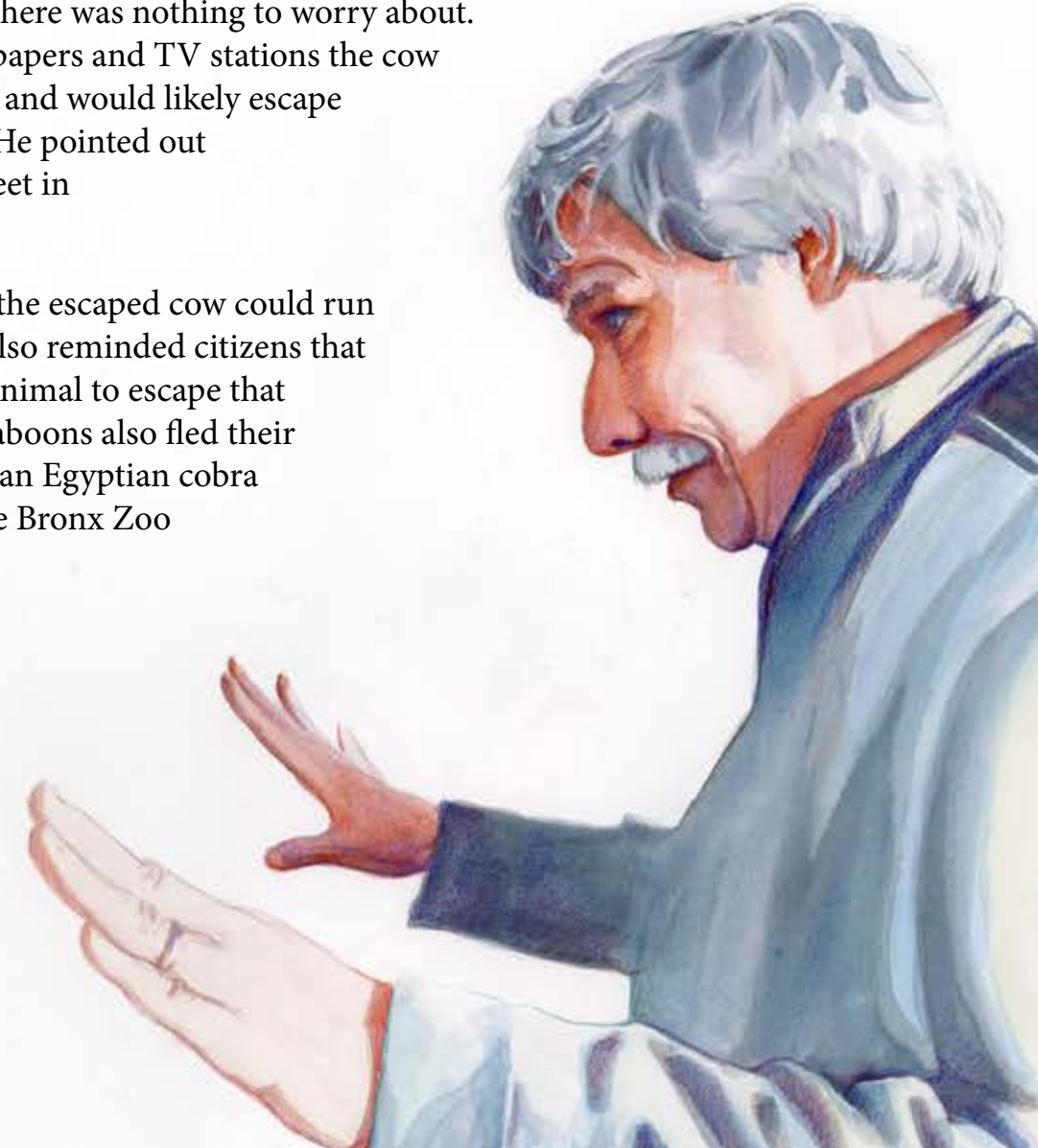
When the trees shed most of their leaves in November's rains, a group of animal-loving citizens suddenly got concerned about Wilhelmina.

