THE MISSING BOOKSHOP

For all my fellow indie booksellers – Katie



To Linda and Dave Drayton, my mammar and pops, for instilling a love of reading and books in me – Kirsti



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“The End,”

Mrs Minty said as she closed the book and smiled at the children on the rainbow carpet.



“Thank you for coming to story time
and I hope to see you all next week.”



Milly never missed story time at Minty's Bookshop. Mrs Minty knew about every book in the whole world. Milly liked to set her challenges.

"One with a bear in!"



"One with pirates!"



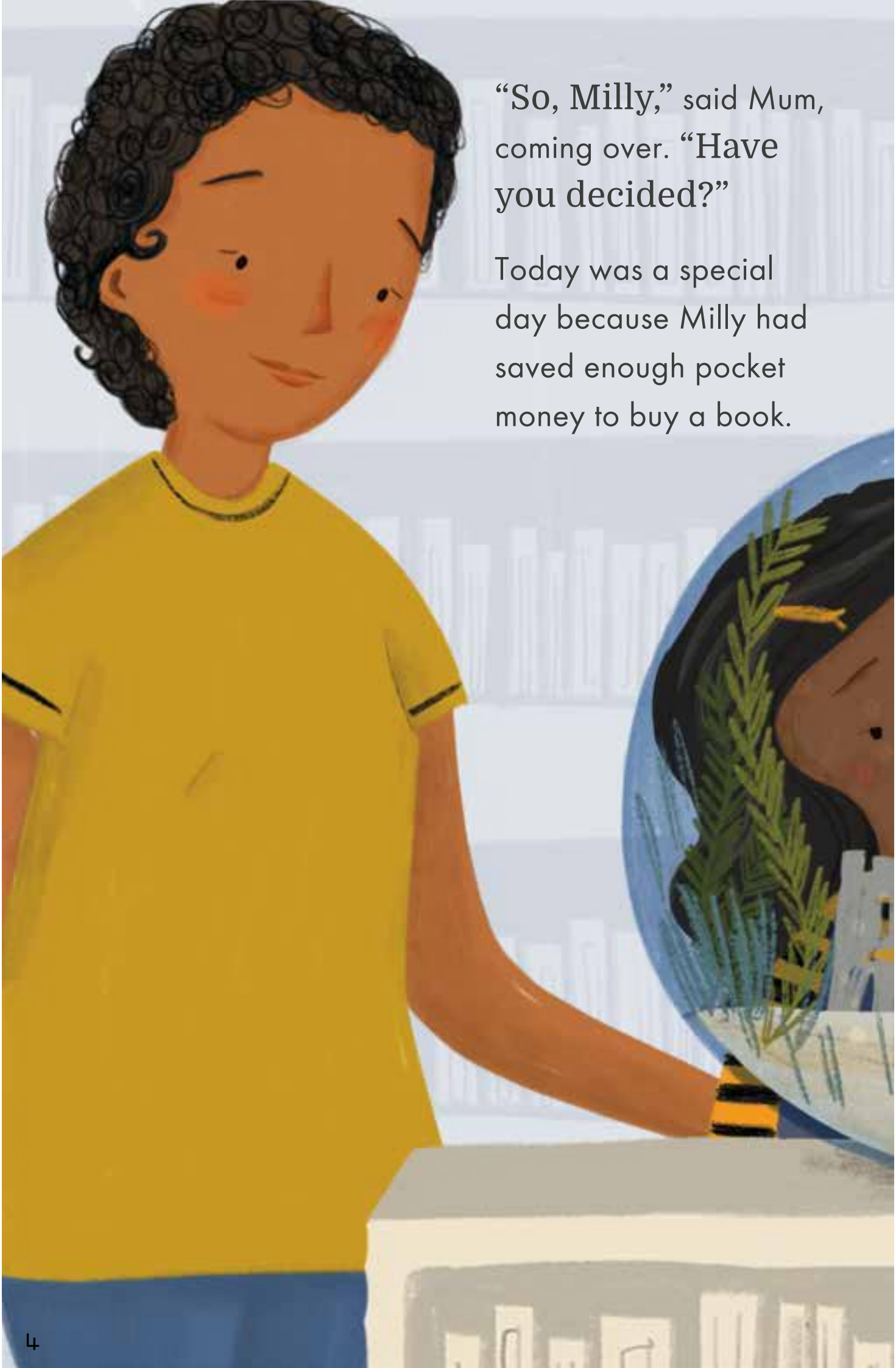
“Ponies?”



“Aliens!”



Mrs Minty always
had just the thing.



"So, Milly," said Mum, coming over. "Have you decided?"

Today was a special day because Milly had saved enough pocket money to buy a book.

"I think I'd like some sort of

sea adventure,"

Milly replied excitedly.

"Aha!" said Mrs Minty. "I have just the thing!"





Mrs Minty got up from her creaky wooden story chair.

"Goodness! I'm getting a bit creaky, too!" she said. She smiled but Milly couldn't help noticing how slowly she walked.

Mrs Minty trailed her fingers along one of the shelves and pulled out a book with a turquoise cover and gold writing.

"I think you'll like this," she said, her eyes twinkling. "It's full of mermaids and sea monsters."

Milly took the book and opened it at the first page.



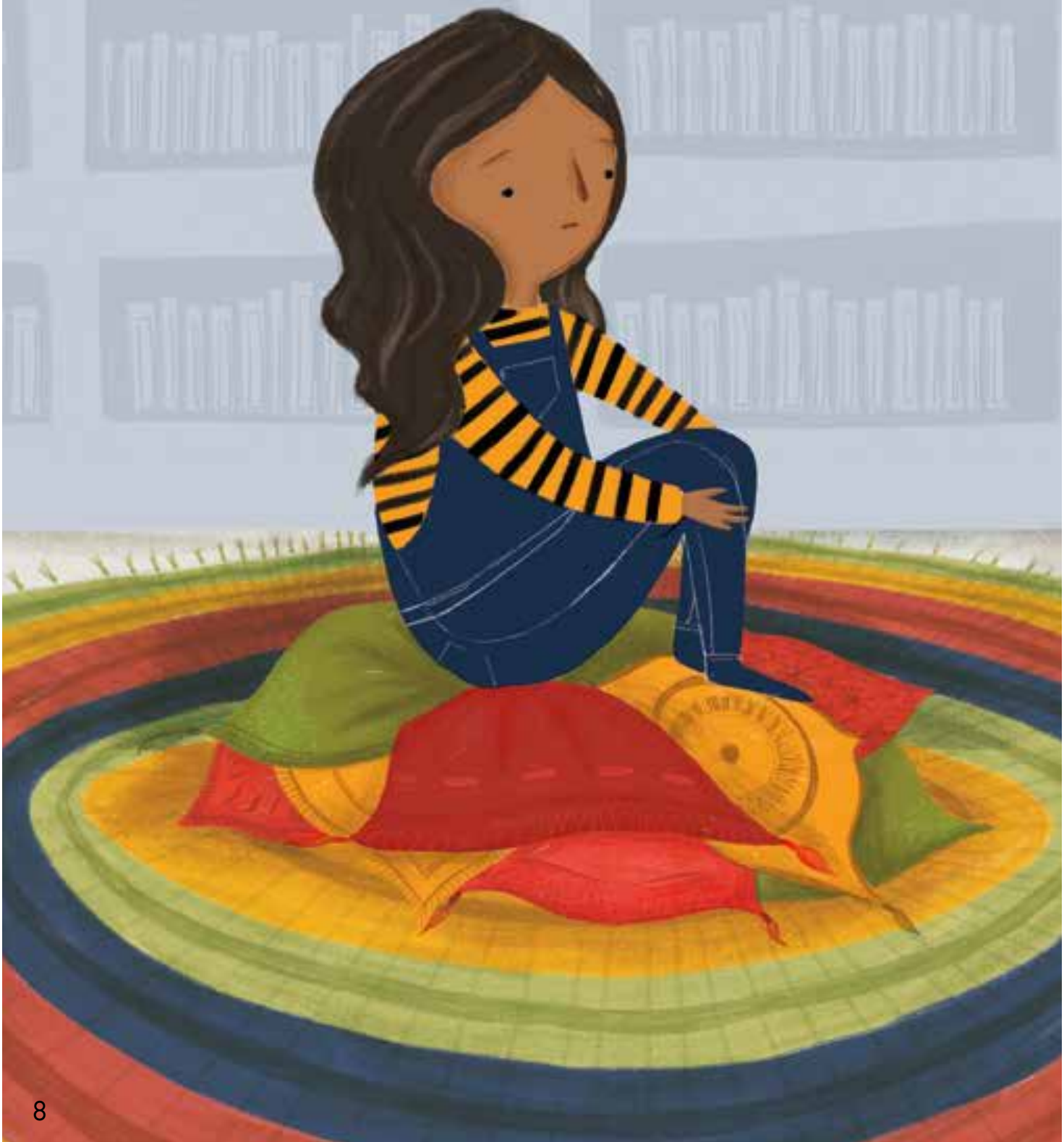
“Hang on, Milly,”
Mum called.