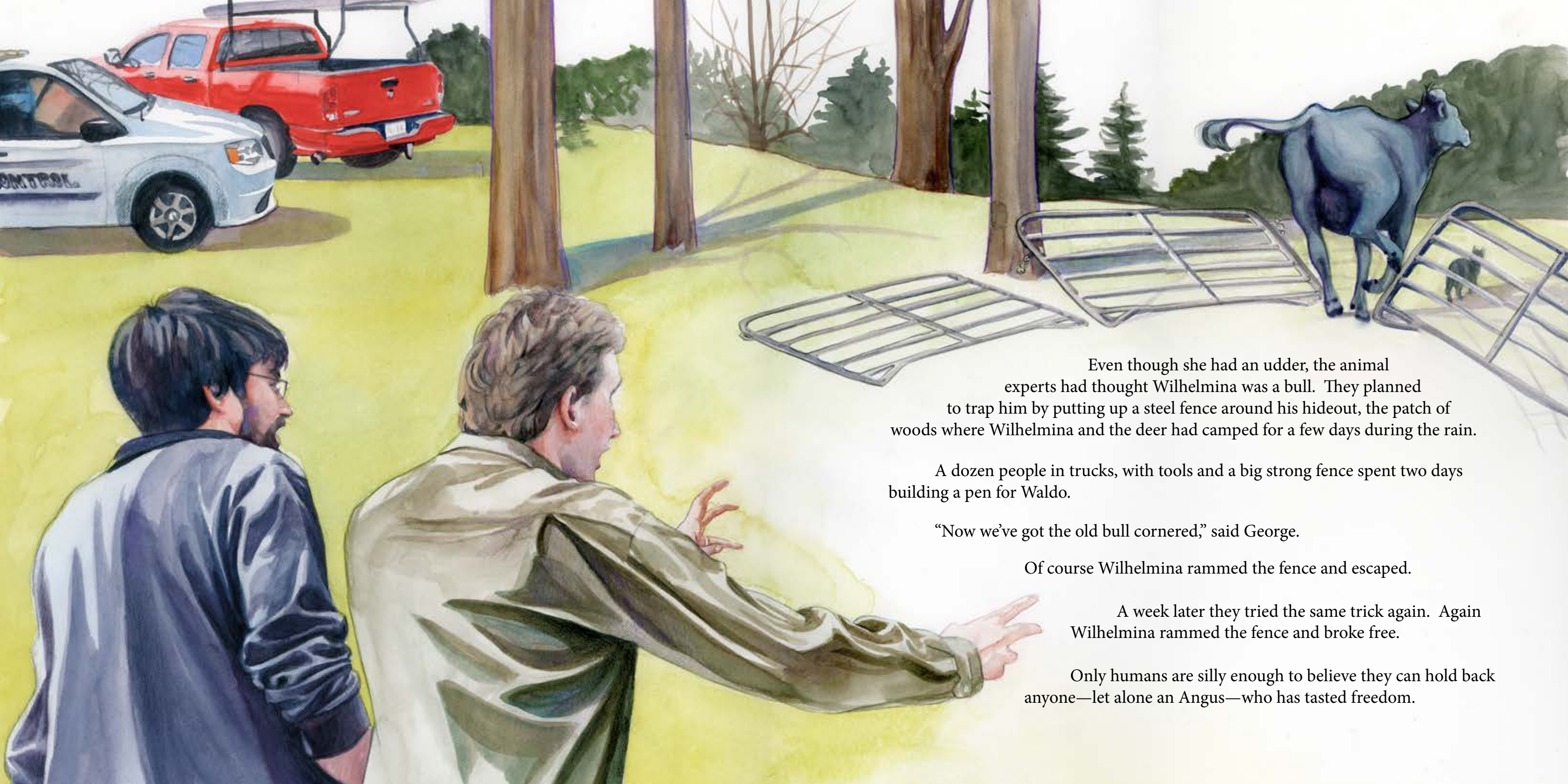


Without the summer foliage to feed on, they were afraid the runaway cow—as the newspapers were calling her—wouldn't have enough to eat and might show up at their houses.

George Richards, the animal control officer for Orange and Milford, assured residents there was nothing to worry about. Still, he told the local newspapers and TV stations the cow was a “runner and jumper,” and would likely escape an attempt to capture her. He pointed out that cows can jump seven feet in the air.

George was worried the escaped cow could run into a congested area. He also reminded citizens that the cow was just the latest animal to escape that year. Reptiles, birds, and baboons also fled their human captors—including an Egyptian cobra that slithered away from the Bronx Zoo in March.





Even though she had an udder, the animal experts had thought Wilhelmina was a bull. They planned to trap him by putting up a steel fence around his hideout, the patch of woods where Wilhelmina and the deer had camped for a few days during the rain.

A dozen people in trucks, with tools and a big strong fence spent two days building a pen for Waldo.

“Now we’ve got the old bull cornered,” said George.

Of course Wilhelmina rammed the fence and escaped.

A week later they tried the same trick again. Again Wilhelmina rammed the fence and broke free.

Only humans are silly enough to believe they can hold back anyone—let alone an Angus—who has tasted freedom.

One afternoon during the second week of December, Wilhelmina and her friends were grazing peacefully at the edge of the woods in the Calf Pen Meadow neighborhood, in Milford.



Calf Pen Meadow had been a hiding place for cows since the Colonists hid their cattle from the British in the low-lying area during the Revolutionary War.



A week earlier, children at the Calf Pen Meadow School—whose school mascot is a cow—told their teachers they saw a black cow with a group of deer. The teachers told the principal, and the principal called George Richards.



That's when George made plans for this afternoon with a big group of animal doctors and town officials. They were going to track down Waldo, trap him and move him to an animal sanctuary.

The owners of the farm Wilhelmina ran away from didn't want her back. But the newspaper said they were probably still going to have to pay for all the experts and the cost of moving her.

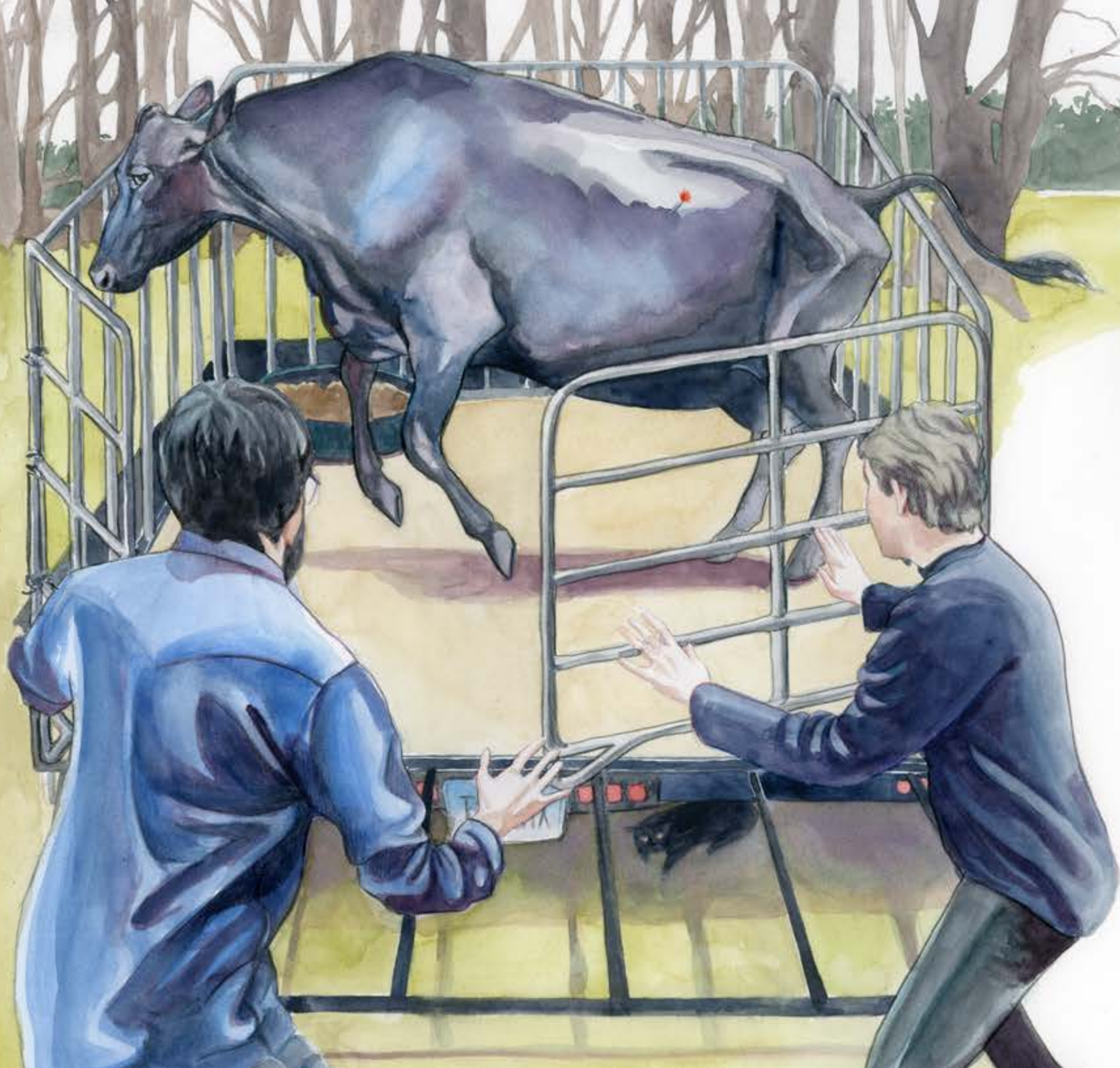
The group set out late in the afternoon of Wednesday, December 14.