“We need to pay for it first! Why don’t you tidy up the story area while I find your pocket money for Mrs Minty?”

Milly handed her mum the book and went to collect up the colourful cushions.

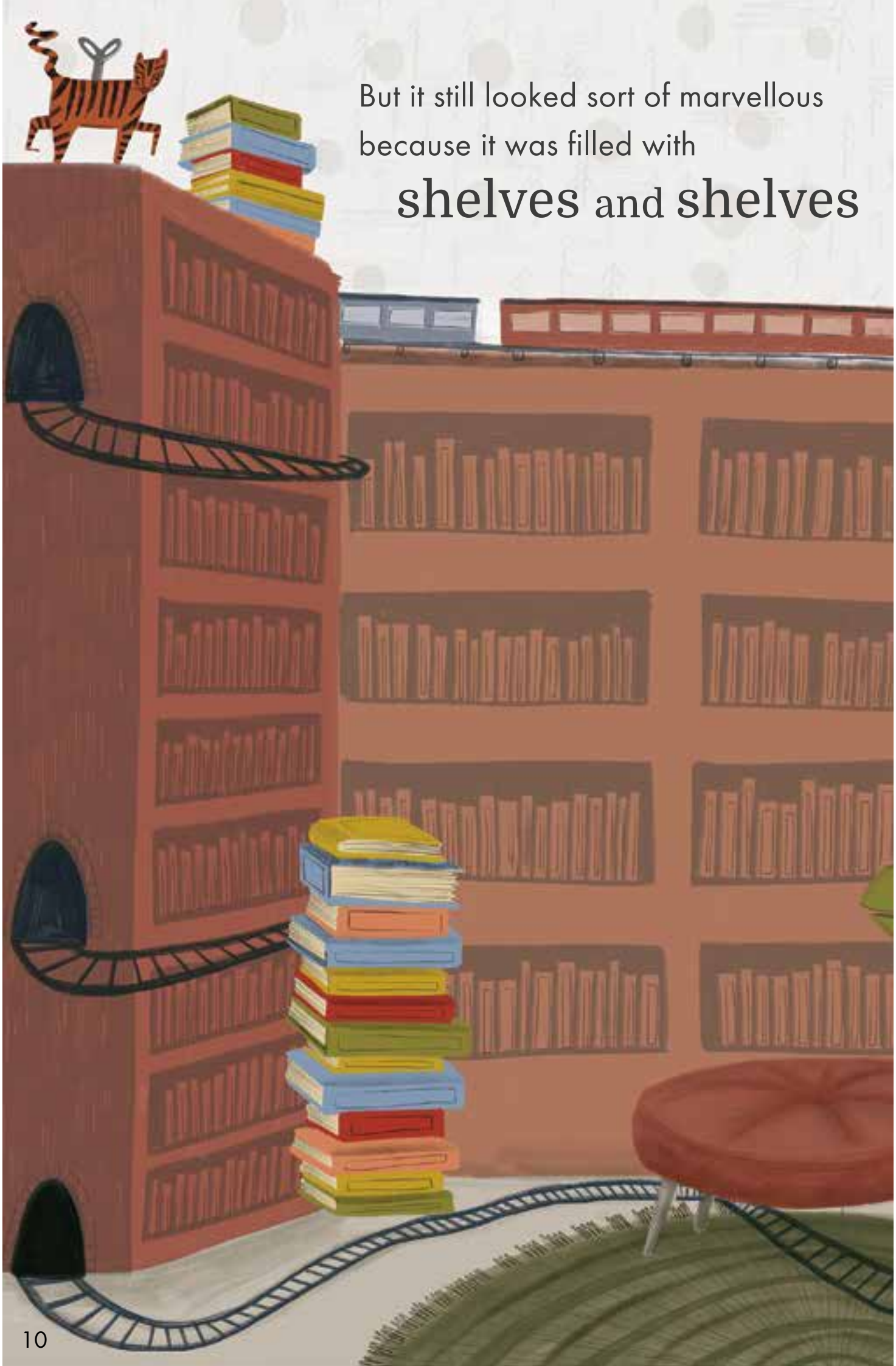
The colours didn't look that bright any more.