"We found him with the family of deer that he had been hanging out with," George told the reporter.

They also found out that Waldo was a girl. Now they called her Wilhelmina—as if it hadn't been her proper name all along.

"She snores very loudly," said George. "And when she starts to stir and wake up, she makes her presence well known."

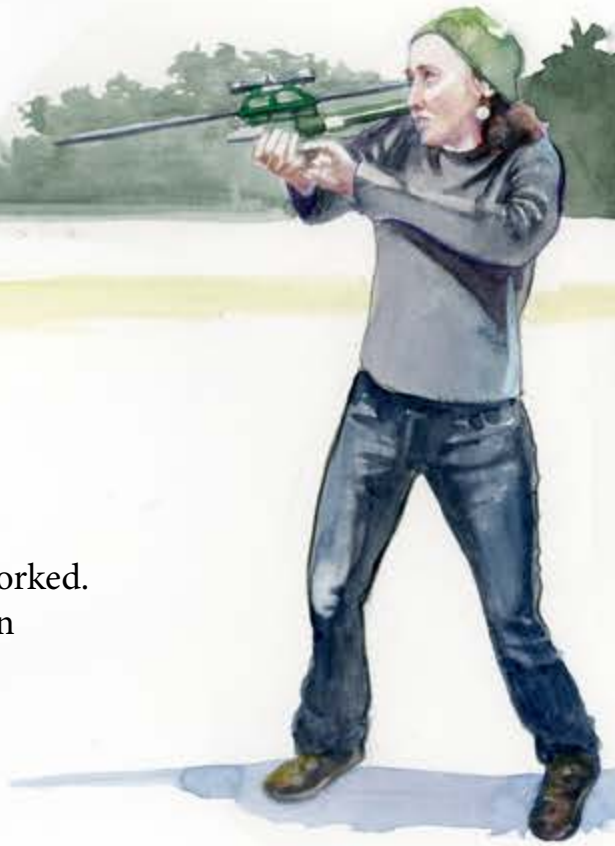




This time the group used a new trick—and it worked. Wilhelmina had a sweet tooth and couldn't resist grain soaked in molasses. That's exactly what they used to lure her into a portable corral.