She turned one over to see if the other side looked better but that was all worn, too.



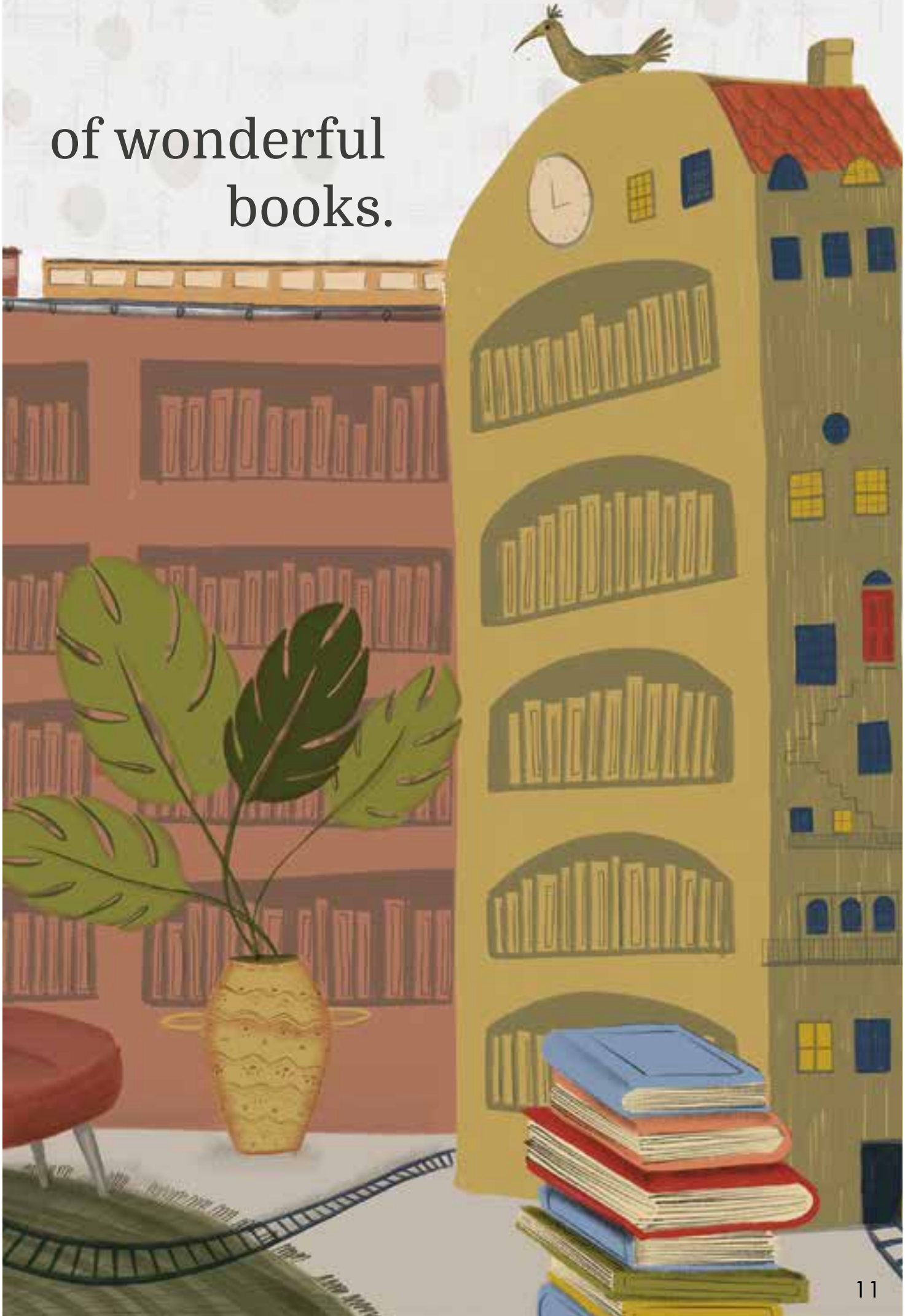


Looking round the bookshop she could see the paint was starting to peel off round the window frames and the curtains were faded.



But it still looked sort of marvellous
because it was filled with
shelves and shelves

of wonderful
books.





Milly glanced over at the picture of Mrs Minty and her daughter sitting on the wooden story chair when it was brand new.

Mrs Minty looked quite different now.

In the picture, Mrs Minty didn't have her little reading glasses and her long silver hair was as red as an apple.

"Time to go, Milly,"
her mum called.