Wilhelmina was outnumbered. But she still put up a fight.

“We got her corralled in this steel enclosure we built,” said George, “but it took two tranquilizer darts to calm her down.”





Wilhelmina woke up just before arriving at the farm in Oxford, about twenty miles away. The humans expected she would live out her days there.

“She’ll be happy there,” said George.

She looked through the steel bars of the cage they had put her in on a truck. She noticed the covered bridge over Eightmile Brook that divides Oxford from Southbury, winding south all the way from Lake Quassapaug (*qwa-sah-pawg*) to the Housatonic (*who-sa-tonic*) River.

Although she still felt sleepy from the tranquilizers, Wilhelmina’s heart quickened at the sight of the water.

“I’m ready for another adventure,” she thought.



“Isn’t she a beauty!”
said the old woman standing
outside the white farmhouse,
looking at Wilhelmina. “And a
real Black Angus! Reminds me
of the old place.”

She meant the farm she grew up on,
back in the Scottish Highlands.

George led Wilhelmina down the
ramp off the truck. He handed the rope
they had put around her neck to the old
woman.

“Take good care of her, Betty,” he
said to the woman. “She’s a wild one.”

“Oh, she’ll be fine,” said Betty, wiping her hands on her red and white checked apron as she looked at Wilhelmina.

Their eyes met. Wilhelmina thought she had never seen kinder or bluer human eyes than Betty's. They twinkled, too. It was as if she understood something about Wilhelmina that all the experts didn't.



The winter was harsh. She went outside a few times, but Wilhelmina mostly passed the short days and long nights inside the big, clean barn.



Although there was another cow, a horse, and a sheep to talk to, all Wilhelmina could think of were the adventures she had enjoyed with her deer friends.



After the cold rains of March passed, Wilhelmina spent more time grazing in the meadow behind the barn. Soon the bare gray-colored trees sprouted millions of little red buds that would become leaves.

As the roller-coaster temperatures of spring gave way to hotter days and warmer nights, Wilhelmina felt something stirring inside.

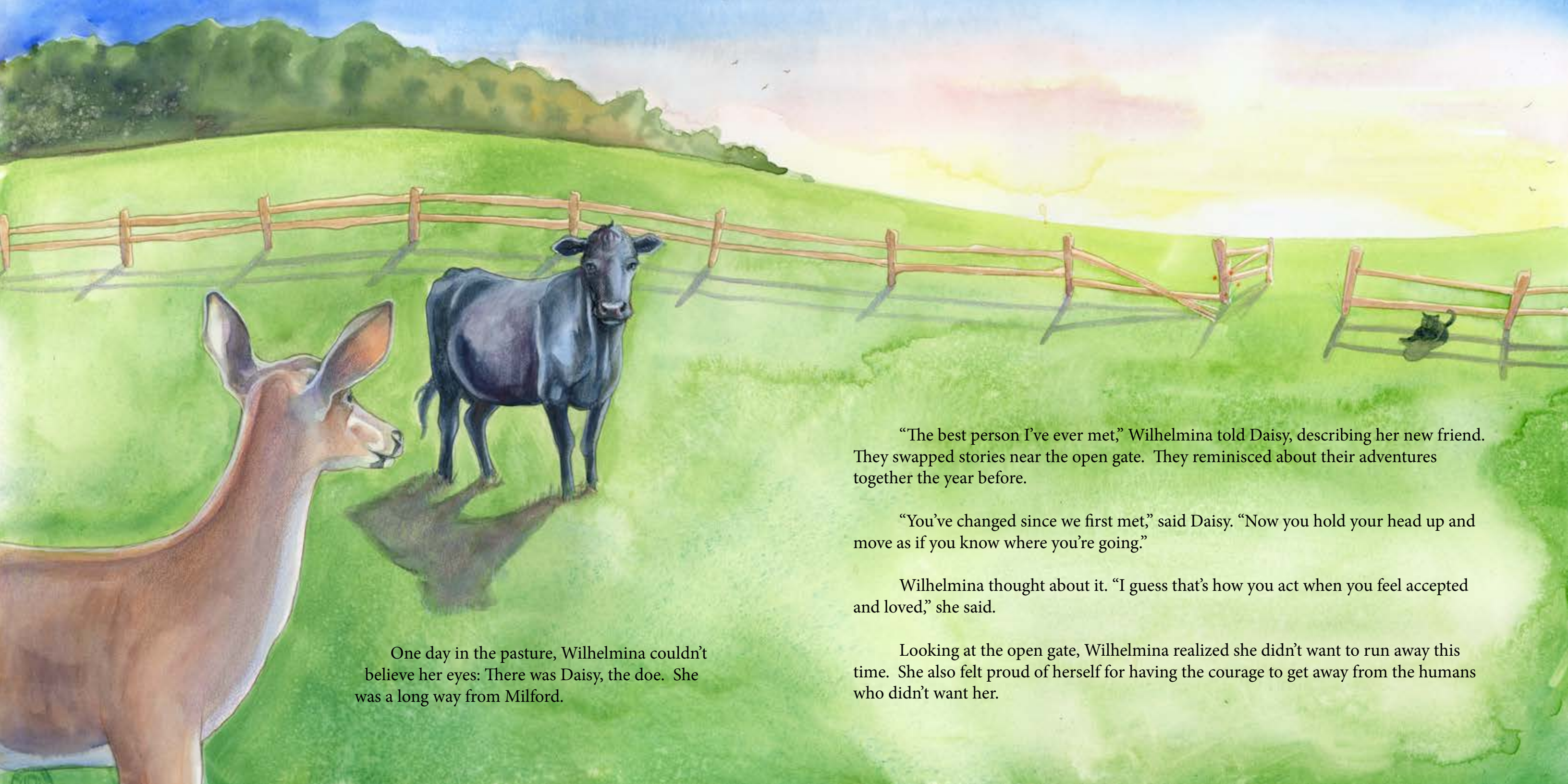


But this time, instead of the uncaring people who didn't want her back, there was Betty. The kind lady brought her special treats, petted her nose—which had gotten hurt when she was captured—and told her stories about her childhood in Scotland.



Betty laughed recalling the time she ran away from home.

“I was all of ten,” she said, “and I thought I deserved more than my parents could afford to give me.”



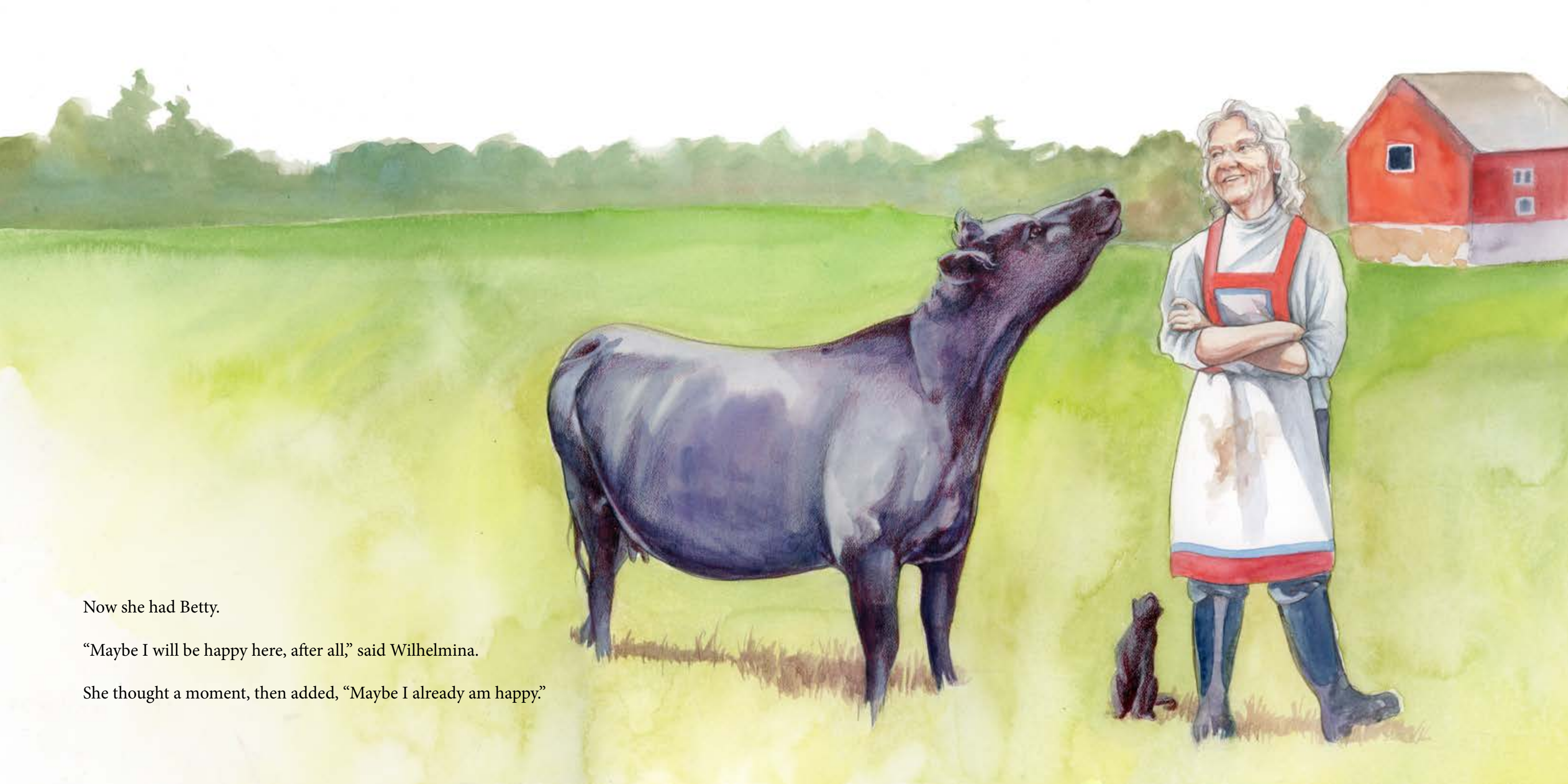
One day in the pasture, Wilhelmina couldn't believe her eyes: There was Daisy, the doe. She was a long way from Milford.

"The best person I've ever met," Wilhelmina told Daisy, describing her new friend. They swapped stories near the open gate. They reminisced about their adventures together the year before.

"You've changed since we first met," said Daisy. "Now you hold your head up and move as if you know where you're going."

Wilhelmina thought about it. "I guess that's how you act when you feel accepted and loved," she said.

Looking at the open gate, Wilhelmina realized she didn't want to run away this time. She also felt proud of herself for having the courage to get away from the humans who didn't want her.



Now she had Betty.

“Maybe I will be happy here, after all,” said Wilhelmina.

She thought a moment, then added, “Maybe I already am happy.”



The End.

John-Manuel Andriote

John's love of the old farms, stone walls, and beautiful country roads in the "boondocks" of eastern Connecticut—where he grew up and returned in 2007 after thirty years "away"—made *Wilhelmina's* story jump off the newspaper page and grab his interest. As a longtime journalist, he knew this was a special story waiting to be re-told.

John built his journalism career over twenty-two years in Washington, D.C., after earning a master's degree in journalism from Northwestern University in 1986. Although *Wilhelmina Goes Wandering* is his first children's book, John is the author of several other books that reflect his diverse interests, including an award-winning history of the AIDS epidemic and a history of disco/dance music.

Katie Runde

Katie is an award-winning artist born in Connecticut and based in central Vermont, where she enjoys spending quality time with *Wilhelmina's* cow cousins. She creates her lovingly rendered portraits of human and bovine alike to a constant stream of public domain audiobooks. When not in the studio or the classroom, Katie milks cows, plays saxophone and clarinet in a variety of bands and orchestras, theologizes, and gets her hands dirty crafting giant anamorphic street paintings.

Read more about *Wilhelmina* at runawaycowbook.com.